

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES FOR AUGUST 3, 2026
APPROVED ON AUGUST 17, 2026**

Commissioners Present: Ben Bornstein, Art Woolf, Kirsten Tyler

Commissioners Absent: Max Tyler, Will Dunkley

Also Present: Harmony Cism (Planning Coordinator & Zoning Administrator), Maria Barden (Minute Clerk), Daniel Strobridge, Barb Peck, Lori Johnson, Bill Cleary

The meeting began at 6:31pm

Amendments to the Agenda

None.

Citizens to be heard – Items not on the agenda

None.

Approval of Minutes – July 20th, 2026

The minutes of the July 20th meeting were not approved because they did not have a quorum of members who were all present at the last meeting here at the present meeting.

Continued Discussion – Updates to Land Use and Development Regulations

K. Tyler motioned to go through item by item, A. Woolf seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

- a. The Planning Commission reviewed the Updates to Land Use and Development Regulations section-by-section and had some discussion surrounding certain items for clarification.

H. Cism says no motions approving or denying amendments should be made until after the public hearing. These are all informal approvals/discussions until then.

L. Johnson questions, if someone's house burns down and they can't start reconstruction for 6 months will they have to meet all the requirements of zoning instead of getting an extension? What if someone can't get a zoning permit because they don't meet the current zoning requirements?

H. Cism clarifies that if there is a property that could not be permitted by today's regulations, that would be considered a pre-existing non-conformity and if someone was to rebuild in that same footprint with the same number of bedrooms they can continue with that non-conforming use and could get a zoning permit. They wouldn't be charged for the preexisting sq footage, they'd only be charged if they added any.

L. Johnson asks if other things are required to get a zoning permit?

H. Cism says if it is non-conforming that is attached to septic built before 2007, they are grandfathered in by the "Clean Slate" exemption, so they wouldn't need a WW permit, just building plans that show the sq footage and what the building looks like.

B. Peck expands on what **L. Johnson** says and talks about houses that sit on the road. What if someone wants to demolish their house and move it but they are non-conforming?

B. Bornstein reminds **B. Peck** that they are talking about damaged or destroyed structures specifically and not something that people are looking to replace.

B. Peck asks what the definition of “destroyed” is.

The definition of destroyed is: “damaged or destroyed by any catastrophic cause.”

H. Cism says the State controls WW, not the town, and so if someone wants to take down a site and rebuild, the State requires that it be within fifty feet of the current structure.

B. Peck asks if the State grants someone a waiver for WW and allows them to go further, and does the town have any say in that?

H. Cism says if someone is given a WW permit or exemption from the State then they can be given a zoning permit from the town.

B. Bornstein talks about the cross-reference in the regulations and thinks there should immediately be an annotation wherever there is a figure, so they know exactly where each reference is.

This is a very tedious and time-consuming task because there could be hundreds of pages that are relevant to one figure, **H. Cism** hasn’t had a chance to work on it with her other planning and zoning tasks.

A. Woolf thinks there is an easier way they could go about this with it being online and searchable.

B. Peck thought the twenty-five point regarding the minimum score was a temporary measure put in for two years.

B. Bornstein says yes, it is temporary, but they are having a discussion currently to see if it’s something they want to make more permanent.

B. Peck wonders why it must be a certified landscape architect or professional outfit to design it, she takes issue with the added cost.

B. Bornstein feels someone qualified for the job should oversee that sort of work.

D. Strobridge asked if the camp regulations were in reference to a campground like the one in Fairfax where the campsites are all on top of each other? Is there an exception to something like his where it’s spread out over 80+ acres.

H. Cism says proposed Section 308.B was written with campgrounds like his in mind. The town doesn’t have the say for the WW requirements, which are all at the State level, but the DRB can waive other things such as the road requirements.

H. Cism will reach out to **D. Strobridge** tomorrow and give him a phone number for the State to contact someone about a WW permit.

D. Strobridge would like someone from the Planning Commission to have someone from the State come to his property because one gentleman attending the meeting recommended he have someone at the State look at his land, because he felt it is a benign issue. He feels that there is nothing he is doing on his property that is destroying the land.

A. Woolf feels the word “valuable” is not necessary in Section 314.F(3)(e).

D. Strobridge asked if pg. 3-33 development standards regarding culverts, Section 321.D(13)(a), was in reference to driveways?

Yes, it is.

L. Johnson mentioned a comment to remove section 263.K and wonders why that is being removed.

H. Cism says the subchapter reference is being removed from the table of contents, but that section is not being removed from the regulations.

Updates

- a. Town Planner Search:
A committee has been formed to review applicants along with a set of questions.
- b. Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Projects:
Grant Writing, 1705, & Pedestrian Pathway.

K. Tyler and **B. Bornstein** met to discuss and draw up an approach based on the meeting with the CCRPC staff. **B. Bornstein** has reached out to Maya Balassa to set up an initial meeting with CCRPC regarding 1705. There will be a meeting with **H. Cism**, CCRPC, and the Town Admin this Thursday.

Communication

- a. Front Porch Forum Posting:
This was regarding W. Dunkley posting on FPF with an update to the previous PC meeting. There was a discussion that maybe everyone should discuss what is posted on FPF prior to it being posted so everyone can agree.
K. Tyler motions to table the FPF discussion and additional communication strategies & formats discussion until M. Tyler and W. Dunkley are back. A. Woolf seconds. Motion passed 3-0.

Correspondence

- a. DRB meeting notice from July 27th
- b. Dinner invite for all Town employees, boards and committees from a community member.
- c. Land Use Review Board decision approving partial Tier 1B exemption.

Work Plan

- a. Next meeting will be August 17th
- b. Approve the Minutes for July 20th and August 3rd

K. Tyler motions to adjourn the meeting, A. Woolf seconds. Motion passed 3-0.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:11pm