

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES FOR OCTOBER 19TH, 2026
APPROVED ON ***, 2026**

Commissioners Present: Will Dunkley, Kirsten Tyler, Max Tyler, Ben Bornstein

Commissioners Absent: Art Woolf

Also Present: Harmony Cism (Planning Coordinator & Zoning Administrator), Maria Barden (Minute Clerk), Maya Balassa (CCRPC), Barb Peck

The meeting began at 6:30pm.

Amendments to the Agenda

None.

Citizens to be Heard - Items not on agenda

None.

Approval of Minutes - October 5th, 2026

M. Tyler motioned to accept the minutes from October 5th, 2026 as amended. B. Bornstein seconded, motion passed 4-0.

Discussion

1. FY'27 Municipal Planning Grant-

a. Application, Review and Resolution Recommendation:

M. Balassa says she is helping draft a couple grants this year to help support the Town's planning work. This first one is the Municipal Planning Grant through the State. It is for bylaw updates, plan updates, and other initiatives. The application opened October 1st and will be due December 1st. She will be attending the SB meeting this Thursday and is looking for feedback from the Planning Commission about any changes or discussion they may have for the draft application. The current draft is for engagement leading up to the Town Plan update and focused on future land use, asking where, how, and at what rate if at all the town wants to grow. There is a focus on housing, density, and growth since that is something the State is looking for, she wants to make sure the town is competitive.

B. Bornstein asks about paragraph E talking about having to register and create an account, is that something that has already been done?

H. Cism already has an account and has added M. Balassa as an editor.

B. Bornstein asks about Westford staff being responsible for final submission on page one, he would like more clarity on this in the resolution since the town is the applicant and therefore would be the grantee. He also asks if "Selectboard" be more uniformly spelled out throughout the application for consistency. **M. Balassa** says this language is not changeable because this document comes from the State. She says she will provide that feedback to the State for future years. **M. Tyler** asks if there are any comments or revisions to the application. **K. Tyler** had some concerns around the general sense that conservation is not included in the application at all. An update to the Town Plan is looking at the whole plan in

all forms and right now we're focusing on development, housing areas, and designated areas. The scope says it covers all aspects of the Town Plan. She thinks in conjunction with looking at development/future growth she thinks we should also add a future conservation and natural resources priority as a compliment to the development priority as a more balanced public engagement. The Planning Commission had a broader discussion regarding the application and what they can do to add a more balance to what K. Tyler is saying.

W. Dunkley asks M. Balassa about her drafting a competitive grant, his understanding is this application is centered around town growth, and would it make it more competitive if it was broader? **M. Balassa** says it's hard to know, one category questions if this project creates a template for other towns to use as a high point association. She specifies that the application does not limit what questions you can ask the community, it's not a boundary, it's just a source of money and whatever questions align, align.

M. Tyler reminds everyone that this is not for a Town Plan update; it's for engagement related to a Town Plan update. His assumption is there will be limited funding that the town will get and it's not going to be anything crazy, so he does feel it is focused on the controversial parts of the Town Plan.

B. Peck feels the Town Plan was not revised when it should have been. She feels the public needs to understand what aligning with the State means for the Town.

M. Tyler asks M. Balassa what happens if we delay the SB on this, is there any downside?

M. Balassa says she needs the resolution before December 2nd. If they want to wait until the November 12th SB meeting, that is fine, it will give her time to edit the application to create less focus on growth in the questioning if that is what the Planning Commission wants. **M. Tyler** asks W. Dunkley and K. Tyler to draft changes to the Municipal Planning Grant application to have for their November 2nd meeting so they can get it to the SB for November 12th meeting.

B. Bornstein thinks this is a good approach and wants to stress that we're not trying to exclude any aspect of the outreach.

W. Dunkley and K. Tyler will connect and draft those changes with M. Balassa.

2. Budget-

Identification of and Funding for Future Projects:

There has been no identification of any new line items. **M. Tyler** discussed some of the current line items and where he feels they're landing on each one. The Planning Commission feels that keeping the budget around the same would be wise, but they should look at it a little closer at what projects might be coming up. **M. Tyler** says if the Planning Commission meets on November 2nd, they have one more meeting before he must take their budget to the SB on November 12th. **B. Bornstein** wonders if the Planning Commission would be willing to budget for him to have coverage of ink toner for printing off Planning Commission related information/packets. **H. Cism** says if the Planning Commission wants to find an area of the budget to take that from, they can vote on it. M. Tyler and H. Cism will discuss and they can reevaluate it on November 2nd.

The Planning Commission is going to look at the Town of Jericho to see what they spend on UPWP and then discuss it at the next meeting.

3. Town Report-

The Planning Commission will review a draft at the next meeting.

4. VOREC Community Grant Program-

W. Dunkley says they've heard some feedback about the desire to get stuff moving at 1705. Is it too soon to get a grant to design a trail to the river? **M. Tyler** asks K. Tyler if they looked at it from the Conservation Commission's point of view and decided that it didn't make sense. **K. Tyler** says this was one of the three grants that she had sent to the Planning Commission from the Conservation Commission. She said this one is more appropriate for Planning Commission work but not Conservation Commission work, the Conservation Commission will be going for the trails grant instead. **M. Tyler** says when he first read it, he thought it was great because it's designed for planning, the negative was that it's a reimbursement grant so the town would need the money to get the grant. The Planning Commission discussed some of the potential projects that this could apply to, including but not limited to the pedestrian pathway connecting with the town center, river access, connecting the trails in town including the town forest, the town common, and open spaces for subdivisions. **W. Dunkley** thinks it's clear that people have shown interest in having river access and believes this grant could be beneficial for looking into that, other members of the Commission agree that it could be a good starting place.

B. Bornstein mentions a new grant he just got notice of, for putting in electric vehicle charging stations, something to investigate and find out how much it might cost.

H. Cism will include that notice in the next packet.

W. Dunkley will conceptualize what the project is and how it will benefit from the VOREC funding; get an estimate of how much it would cost and then they'll bring it to the SB to see if they approve of the Planning Commission applying for the grant. The pre application is due December 12th so they should work on this soon.

Update - UPWP Projects

- a. Hoyle Tanner and CCRPC visited Brookside Rd. last Thursday, they checked in with H. Cism after they took pictures; They talked to a couple of landowners who popped out while they were there. The date for the Local Concerns meeting will be Tuesday, November 17th at the school. CCRPC will make up an informational flyer for the meeting and H. Cism will share that with the community.
- b. K. Tyler sent the notes from the Planning Commission to Anne Nelson on the engagement plan priorities for activities.

Correspondence

- a. K. Tyler's notes from the ACT 250 Criterion 8C Workshop.
- b. Affordability Article substack written by A. Woolf.
- c. Notice of Jericho Bylaw Amendments - Updates to Regulations.
- d. ANR Municipal Day - October 30th.

Work Plan Review

- a. Next regularly scheduled meeting will be November 2nd.
- b. EV Charging Grant and VCGP Grant will be on the next agenda.
- c. W. Dunkley and K. Tyler will modify wording for the Municipal Planning Grant.
- d. M. Tyler will create a draft submission for the Town Report.

- e. W. Dunkley will work on creating a project proposal for 1705 recreational/economic impact study for potential VOREC application.
- f. The Commission should check out the Jericho Planning Commission pages.
- g. M. Tyler will follow up with H. Cism regarding B. Bornstein's budget request.
- h. M. Tyler will produce rough proposals for the special projects budget line item.
- i. The Commission will look at UPWP spreadsheet for current year, and what kind of projects other towns have in there.
- j. Two meetings in November, discuss December and January meetings at next meeting.

W. Dunkley made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30pm. B. Bornstein seconded, motion passed 4-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.