

**TOWN OF STAMFORD**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**  
**October 17, 2022**  
**(UNAPPROVED)**

Planning Commission: Debra Burchard, Chair, Carolyn Brooks, Kurt Gamari, Sheila Lawrence, Aaron Malachuk, Daniel Potvin David Saldo, Maura Hawkins and Jenifer Hughs.

Visitors: Beth Phelps, Debra Righi, James Righi and Pamela Tworig.  
James Sullivan, Bennington County Regional Commission.  
Lori Shepard, Secretary.

Deb Burchard called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**HEARING OF VISITORS**

None.

**MINUTES**

MOTION by Deb Burchard to accept the regular meeting minutes of August 29, 2022 as written. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

MOTION by Deb Burchard to accept the regular meeting minutes of September 19, 2022 as written. SECONDED by Aaron Malachuk. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

**ZONING ADMINISTRATOR**

1. Deb Burchard stated that Ryan Rush-Booth, the Zoning Administrator, was unable to attend the meeting but spoke at length with her about a permit application he has received. The property owner has applied for a building permit for a seasonal camp in Alpenwald. He has had a septic system designed but does not intend to have it installed; he instead wants to put in a composting toilet. The applicant says his neighbor and several other seasonal dwellings in Alpenwald have composting toilets. Deb Burchard noted that the town has a history of approving seasonal camps in Alpenwald. Ryan Rush-Booth wanted to bring this matter to the Planning Commission since Alpenwald is located in the Residential District. There is also another property owner who intends to have a septic system designed but not installed, for a camp on Main Road, also in the Residential District. Maura Hawkins stated that she is preparing an appeal permit to the Zoning Board of Adjustment concerning the building permit that was issued for the property on the corner of Main Road and The Lane for this very reason. She believes that our Zoning By-Laws do not allow camps in the Residential District. The By-laws require a dwelling to have running water, a septic system and cooking facilities. Dave Saldo felt this was a conflict of interest if she is talking about filing an appeal on the Main Road property. Additional discussion ensued concerning the need to more accurately define camps, dwellings and seasonal homes.

MOTION by Dan Potvin that this board shall advise the Administrative Offer that a camp in a Residential District is not allowed. SECONDED by Aaron Malachuk. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

Jim Sullivan noted that the state is the permitting authority for septic systems but the town can say what is allowed where in its By-laws. Jenifer Hughs asked if a composting toilet can be considered a fully working system. What if they have improved composting toilets to the point that they can be considered a residential solution and maybe we are behind the times in recognizing that. Jim Sullivan didn't know the answer but said it was a good point. Maura Hawkins said you can't just have a shed with a bed.

2. Deb Burchard stated that Ryan Rush-Booth has received complaints that there is a campground at the north end of town without a permit. He talked to the property owner who stated that he is not running a campground. How does the Zoning Administrator handle this when social media and other sources seem to support that there is a campground? Pam Tworig said as a board they need to demand compliance with the By-laws. Carolyn Brooks asked if there was a job description for the Zoning Administrator position and

suggested some training in zoning practices and enforcement. Jim Sullivan stated that VLCT usually offers training in the spring and that he is available to answer questions as well.

#### BY-LAW MODERNIZATION GRANT

Deb Burchard stated that from the discussion at the last meeting the Planning Commission would not pursue a new zoning district and would forfeit the \$1,000.00 payment. Jim Sullivan said the town needs to update the By-laws toward the state's goals in order to not lose the \$1,000.00. He felt it was clear at the last meeting that the board does not want to change the By-laws to create higher density in town. He said we could create a new village district with the same regulations as the residential district, but didn't know if that would fly with the state. Kurt Gamari suggested creating a village regulatory district with the same boundaries as the village center designation with only slightly different regulations such as changing the road setback from 50 feet to 25 feet from the center of the road and reducing the road frontage from 150 feet to 100 feet. Kurt Gamari said the board could also drop the minimum acreage building requirement from two acres to one acre. Deb Burchard said they could also change the maximum building coverage percentage. Jim Sullivan felt any of these changes would most likely be accepted by the state. A positive impact from these changes would be that it could make some of the non-conforming lots less non-conforming. The board discussed negative aspects. Lori Shepard noted that the town's land assessment schedule is based on two acres and changing a small portion of the town to one acre lots in the middle of a town-wide reappraisal may not be good. Kurt Gamari noted that the town allowed one acre lots until 2009. The board decided there was plenty of time to decide since the grant goes through 2023. Sheila Lawrence asked if the town does not make any changes to its By-laws and forfeits the \$1,000.00 if the Bennington County Regional Commission also forfeits their share of the money. Jim Sullivan said no, they signed a contract to assist nine towns over a two year span and they will keep their money regardless of what the town does.

#### SOUTHERN VERMONT ECONOMIC ZONE

Jim Sullivan was familiar with this designation. The Southern Vermont Economic Zone would encompass all of Bennington and Windham Counties. The significance is to have southern Vermont formally recognized as an economic zone to allow more funding opportunities to help businesses get started, help with broadband infrastructure, provide workforce/business training and support, and increase housing. He suspects there's not a lot of money available and doesn't know how it would be divided up. Pam Tworig said this could benefit Stamford indirectly by providing more jobs in Bennington or Wilmington. Dan Potvin felt supporting this new economic zone would be worthless unless the state completely revamps Act 250 which makes it nearly impossible to start a business in Vermont. Kurt Gamari feels like this could fund increased housing which may not be good for our town. Dave Saldo noted that if the golf course acreage was sold and developed, it could require a wastewater treatment system. Deb Burchard said she doesn't like to be pushed by the state to beg for our money back when it's our tax money they are using. Kurt Gamari had several concerns as to what we would be on the hook for if we joined. Carolyn Brooks saw this as an opportunity to help people in our area. Pam Tworig felt that it's hard to sign a letter of support for something you don't really know much about. Maura Hawkins felt the board should send it back to the Selectboard and ask them to get more information. Jim Sullivan said he expects several towns won't do anything and will not send in a letter of support.

#### DISCUSSION OF THE ZONING BY-LAWS

The Planning Commission reviewed the definitions. They would like to create better definitions for dwelling, dwelling unit, change of use, right-of-way, mobile home, tiny home, and seasonal, vacation structure or camp. Jim Sullivan will look at By-law definitions from other town By-laws for the next meeting.

Pam Tworig wanted to discuss the campground again. Dan Potvin felt if it's not prevented by our By-laws then he probably can do it. Pam Tworig asked if we as a town are ok with having a campground. She felt maybe no one cares if it's at the north end of town, but what if someone wanted to do it more in the center of town or East Road. The board agreed that since the property is zoned as residential, if the owner wants to have a campground, he needs a local permit for the business as well as any state permits that might be required.

MOTION by Deb Burchard to adjourn. SECONDED by Carolyn Brooks. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

The next Planning Commission meeting will be Monday, December 5, 2022 at 6 p.m.

Debra Burchard  
Planning Commission Chair

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