

TOWN OF STAMFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
March 13, 2023
(UNAPPROVED)

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

Visitors: Nancy Bushika, Victoria Jefferies, Debra Righi, James Righi, Pamela Tworig and Janet Hurley from the 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.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

Janet Hurley from the Bennington County Regional Commission spoke about the benefits of creating a Development Review Board. Our current Zoning Administrator only issues permits for things that can be administratively approved. Some building and land development requires site plan approval from the Planning Commission. Some development requires conditional use approval from the Zoning Board of Adjustment. This creates two different hearings before two different boards. Janet Hurley explained that if the Development Review Board was created, the Zoning Board of Adjustment would be dissolved. The Development Review Board would handle everything that used to come before the Zoning Board as well as the site plan review. The Planning Commission would not be part of the site plan review process. She said the positive side of creating a Development Review Board is that it streamlines the process; it is a more efficient structure. Dave Saldo asked about the drawbacks and Janet Hurley did not feel there were any. Since the By-laws were revised, there has not been any development in town that has required a site plan review. Dave Saldo felt our current process has worked well for the town and wasn't sure there was a real need to change it.

The creation of a Development Review Board would not replace the Zoning Administrator position. The Zoning Administrator would work in tandem with the Development Review Board. Permits wouldn't be denied, they would be referred by the Zoning Administrator. Janet Hurley said there was no conflict to have members of the Planning Commission serve on the Development Review Board. Aaron Malachuk foresees more future growth in Stamford and feels it would be good to move in this direction. The board discussed the Enhanced Energy Plan as well as the flood zone and river corridor. Aaron Malachuk asked if a wrongly issued permit sets a precedent for future development. Janet Hurley said no, it does not. Kurt Gamari asked Janet Hurley if his recent election to the Selectboard would create a conflict. She believes it makes him an ex-officio member of the Planning Commission and he can no longer vote on the Planning Commission. She said the Energy Coordinator is also an ex-officio, non-voting, member of the Planning Commission.

Nancy Bushika asked how the referral process would affect the permit fees. Our current structure requires payment of an additional appeal fee to the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Janet Hurley suggested having one fee for simple permits that the Zoning Administrator can approve and a second fee for any building or development that would need to be referred to a board for approval. Carolyn Brooks feels all the permit fees should be increased. The board also discussed paying the Zoning Administrator an hourly rate instead of through permit fees. The board would like the Zoning Administrator to attend meetings and provide permit updates. Janet Hurley noted that since the Zoning Administrator is appointed by the Selectboard, it is within their purview to create a reporting structure. The current Zoning Administrator's term is up this year and the Planning Commission felt they should not recommend that he be reappointed for another term. Anyone interested in serving as Zoning Administrator should submit a letter of interest to the town

office, Attention: Planning Commission, by March 31, 2023. Interviews will be conducted by the Planning Commission at their next meeting on Monday, April 3, 2023 and the board will prepare to make a recommendation to the Selectboard for its April 6, 2023 meeting.

BY-LAW MODERNIZATION GRANT PROCESS

Janet Hurly understands that the town does not want to make any density changes, but she feels there are changes that could be made that the state will accept so the town will not lose its \$1,000.00. She suggested increasing the accessory dwelling units, making customary home occupations easier, creating a zoning district that coincides with the village center designation and changing the minimum lot size within that new district, or reducing the road setback limit within that district. Kurt Gamari felt that most homes within the village center designation are non-compliant with the setbacks and this would help bring several homes into compliance. He also felt reducing the minimum acreage required within a new village center district would not affect too many properties. Nancy Bushika confirmed that only one change is required for state approval. Janet Hurley will come back with some suggestions at a future meeting.

MINUTES

1. MOTION by Aaron Malachuk to accept the regular meeting minutes of January 9, 2023 as written. SECONDED by Dave Saldo. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.
2. The board deferred accepting the minutes of February 6, 2023 until the next meeting since not everyone in attendance was at the last meeting.

REORGANIZATION OF PLANNING COMMISSION

MOTION by Sheila Lawrence to leave everything as is. Without a second, the motion failed.

MOTION by Kurt Gamari to nominate Aaron Malachuk as Chair. SECONDED by Carolyn Brooks. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

MOTION by Dave Saldo to nominate Sheila Lawrence as Vice Chair. SECONDED by Deb Burchard. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

MOTION by Dave Saldo to appoint Carolyn Brooks as Clerk. SECONDED by Aaron Malachuk. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

The next Planning Commission meeting will be Monday, April 3, 2023 at 6 p.m.

MOTION by Aaron Malachuk to adjourn. SECONDED by Dan Potvin. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Carolyn Brooks
Planning Commission Clerk

CB/las