

**TOWN OF STAMFORD**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**  
**August 7, 2023**  
**(UNAPPROVED)**

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

Maura Hawkins and Daniel Potvin were not present.

Visitors: Tammy Elias, Lisa Gramlin, Jedidiah Gramlin, Victoria Jefferies, Sheila Pecor, Debra Righi, James Righi, and Pamela Tworig.

Lori Shepard, Secretary.

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

**STAMFORD SIGN**

Sheila Pecor asked about the sign. Dave Saldo said that there are many violations with the sign. Kurt Gamari and Pam Tworig stated that the Selectboard is dealing with the matter. They have asked for the Zoning Board of Adjustment's opinion as to whether a permit is needed. Kurt Gamari said that if you read the town's By-laws literally it says that you have 14 days from the Zoning Administrator's action or decision. Aaron Malachuk ended discussion saying this matter is not under the purview of the Planning Commission.

**STAMFORD MAIN RENEWABLES WIND TURBINE PROJECT**

Jed Gramlin said when he includes the height of the proposed windmill, it will make the project over the 2,500 foot elevation restriction. The board thought 2500 feet is the land elevation from sea level. Kurt Gamari questioned whether the Town Plan sets guidelines that must be followed or just sets ideas that are preferred. The proposed site is outside of the preferred area and is within the one kilometer buffer called for in the Town Plan. Dave Saldo feels the state is trying to shove this down our throats. Pam Tworig is frustrated that the mailing was received late and the Selectboard's request for an extension has not been granted. She feels it is key to have all comments, questions and concerns sent in by the deadline so that the Public Utilities Commission is forced to address them. Jed Gramlin is concerned that if this one project is allowed, there will be more windmills in town. Pam Tworig asked the Commission to make sure if they schedule a public hearing with the Public Utilities Commission that the hearing is held in town. She said if the windmill location was in the right place, maybe no one would care and the town would get some tax money. Dave Saldo would like to get the Conservation Commission involved. He feels the board should remain neutral and look at both sides before forming an opinion. Jen Hughes felt the town worked extensively to create the Town Plan and if this project doesn't align with the Town Plan, maybe they shouldn't be neutral. Dave Saldo may have some contacts that could help. He feels there are already plenty of windmills in our area. Maura Hawkins submitted several questions that should be answered about the project. The board debated whether it was wise to voice their concerns or if that just gives the company time to prepare answers to justify the concerns. Residents may try to gather signatures in opposition of the project.

MOTION by Aaron Malachuk to invite Norwich Technologies and the Bennington County Regional Commission to a Planning Commission meeting to be held on Friday, August 18, 2023 at 3 p.m.

SECONDED by Carolyn Brooks. 6 in favor. 1 opposed (Sheila Lawrence). Motion APPROVED.

Sheila Lawrence felt the Planning Commission shouldn't accommodate them by holding the meeting at 3 p.m.

MOTION by Aaron Malachuk to hold a public hearing on Monday, August 21 2023 at 6 p.m.

SECONDED by Deb Burchard. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

#### MINUTES

MOTION by Carolyn Brooks to have the minutes revised to state that they were taken by Lori Shepard for approval by the Planning Commission. SECONDED by Deb Burchard. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

MOTION by Deb Burchard to accept the regular meeting minutes of May 8, 2023 as revised. SECONDED by Carolyn Brooks. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

#### COMMISSION MEMBERS/QUORUM

The Vermont League of Cities & Towns advised that the two ex-officio members (Kurt Gamari as Selectboard member and Jennifer Hughs as Energy Coordinator) are non-voting members and therefore, do not count toward the quorum. VLCT advised that the Selectboard could appoint the ex-officio members to actual commission seats and allow them to vote and count toward the quorum. Aaron Malachuk was inclined to accept that suggestion. Dave Saldo did not agree and Kurt Gamari stated that he was uncomfortable voting on both boards. Sheila Lawrence saw both sides. Deb Burchard understands the conflict with Kurt Gamari as Selectboard member but does not see the conflict with Jennifer Hughs as Energy Coordinator. The board debated whether to ask the Selectboard to drop their membership to a 7 member board or recognize it as a 9 member board with 2 vacancies. Jen Hughs considered resigning as Energy Coordinator so she could continue to actively serve on the Planning Commission. With the windmill project on the table, maybe now is not the time to resign. The state has discussed a law that would not allow the Zoning Administrator to be a voting member of the Planning Commission. The law has not passed but it may next year. Deb Burchard considered becoming a non-voting member since she is also the Zoning Administrator. Aaron Malachuk will look into whether the Selectboard could recognize the Zoning Administrator as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Planning Commission.

#### ZONING ADMINISTRATOR

Deb Burchard requested permission from the Planning Commission to go to the Selectboard with the following:

1. She would like to see a building permit fee where the fee increases with the size of the building. She would like to see a better online presence with forms that can be completed online. She would like to see penalty fees that are double the permit fee, or something similar in order to encourage people to file a permit.
2. Deb Burchard has researched the pay scale for other Zoning Administrators in the area. Most are paid either by salary or by the hour with a range of \$20.00-\$25.00/hour. An hourly rate encourages follow up and enforcement.
3. Deb Burchard would like to recommend the creation of a Development Review Board and would recommend that the members of the Zoning Board of Adjustment should be appointed to the Development Review Board.

The Planning Commission granted permission for the building permit fee scale and hourly rate changes but would like to discuss the Development Review Board further before approaching the Selectboard.

4. Deb Burchard asked the board to define the application process. She asked if applicants can navigate around the Zoning Administrator and go directly to the Zoning Board of Adjustment. She feels this is what happened when the Selectboard went directly to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for its opinion on the new sign. Pam Tworig explained that they did not mean to by-pass her, but the Selectboard wants its opinion on the 14 day appeal process. The board further discussed the sign, the question of municipalities needing to file permits and the violations. Kurt Gamari suggested a fresh start from here to do what is right going forward, otherwise the board could be opening a whole can of worms.

MOTION by Aaron Malachuk to adjourn. SECONDED by Carolyn Brooks. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

The next Planning Commission meeting will be Friday, August 18, 2023 at 3 p.m. The public hearing is scheduled for Monday, August 21, 2023 at 6 p.m.

These minutes were prepared by Lori Shepard on behalf of the Planning Commission for its review and approval.

Carolyn Brooks  
Planning Commission Clerk

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