

TOWN OF STAMFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
July 1, 2024
(UNAPPROVED)

Planning Commission: Daniel Potvin, Chair, Alden Finney, Peter Greenbush, Kurt Gamari, ex officio member, Lisa Gramlin, and Sheila Lawrence, and David Saldo.
Maura Hawkins was not present.

Visitors: Sally Bohl, Jedidiah Gramlin, Sheila Pecor, Debra Righi, James Righi, and Lori Shepard.

Daniel Potvin called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

HEARING OF VISITORS:

1. Lori Shepard presented the Board with a letter from the Select Board pertaining to the declassification of a portion of County Road from Class 4 to a legal trail.

2. As Treasurer, Lori Shepard requested approval for payment of a bill from BCRC for \$909.07. This is the Town's 10% match (which would have been waived) for a modernization grant that we failed to meet. Lori explained that we did not have all of the details at the time of signing. MOTION by Dan Potvin to not pay the bill. No SECOND. Motion FAILED. David pointed out that we utilize the BCRC for many things. It was discussed that had a chance to use this grant and didn't follow up so we should pay for it. MOTION by David Saldo to pay the bill. SECONDED by Peter Greenbush. 6 in favor. Motion APPROVED and payment of bill authorized by Peter.

MINUTES:

MOTION by Dan Potvin to accept the regular meeting minutes of June 3, 2024 as written. SECONDED by Alden Finney. Peter and David abstained as they were not present. Motion APPROVED.

DISCUSSION:

OPEN MEETING LAW:

The Planning Commission is considered a non-advisory board and must adhere to the following rules:

1. Meetings must be recorded digitally (audio or video) and made accessible to the public. The Town Clerk will most likely post this on the Town website along with the written minutes. This must be posted within 30 days of approval of the minutes and remain up for 30 days after the next meeting.
2. The Planning Commission must provide an in-person option for meetings.
3. The Planning Commission must provide a remote option for anyone who requests it. This can be as simple as speakerphone.
4. The Open Meeting Law explanation must be posted on the Town website along with instructions on how to submit a complaint for non-compliance of the law to the Secretary of State.

ACT 250 CHANGES:

Lisa Gramlin spoke with Janet Hurley of BCRC who agreed that Stamford would most likely not become a tier 1 town. Tier 1 is for more high-density development, which concentrates more on already developed areas that have municipal sewer and water. Stamford will most likely fall into the tier 2, which follows the old Act 250 rules, and tier 3, which puts in place protections for natural resources, categories. The Board discussed what tier 3 would mean for our town. Kurt Gamari pointed out that much of our town is already owned by National Forest. Dan Potvin voiced concerns about the state taking over ownership of our rivers and farmland. It will take a couple of years for the Land Use Maps to be drawn. The BCRC has until 12/31/26 to write their new Regional Plan. Additionally, there are new laws regarding flood disclosure. People selling in high-risk areas must disclose that information along with previous water damage or even the threat, such as being in the river corridor. There is also an increase in Second Home Tax rates, although unclear if this refers to transfer taxes or property taxes. Village designation expires July 2030 for Stamford and it should be considered whether or not to let it expire. Kurt pointed out that there are grants available because of this designation, especially for historic structures, and perhaps some grants the school could benefit from.

RENEWABLE ENERGY STANDARD:

There is a new standard for commercial electricity generators to generate 100% of electricity through renewable resources by 2035. Also, the goal of having renewable energy generated in Vermont has been moved from 10% to 20%. It was clarified that this standard applies to companies not individuals.

THE FLOOD SAFETY ACT:

River Corridor Maps will be drawn by 2026 with new protections. There will be State regulations on development to require building "out of harm's way" and leaving room for rivers to overflow. The State will be taking over wetlands, protecting the wetland we already have or increasing them. Dam safety changes will move responsibility for inspection away from municipalities to the State (Department of Environmental Conservation). Dan Potvin noted that there are no dams in Stamford. Emergency planning for floods will also shift to BCRC as opposed to local planning.

NEW BUSINESS:

David Saldo would like to see either the Select Board or Planning Commission help sponsor a program through either the State or Federal government to provide propane-fueled generators for every residence in town (approximately 340 homes) so that everyone could have one in the case of an emergency. Discussion was had on possible costs. David thinks the State would help finance about 80% of the cost while Dan disagreed. While David's idea was initiated by Dan's efforts to create resiliency for townspeople, Dan stated that his focus is on having people help themselves. Lisa Gramlin suggested that these are two different situations. The Board will look further into both. Dan has eight speakers lined up to present for his resiliency conference which will be held in the school's gymnasium. The date and time are still TBD. Kurt Gamari thought that this is an idea that could be expanded upon each year. Sheila Lawrence informed the Board

that she has an Emergency Management meeting on 8/13 and would be bringing up concerns about what can be done when the power goes out and what the State can do to help regarding getting generators.

LOT DIVISION:

Lisa Gramlin asked why the Planning Commission needs to be involved in subdivisions of more than two lots when they just follow the same bylaws as the AO Debra Burchard. Lori Shepard clarified that a former Board member thought that more than two lots in a division required, "more heads" to consider roads, emergencies, etc. The bylaws say it is an allowable action so we must allow it. Some members wondered if it still required a site plan review, stating that subdividing subdivisions have rules to follow. Lesure Road, for example, is ripe for heavy development. Kurt Gamari stated that while it's great that we want to expand we're a town with limited resources. We've got to consider roads, staffing, etc. The new Act 250 notes the private road situation, limiting them to 800ft (without an Act 250 permit). The question arose regarding the maintenance of private roads. Lori Shepard noted that the State recently passed a law that houses on private roads should have a road maintenance agreement.

OVERSHADOWING:

The Board revisited the issue of septic overshadowing. While it was noted that the State has jurisdiction over septic systems, some Board members believe that, while people generally have the right to do what they want on their own land, it becomes a problem when it interferes with the rights of other land owners. Kurt Gamari stated that overshadowing becomes a town problem because there is not enough acreage between properties and that the change in the 2009 bylaws to require 2 acres to build was partially meant to address this. Peter Greenbush suggested that this could begin to be remedied moving forward by defining "overshadowing" in the bylaws and restricting such infringement in further development. It was noted that this is not applicable to Alpenwald Village. The Board agreed to research more and revisit the topic.

MOTION by Peter Greenbush to adjourn. SECONDED by Daniel Potvin. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Lisa Gramlin
Planning Commission Clerk