

TOWN OF STAMFORD, VERMONT
PLANNING COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes — July 27, 2026

DRAFT — PENDING APPROVAL

Members Present: Lisa Gramlin (Chair), Pam Tworig, Marta Miller, Debra Burchard, Jim Stimpson

Members Absent: Natalie O'Neil, Alden Finney

Others Present: Debra Righi, James Righi

1. Call to Order and Hearing of Visitors

The meeting was called to order by Lisa Gramlin at 6:01 p.m. and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Reading and Approval of Minutes

MOTION by Jim Stimpson to accept the minutes as written. SECONDED by Lisa Gramlin. All in favor. MOTION passes.

3. Wind Energy and Infrastructure Policy

- Lisa reported that BCRC has agreed to stay with the 1 km residential buffer zone for wind turbines instead of implementing a new .5 km buffer zone in their Regional Plan.
- The Planning Commission expressed opposition to buffer zone reduction from 1 km to 0.5 km.
- Searsburg is planning to reduce the number of wind turbines, but the new turbines will be much taller.
- Economic feasibility arguments from corporations and the desire for clean energy are prioritized over citizen impacts including reduced property values.
- Discussion ensued about whether Stamford could impose a more robust buffer in our Town Plan.
- The Planning Commission expressed not being anti-renewable energy but rather having concern over siting decisions.
- The potential for renewable energy pressure to increase in the future was acknowledged, requiring proactive policy measures.

4. Concerns Re: Transparency and Fairness in Regional Planning and Corporate Influence

- The Commission emphasized the importance of robust community input and concerns about regional plans becoming regulatory without adequate public engagement.

5. Data Centers and Energy Infrastructure

- While there is no immediate threat of data centers in Stamford, vigilance is necessary given national developments.
- The Commission agreed to explore adding language in the Town Plan to address data center siting and impacts.
- The importance of modernizing the Town Plan to reflect current technology and energy realities was recognized.

- The Commission plans to consult Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) for legal advice on what language can be included in bylaws to deter unwanted developments like data centers.
- VLCT specialists can also provide targeted legal guidance on septic overshadowing, septic setbacks, and other regulatory questions.

6. Zoning Districts and Land Use

- The Commission agreed to prioritize reviewing and potentially redefining zoning districts to better reflect the town's geography, usage, and community values.
- Current zoning districts (residential, rural, forest) are largely undifferentiated in regulations.
- The legal and practical distinctions between camps, vacation homes, and residences require clarification as current definitions and tax implications are unclear or overlapping. The Commission recognizes the need to update definitions to align with state law and local usage impacting zoning and tax policy.

7. Community Growth and Housing

- Survey results show strong community preference to maintain Stamford's current character with minimal new development.
- The commission acknowledged community sentiment favoring minimal new development and expressed skepticism about growth-driven tax revenue models.
- Attempts by the state to increase housing face challenges including infrastructure costs and community resistance.
- The commission recognized that more houses mean increased expenses such as schools, roads, sewer, and water services, which likely negate tax revenue gains.
- There is a longstanding tension between development pressures and community desires for preservation. Some Regional Plans have pushed for smaller lot sizes to increase housing numbers, conflicting with local values. The Commission emphasized its role in upholding community will through the Town Plan and Bylaws.

8. Water Quality and Environmental Protection

- Protecting water resources and addressing septic system impacts emerged as critical themes for future zoning and planning.
- Challenges include enforcement as septic permits are handled by the state directly, bypassing local oversight.
- Protecting natural resources aligns with residents' desires and long-term town sustainability.
- The need to incorporate water protection priorities into the updated Town Plan was emphasized.

9. Town Plan Content and Layout

- A reorganization of the Town Plan's table of contents was completed to group related topics like land, water, and agriculture for better flow.
- The revised order aims to create a narrative that is easier to read and logically structured.
- Photographs and maps remain valued for illustrating local features and adding visual interest.

10. Upcoming Engagement and Coordination

- The Commission is preparing for upcoming discussions with state and regional experts to guide water protection and planning priorities.
- **August 27th** meeting: Laura Ranker from Vermont's Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division will address groundwater protection priorities.

11. Next Meeting and Adjournment

MOTION to adjourn by Lisa Gramlin. SECONDED by Marta Miller. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. Meeting adjourned at 7:55p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for **August 10th 2026** at 6pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Tworig, Clerk
Stamford Planning Commission

Minutes approved on: _____