

TOWN OF STAMFORD, VERMONT

PLANNING COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes — August 24, 2026

DRAFT — PENDING APPROVAL

Members Present: Lisa Gramlin (Chair), Pam Tworig, Marta Miller, Debra Burchard, Alden Finney

Members Absent: Jim Stimpson, Natalie O'Neil

Visitors: Laura Ranker (State of Vermont Source Water Specialist), Callie Fishburn & Samantha Page (Bennington County Regional Commission), Sille Larson (State of Vermont Engineering and Water Resources Program Manager) via zoom, Jim Righi, Deb Righi, Kurt Gamari, Irene Bergman, Dave Saldo, Diane Saldo, Shiela Lawrance

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Lisa Gramlin at 6:00 p.m. and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Reading and Approval of Records

- Motion to accept minutes of 8/10/26 by Marta Miller, 2nd by Pam Tworig. All in Favor. Motion PASSES.

Hearing of Visitors

- No Visitor Comments

Water Protection Specialist Laura Ranker Presentation

Ms. Ranker went through a very informative slide presentation explaining Vermont's surface and groundwater system, how the town might protect our water resources, and what a public water supply might look like if it became necessary.

Some important takeaways from her presentation:

- There is a critical interconnection of groundwater and surface water as a unified system vital for public health and planning.
- Groundwater recharges surface water and vice versa, requiring planning to treat both as one system.
- Groundwater is Vermont's main drinking water source and dominates with higher quality but quantity & well yield concerns are exacerbated by droughts.
- Surface activities like landfills, commercial use, and septic fields near water sources increase contamination risks.
- Stamford currently has two public water systems: Stamford Elementary School and the Stamford Valley Golf Course.

- “Source Protection Area” definitions and notifications describe the 200-foot minimum isolation zone and broader 500-foot protection radius for Stamford’s school water system. Water systems like the school are responsible for testing and maintaining their water quality and notifying new landowners within the protection zone.
- Decision factors for town-operated public water systems include: population served, operator expertise, and financial readiness. Administrative load includes monthly sampling, paperwork, and operator certification aligned to water system class.
- Community systems allow higher density development by isolating water sources from septic systems.
- Some towns consider community wastewater treatment systems as alternatives or complements to water systems for managing separation from septic fields.
- Cost responsibility and user billing for community water systems depend on the system’s structure and customers served.
- Public water systems require detailed source protection plans addressing risks, management strategies, and emergency contingencies.
- Stamford currently lacks detailed aquifer potential maps but state geologist Ben DeLong is willing to assist with preliminary data gathering on request.
- More in-depth mapping requires hiring hydrogeologists funded by planning grants through the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.
- Online Mapping Tools and the ANR Atlas provide layered information on public water systems, private wells, hazardous waste sites, and wetlands. Map layers include protected lands, bedrock, watersheds, and wetlands with classifications influencing regulatory protection.
- The importance of integrating groundwater protection into land use planning through zoning and overlay districts was stressed. Zoning Overlay Districts provide additional regulatory layers to restrict or manage land uses within sensitive water protection areas. The overlay districts allow conditional or prohibited uses tailored to protect water resources without overly restricting development.
- It was recommended that non-binding, exploratory language be used in land use planning and future commitments in town plans to keep options open for future water system or protection initiatives.
- It is advised that the updated Town Plan should include public water system recognition and resource maps such as source protection areas. Language can be put in the Town plan to acknowledge potential water needs without committing prematurely. The Planning Commission will coordinate with regional GIS expert Samantha Page for assistance in creating water resource maps as part of the Town Plan update.
- The town’s significant Green Mountain National Forest holdings contribute natural protection of our water resources but require vigilance against improper logging impacts. Vermont has “acceptable logging practices” enforced by the Forest Parks and Recreation Agency, with oversight by the county forester. The town should review the Forest Management Plan and provide input during renewals in order to protect water resources.

- Incentive programs for landowners promote sustainable forest management and conservation. Current use programs provide tax benefits for landowners with a minimum of 25 acres enrolled in stewardship plans. Smaller parcels with valuable wetlands may rely on partnerships with land trusts to achieve conservation goals.
- Overshadowing legislation and isolation distance studies are ongoing with reports expected by January 15, 2027, which may influence future zoning and protection standards.
- The town's health officer should ensure monitoring and enforcement protocols are in place for failing septic systems, including cooperation with state regulatory bodies.

Motion to Adjourn by Lisa Gramlin, 2nd by Marta Miller. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Next Meeting: September 14, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pam Tworig

Clerk