

**TOWN OF STAMFORD**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**  
**October 21, 2019**  
**(UNAPPROVED)**

Present: Planning Commission: Aaron Malachuk, Chair, Kurt Gamari, Helen Fields, Daniel J. Potvin, Sheila Lawrence and Jenifer Hughs.

Stephen Bechtel, Steve Denault and David Saldo were not present.

Visitors: James Sullivan, Bennington County Regional Commission.

David R. Tatro, Road Commissioner

Lori Shepard, Secretary.

Aaron Malachuk called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. and opened with the pledge of allegiance.

Aaron Malachuk stated that David Saldo told him to contact him prior to meetings and that he would participate by phone if a quorum was needed. Sheila Lawrence advised that Dave Saldo would be unavailable until the first of the year.

#### MINUTES

MOTION by Helen Fields to accept the regular meeting minutes of September 23, 2019 as written.

SECONDED by Dan Potvin. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

#### BENNINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL COMMISSION GRANT

The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) applied for grant funding for the regional housing by-laws study. Helen Fields suggested the Planning Commission should begin strategic planning for the future of the town. That way, we would have a direction in mind when the study is complete. Dan Potvin felt the board should wait for the results of the study to initiate discussion. Aaron Malachuk would like to complete the Zoning By-laws project.

Jim Sullivan said there is a push on the state level for towns that want to develop public water and wastewater systems in their town centers. If you have municipal water and sewer, you no longer have to rely on good soil conditions to build. Jim Sullivan said he could get the graphics of what the town could look like with 2 or 3 or 4 times as many houses and would the townspeople want to see that happen. Jim Sullivan said the two reasons towns implement public water and wastewater systems are concerns about water quality and to support development. Jim Sullivan said a public water and wastewater system could cost \$3.8 million to install and \$500,000 to maintain each year. Stamford does not have the size or number of users to support something like that. We could do several small package treatment plans with surface application for around \$400,000 that could handle a 1/2 mile of homes. The state offers funds to pay for a feasibility study. When the town gets the loan to install the system, the cost of the study would have to be paid back to the state. Jenifer Hughs felt having the feasibility study done could put us at the front of the line if other grant funds become available for installation.

#### HIGH SPEED INTERNET

The Selectboard has requested a detailed cost estimate for high speed internet from Chris Lynch at the Matrix Design Group itemizing funding opportunities and what the town would be responsible for.

## DISCUSSION OF ZONING BY-LAWS

Dan Potvin opened the discussion about allowing multiple dwelling units on one property without subdividing. Jim Sullivan said section 7.9 of our By-laws already provides for this as long as you meet the overall density, setbacks and water and sewer regulations. Kurt Gamari felt at some point this would create trouble for the town when one of the family members wants to sell their house. Dan Potvin said he would have something in writing that the house would go back to him. If you have to pre-plan development to meet potential Act 250 subdivision laws if the dwellings are later subdivided and sold, it defeats clustering houses for the purpose of preserving farmland or open space. Jim Sullivan said Planned Unit Development is the theory that would allow towns to vary the amount of acreage needed for lot size if you balance the development with preserved open space or farmland. Helen Fields would like to see Stamford become self-sustaining and would support the preservation of farmland in town. Dan Potvin felt that sharing one septic and water system between clustered systems would leave a better carbon footprint than having five separate wells and five separate septic systems. Jim Sullivan offered to put together some Planned Unit Development wording to replace section 7.9 of our By-Laws. Helen Fields felt there is a positive social aspect to cluster housing. The Planning Commission could allow Planned Unit Development only in sections or everywhere. Dan Potvin felt it should be allowed everywhere in town; that it wasn't right to restrict some people's rights to their property and not others.

Kurt Gamari felt our residential zone runs the full length of town and the board should consider a real residential area. Helen Fields asked if more housing raises taxes. Jim Sullivan said in the short term, more housing increases your tax base and should lower taxes. But studies have shown in Vermont that over time, increased development equals higher property taxes. Dave Tatro felt increasing homes would increase taxes, especially if they have children in school. Helen Fields said we are a suburb of North Adams which is booming right now and it's important to create a stronger sense of community. Increasing population diversity could also increase businesses in town. The board discussed creating a business district at the town center that would not discourage home business outside of the district.

Jenifer Hughs suggested beginning the By-laws with a summary of what the board envisions for the town and what it would like to encourage. Jim Sullivan suggested creating a village district that would allow a higher density population with mixed use development and the promotion of business at the town's center. Aaron Malachuk suggested the village district should run from the MA state line to the Main Road bridge between Mill Road and Nichols Road. Jenifer Hughs recalled that a designated village district might open up grant resources for the Building Community Group. Aaron Malachuk asked if there was a downside to creating a village district. Jim Sullivan said there could be potential conflict along the boundaries of the district. Jim Sullivan will prepare a draft map of the village district boundaries and will draft an outline of what might be allowed in each district.

Helen Fields asked if the BCRC works for the state, the county or the towns. Jim Sullivan responded that he works for the member towns, although it is sometimes tricky because they have state contracts. Aaron Malachuk said it is important that they plan what direction the town is moving in. When making the By-laws less restrictive, they also need to make sure the changes make sense for the town.

Readsboro is talking about getting out of their Act 46 merger and shutting down their school. This could provide increased students and revenue for Stamford School if Readsboro tuitions their children to Stamford.

Jim Sullivan suggested that the Planning Commission complete the By-laws soon and the village district and infrastructure can become Part B. He commended the board for being progressive and liberal in

their discussion and vision for the town. Dan Potvin asked if Jim Sullivan could work on the Zoning By-laws and come back with a draft for their review. He will try to have it completed by December.

Dave Tatro asked if Jim Sullivan was aware of any grants to upgrade a Class 4 road to a Class 3. Creating room for the town to grow outward could impact our roads. Jim Sullivan recommended talking to Jim Henderson at the BCRC.

MOTION by Aaron Malachuk to adjourn. SECONDED by Dan Potvin. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

The next meeting was scheduled for Monday, November 18, 2019 at 7 p.m.

Aaron Malachuk  
Planning Commission Chair

AM/las