

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**Minutes of September 7, 2022**

The meeting was held at the Community Room of the Brown Public Library, and was also streamed via the Town GoToMeeting account for the benefit of those unable to attend in person.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Chair Laura Hill-Eubanks.

**Roll Call:** Present for the meeting were Commissioners Laura Hill-Eubanks, Nancy Peck, Ruth Ruttenberg, and Aaron Rhodes. Chandra Blackmer was absent. Clerk Mitch Osiecki hosted the meeting from the Community Room. Also attending remotely were JuliBeth Hinds of Birchline Planning, Economic Development Director Tom Davis and Select Board member Lydia Petty, all in attendance remotely.

**Set/Adjust Agenda:** There were no adjustments to the agenda.

**Public Participation:** Laura welcomed guests and made introductions.

**Zoning Regulation Updates:**

JuliBeth made a presentation discussing the status of zoning regulation revisions. We now have a verbatim copy of the existing regulations, but reorganized in the more readable format JuliBeth has previously shared with the Planning Commission.

The current text of the document includes two types of highlights:

Yellow – text not included in the original document;

Blue – areas of potentially legal or statutory inconsistency (will require discussion).

JuliBeth proposed quickly reviewing the document in its current form and looking at the areas yellow and blue highlights.

**1.0 Authority & Purpose**

1.1 We will use the phrase Northfield Zoning Regulations (rather than “land use” & “bylaws”).

1.2 Purpose – increase ability to enforce regulations, protect public health and safety.

1.3 May not be useful.

1.4.2 In-progress projects may be completed within one year of the effective date of the new regulations and may conform to previous regulations (“grandfathering”).

1.4.3 The DRB will have the authority to determine if a proposed use is allowed under regulations. The DRB can base their determination on whether a proposed use is sufficiently similar to an allowed use. Regulation can allow one of three options: Zoning Administrator, Development Review Board, or Planning Commission makes the determination.

1.5 Effective Date

1.6 & 1.7 These sections are lengthy. We could replace this text with references to sections 4444 & 4445 of State Statute.

1.8 Should retain the reference stating that provisions of this regulations are the minimum requirements. Also, where conflict arises, the more stringent or restrictive regulation shall apply.

1.9 Severability – important clause. Widely used.

2.1 Applicability of Vermont Planning & Zoning Act is missing. Should be included.

Planning Commission and Development Review Board Procedures – these can be adopted by reference to 24 V.S.A. §4461.

2.3.4 Authority to require a performance bond. Should move this to subdivision regulations.

2.3.5 & 2.3.6 Can require street or other public improvements (e.g., landscaping). This can be used to ensure the timely completion of a development project. A performance bond can be required as a condition of permit approval.

2.4 Hearing & Public Notice Requirements

2.5 Issuance of zoning permits. (8) is redundant – remove.

Certificates of Occupancy – Northfield does not currently issue these, but there are reasons to do so.

Administrative Review – Can be a good tool; should think about how to implement this.

Site Plan Review – (3) no standards are listed; should add them.

Minor Alterations to a conditional use – does not make sense as written. Will have to revise.

Subdivisions and PUD. These are well-defined by law Should think about which districts should require more intensive review.

Pre-application conference. Should revisit and discuss. Can be an effective tool to streamline application process. Currently available only for PUD. Should be available as a tool for site plan review as well.

Waivers – Waivers and variances are two very different things. Should not be used interchangeably.

Pre-existing small lots should be allowed to be developed – waivers can allow this.

Variances should be used/allowed only in rare situations.

Waivers - -apply to setbacks and height restrictions.

PUD is a review process, not a type of use.

JuliBeth would like to schedule a public workshop to educate interested persons about proposed changes, but we are not ready to undertake that step just yet.

**Approval of Minutes:** Ruth moved to approve minutes of August 3; Aaron seconded.  
**Motion passed, 3-0-1 (Nancy Peck abstained).**

**Next Regular Meeting:** October 5, 2022 at 7:00 pm.

**Adjournment:** Nancy moved to adjourn; Aaron seconded. **Motion passed, 4-0.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:47 pm.