

PLANNING COMMISSION
Organizational Meeting
Minutes
Wednesday, March 5, 2025, at 6:00 PM
Town of Fairlee Town Hall
Grange Room
75 Town Common Road
Fairlee, VT 05045

Wednesday, March 5, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: ZA Brimmer called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM.

PRESENT

Commission Members: Lynne Fitzhugh (Present); Susanne Pacilio (Present); Miranda Clemson (Present); Doug Tift (Present); Lisa Avery (Present); and Moriah Ludwig (Present, online); Tim Danen, Chair (Present); and Smith Reed (Absent). A quorum was met.

Zoning Administrator: Chris Brimmer (Present)

Minutes Clerk: Joanna Bligh (Present)

Visitors:

In Person: None.

Online: Diane Church, Deecie Denison

SELECTION OF OFFICERS

Nomination for Chair

- ZA Brimmer asked for nominations for chair of the Planning Commission.
- Pacilio nominated Danen as chair, Tift seconded the nomination.
- ZA Brimmer asked for any other nominations for chair, and there were none.

Vote: All approved, none opposed, and none abstained. The nomination passed unanimously.

Nomination for Vice Chair

- Chair Danen asked for nominations for vice chair of the Planning Commission.
- Fitzhugh nominated Clemson as vice chair, and Clemson declined.
- Chair Danen nominated Tift as vice chair of the Planning Commission.
- Chair Danen asked for any other nominations, and there were none.

Vote: All approved, none opposed, and none abstained. The nomination passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Pacilio made the motion, and Clemson seconded the motion, to approve the minutes from February 5, 2025, as amended.

- Page 1, under ZA Report, bullet 1, add “and 20 additional residents on Zoom.”

Vote: All approved, none opposed, and none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

Fairlee Inn

ZA Brimmer discussed the Fairlee Inn, which is operating without a permit from the VT Department of Health, Food and Lodging Program. The notice of violation was sent February 28, 2025, and he is waiting for the certified mail receipt, which once received becomes the enforcement date. Pacilio asked about the timeframe, and ZA Brimmer replied 17 to 21 days.

ZA Brimmer noted that the next steps include the Select Board assigning a counsel and the FPD copied on all correspondences. If not resolved, the violation goes to the Environmental Commission.

Short-Term Rentals

The Commissioners began a discussion of short-term rentals (STR).

- Tiftt noted that the manager of the properties has to be nearby.
- ZA Brimmer confirmed the manager must be no more than 30 minutes away, and there is parking, occupation limits, and compliance with all state regulations (<https://tax.vermont.gov/business/industry/short-term-rentals>).
- Tiftt noted that having STR in a limited housing market minimizes long-term family housing.
- Clemson estimated that 13 rentals have been lost to STRs in Fairlee, and there is no limit on the number of properties one individual can buy and list as STRs.
- ZA Brimmer noted that because Vermont does not have home rule, the Town has regulatory authority coming from the state.

NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT AREAS

Sample Language for NDA Bylaw Provisions

ZA Brimmer provided the Commissioners with a revised proposed new language for the Bylaw under sections 2.3, 2.4, 3.1.1, and 5.6.7. ZA Brimmer briefly highlighted the Bylaw revisions and other the Commissioners discussed as follows:

NDA Discussion:

- ZA Brimmer reiterated the difference between an apartment building (four or more units) and an apartment house (fewer than four units).
- Pacilio noted that to qualify for a HUD or VA loan, the building can have no more than four units.
- Avery asked about the funding for the Richard project, and ZA Brimmer replied that the letter provided to the members for review address the pass-through grant applied for by Richard.
- ZA Brimmer discussed the Village Center designation that could be extended south to access redevelopment opportunities, but the NDA qualifies for grants, underground power, and sidewalks. ZA Brimmer noted that the letter is addressed to the VTAOT and VT Agency of Community Development.
- Avery asked if TIF funding (Tax Increment Funding; <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/tif>) was ever considered. ZA Brimmer responded that TIF is a possibility, but the Town does not have the administrative capacity. An alternative would be to use option taxes, such as on cannabis sales.

- Pacilio asked about Bridge+Main project, and ZA Brimmer replied that the Town has received the first tranche of the grant.
- ZA Brimmer discussed the legislative spending bills and the funding request from the Town to have an accessory well at \$550,000 with a 75% match.
- Discussion continued on the area of Town north of the Palisades, which is agricultural land and has a large inaccessible acreage, except for agricultural equipment, across the VT Rail tracks.
- Tifft noted that west of Route 5 north of Town is an agricultural field with standing water and poor drainage.
- Fitzhugh asked if federal money was on hold, and ZA Brimmer noted that the studies have been done and the stormwater issue on Main St. is getting done because VTRANS is planning to pave Rt. 5.

Roundtable Discussion of 2025 Goals and Priorities

- Pacilio asked what the Planning Board top priorities are, and ZA Brimmer replied to quality for the NDA designation.
- Tifft asked about community septic as a priority, and ZA Brimmer responded that community septic is about 4 or 5 years away from breaking ground.
- ZA Brimmer suggested holding educational and informational events.
- Avery noted that community canvassing is a great resource to “meet where they are at” (<https://rippel.org/>) and includes a “Vital Conditions Framework.”
- Avery asked to contact the Town Administrator to ask about the status of grant funding in Fairlee.
- Pacilio summarized the Planning Commission priorities for 2025 – the NDA, public forums, business outreach, and TIF information.

NEXT MEETING:

- Regular Planning Commission meeting on **April 2, 2025**.

ADJOURN

Chair Danen asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

ADJOURN

MOTION: Fitzhugh made the motion, and Clemson seconded the motion, to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 PM.

Vote: All approved, none opposed, and none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

Transcribed by Joanna Bligh, Minutes Clerk