

MEETING MINUTES
MUNICIPALITY OF WOODSTOCK, VERMONT
WOODSTOCK PLANNING COMMISSION
31 The Green
Woodstock, VT 05091

The Woodstock Planning Commission held a public meeting on Wednesday, December 6, 2023 to discuss the following:

Members present: Laura Powell, Nicole Green, Ben Pauly, Mary Margaret Sloan, Brad Lawrence

Public present: Bill McDonald, Jason Delp, Derek Demas, Mike Green

Staff present: Steven Bauer

Administrative Tasks

1. Call to Order – Laura Powell called meeting to order at 7:00pm.
2. Adjustments to Agenda – Laura Powell removed Frank Horneck's presentation at end of agenda as he was not in attendance and public comments were added after approval of minutes.
3. Approve Minutes – 11/1/2023

Ben Pauly motioned to approve the minutes as printed.

Nicole Green seconded the motion.

Vote 5-0. Approved.

Public Hearing

Public Comments

Bill McDonald lives at 18 Linden Hill and asked the Commission to be exempt from a zoning permit to fill in a pool and requested a refund for the \$440 permit fee. Bill McDonald asked to review the excavation permit process and the Planning Commission indicated they would take it under advisement.

New Business

Proposed Bike Lane Study

Mike Green explained the vision for bike lane would benefit the town in multiple ways such as allow Woodstock students to ride bikes to High School and Middle school, quality of life increased, less traffic congestion, limited parking concerns, small business benefits, and tourism from cyclists.

Mike Green suggested the Planning Commission consider any current zoning regulations that restrict bike parking and infrastructure. He suggested completing a VTrans scoping study and gaining support from community and technical groups. The VT Trans scoping study grant is due in April 2024 and Mike asked that the Town be involved in the process.

On Going Business

Short-term rental presentation

Update the B&B Definition (owner occupied with 3 to 9 rooms) – B&B definition should be different than hotel and short-term rental. STR Definition – add that unit can only be rented by one party at a time to differentiate between B&B.

Permit Caps - Currently no caps. It is estimated there are roughly 125 STRs in Woodstock. Mary Margaret Sloan does not think owner-occupied rentals should be capped but non-owner-occupied units should be capped. Some towns set caps as a % of total parcels in the town, normally around 5% to 9%. Have 2100 habitable units in town and village combined which would be roughly 105 STRs based on 5%. Laura Powell and Ben Pauly replied that both non-owner occupied, and owner occupied STR should have caps. Mary Margaret Sloan explained her research showed non-owner occupied STRs have an impact on the LTR unit availability. Laura Powell explained the breakdown in Woodstock is roughly 70% STR are non-owner occupied and 25% are owner occupied, and 5% are unaccounted for. The Committee agreed to a cap of 65 for non-owner occupied and 40 cap for owner occupied, except Mary Margaret which felt owner occupied should have a higher cap.

Cap by parcel - Laura suggested one permit per parcel, which is the current regulation. Brad Lawrence and Ben Pauly agree. Mary Margaret Sloan asked if town and village should be considered separately.

Cap by person/entity – Should there be a cap on how many permits one person/entity can be granted? Nicole Green asked if someone who currently owns multiple STRs would be grandfathered in? Jason Delp explained an ownership entity can be created for each property and may not solve the problem. Steven Bauer suggested possibly limiting the registered agent rather than entity.

Fees - Should there be a per bedroom fee and a separate fee for owner-occupied vs. non-owner occupied? Laura Powell suggests an annual fee of \$2000 per non-owner occupied STR plus \$500 per bedroom fee and \$1000 per owner occupied STR plus same \$500 per bedroom fee. Mary Margaret Sloan indicated those fees are too high as it currently is \$1000 one-time fee. Brad Lawrence and Ben Pauly agree with Laura Powell that the proposed annual fee is reasonable. Nicole Green is worried higher fee may cause people to be non-compliant.

Fines and Enforcement – Laura Powell suggested the software needs a channel for complaints. Currently, the fine is up to \$200 per day for violation. VLCT suggested the fines could be enforced by the Judicial Bureau, same as parking tickets. Steven will draft language around fines and enforcement.

Grandfathering/non-conforming use – Owner's must be able to prove compliance as of 2/11/2020 to be grandfathered. Derek Demas mentioned people doing STRs before 2/20 will come forward to prove they were grandfathered in and guesses it applies to roughly 20-30 people. Steven Bauer wants to make sure the cap includes the grandfathered properties and Brad Lawrence asked to show how many units are grandfathered before setting the cap.

Occupancy Limit – Currently limit is 2 occupants per bedroom, with 6 person max. Laura Powell suggested 2 occupants per bedroom + 2 additional guests. The commission agreed. Noise and traffic and fire safety will be regulated separately.

Ben Pauly mentioned STR approval should be an administrative permit rather than conditional use but perhaps can still notify abutters. Steven Bauer suggested posting the list of all approved STR permits in the Standard annually. Mary Margaret Sloan requested conditional use approval for non-owner occupied STRs but the remaining Commission members prefer administrative review for both types.

Public Comment – Derek Demas mentioned the STR tracking software will cost \$28k. He asked if someone has an existing permit if they can continue to operate and will not need to go through the new process and Steven Bauer confirmed, yes that is correct.

Identify Action Items

Steven Bauer will draft the proposed STR regulation changes.

Other Business –

Laura Powell will be resigning from the Planning Commission after current meeting. Steven Bauer will advertise the vacant position which would start in February through 2026.

Adjournment

Ben Pauly motioned to adjourn the meeting.
Brad Lawrence seconded the motion.

Vote 4-0. Approved.

Meeting adjourned 9:49pm