

Planning Commission Thetford Rules of Procedure

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The Planning Commission (Commission) is required by law to conduct its meetings following the Vermont Open Meeting Law. 1 V.S.A. §§ 310-314. Meeting of the Commission must be always open to the public, except as provided in 1 V.S.A. § 313.

APPLICATION. This policy setting forth rules of procedure and intention shall apply to the Commission. These rules shall apply to all regular, special, and emergency meetings of the body.

PLANNING COMMISSION STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Keeping the best interests of the community as a whole in mind, **act as an advisory group to both the town and the selectboard on issues and policies related to planning, land use regulation, and community development.** This includes preparing and amending the Town Plan, Zoning Bylaws, and Subdivision Regulations, and undertaking studies and making recommendations on matters of land use.

ORGANIZATION

1. The Commission shall annually elect a chair and a vice-chair.
2. The chair or other presiding member shall facilitate its proceedings by applying these rules and making determinations about all questions of order or procedure each meeting.
3. A majority of the members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum. If a quorum of the members is not present at a meeting, no meeting shall take place.

24 V.S.A. Section 4322 automatically makes a selectboard member in a rural town an ex officio (non-voting) planning commission member by virtue of their office. Select Board members may participate in Commission work but may not vote unless appointed to the Commission as a voting member.

4. No single member shall have authority to represent or act on behalf of the Commission unless, by majority vote, the Commission has delegated such authority for a specific matter at a duly noticed meeting and such delegation is recorded in the meeting minutes.
5. Motions made by members of the Commission do not require a second. The chair or other presiding member may make motions and may vote on all questions before the Commission.
6. The Commission will aim for consensus (near unanimity) when making decisions. When a decision must be taken, a motion will only pass if it receives the votes of at least a simple majority of the attending members.
7. Any member of the Commission may request a roll call vote. Pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 312(a)(2), when one or more members attend a meeting electronically, a roll call vote is required for votes that are not unanimous.
8. A recording clerk shall be appointed to maintain minutes of all Commission meetings.
 - A. The clerk shall provide minutes for review by the Commission within 5 days of a given meeting.
 - B. Minutes will be made public on the town website.
 - C. Minutes may be reviewed, modified, and approved as per Vermont statute.
9. The Commission and the Select Board have agreed to the following process to appoint new members:

- A. The candidate will submit a letter to the Commission Chair.
 - B. The Chair will present the letter to the Commission and the candidate will interview with the Commission.
 - C. The Commission will make a recommendation to the Select Board.
10. New members shall be given, before their first official meeting as a member, information relevant to their work with the Commission including:
- A. Town Plan
 - B. Zoning By-laws
 - C. Subdivision Regulations
 - D. Flood Hazard Areas
 - E. Town Committee Handbook
 - F. Office of the Secretary of State's Memo, *The Players: A review of the roles and responsibilities of local officials with respect to land use regulation in our municipalities* or current update to same
 - G. Orientation to archived resources
 - H. Orientation to current work
 - I. Planning Commission's Rules of Procedure, which they must sign, to demonstrate their agreement to following the RoP

AGENDAS

1. Each regular and special meeting of the Commission shall have an agenda, with time allowed for each item of business to be considered by the Commission. The last part of each meeting shall be devoted to developing an agenda for the next/upcoming meeting. Those who wish to have items added to the meeting agenda later shall contact the chair to request inclusion on the agenda. The Chair shall determine the final content of the agenda.
2. The Chair shall distribute a draft agenda for the Commission to review 24 hours prior to posting publicly.
3. At least 48 hours prior to a regular meeting, and at least 24 hours prior to a special meeting, a meeting agenda shall be posted in or near the municipal office, on the Town website, and at the following designated public places in the municipality:
 - A. Thetford Hill Post Office
 - B. Baker's General Store in Post Mills
 - C. Wings Store in East Thetford
4. The agenda must also be made available to any person who requests such agenda prior to the meeting.
5. All business shall be conducted in the same order as it appears on the noticed agenda unless a change is necessary accommodate the schedule of an invited guest. Each meeting shall begin with a review of the agenda and any addition to or deletion from the noticed agenda must be made as the first act of business at the meeting. Any other adjustment to the noticed agenda, for example, changing the order of business, postponing or tabling actions, may be made by simple majority vote of the body.

MEETINGS

1. Regular meetings shall take place on, *the first and third Tuesday of the month at 7:15 p.m.*
2. Special meetings shall be publicly announced at least 24 hours in advance by giving notice to all members of the Commission unless previously waived; and to any person who has requested notice of

such meetings. In addition, notices shall be posted in the town clerk's office and at the designated places in the town.

3. Emergency meetings may be held without public announcement, without posting of notices, and without 24-hour notice to members, provided some public notice thereof is given as soon as possible before any such meeting. Emergency meetings may be held only when necessary to respond to an unforeseen occurrence or condition requiring immediate action by the Commission.
4. A member of the body may attend a regular, special, or emergency meeting by electronic or other means without being physically present at a designated meeting location, so long as the member identifies him or herself when the meeting is convened and is able to hear and be heard throughout the meeting. Whenever one or more members attend electronically, voting that is not unanimous must be done by roll call. If a quorum or more of the body attend a meeting (regular, special, or emergency) without being physically present at a designated meeting location, the agenda for the meeting shall designate at least one physical location where a member of the public can attend and participate in the meeting. At least one member of the body, or at least one staff or designee of the body, shall be physically present at each designated meeting location.
5. The Commission shall appoint a presiding member[facilitator] for each meeting. This position may rotate between members of the Commission.
6. Meetings may include reports from members attending meetings or activities relevant to the work of the Commission.
7. The Commission acknowledges that members have different conversation and leadership styles. The presiding member will maintain an organized conversation in all meetings - though all individuals are responsible for civil conversation:
 - A. Focus on problem-solving.
 - B. Be respectful of each other.
 - C. Allow each other to finish line of thoughts (in a timely fashion).
 - D. Avoid talking over others.
 - E. Avoid repeating themselves.
 - F. Allow other members to speak once before speaking twice.
8. The member presiding over the meeting shall encourage all members to express their opinion and suspend criticism when new options are suggested, until presiding member provides space for critically reviewing several options at once.
9. A member may speak or make a motion *without* being recognized by the presiding member. Members are encouraged to let each member speak without being interrupted. There is no limit to the number of times a member may speak to a question.
10. Meetings may be recessed to a time and place certain.

WRITTEN REPORTS

1. The Commission will agree upon main author/s of official written reports to represent the views of the Commission. All reports will be drafted and discussed by the Commission before publishing or presenting to the Public.
2. Authors will solicit ideas from the Commission at the beginning of the process.
3. Authors will provide a draft to review, revise, and edit at least one meeting before a final draft is approved.
4. The Commission will approve any final drafts.

5. Annual Report: ideas will be solicited on or near the first meeting in November. The writing team will then provide a draft to the group two meetings before its due date.

REPRESENTING THE COMMISSION

1. Members of the Commission are committed to transparency to each other and the public.
2. Members of the Commission will represent the body and the Town professionally.
3. It is understood that Members of the Commission may often attend other public and private meetings, sometimes in an official capacity as Commission liaison.
4. The Commission may designate a member to represent the agreed upon position of the Commission on a particular topic.
5. Unless they are designated by the Commission to present a current Commission position, members may identify themselves as members of the Commission, but shall identify their comments as "personal "when making public comments,
6. Members will be respectful of other entities and individuals, corresponding professionally. Should a dispute arise from such correspondence, the issue may be taken up by the Commission.
7. Liaison relationships shall be designated and approved by majority vote.

EMAIL COMMUNICATION

1. This PC has seven appointed members. A quorum is four members. No meeting of the Commission may occur unless there is a quorum. If a quorum of members is present, Vermont's Open Meeting Law prohibits discussions between members of a commission, outside of a duly warned meeting,
2. Vermont's Open Meeting Law allows these activities within requiring a warned meeting:
 - A. Scheduling a meeting, organizing and discussing an agenda.
 - B. Distribution of information or materials to discuss at a later meeting provided that records are public.
 - C. Dissemination of Information, comments, edits to documents may be accomplished via one-way communication to other members.
3. Emails should have a specific subject heading: this may include date and time and title of relevant meetings or request for response.

WEBSITE

1. The Commission shall be responsible for what information is presented to the public about the Commission and its work via the town website.
2. The Commission will work with town officials to maintain this information.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The Commission acknowledges that dispute is a natural phenomenon in group work. Members of the Commission, by agreeing to these Rules of Procedure, make a commitment to be respectful of each other, and to the following process to find an amicable solution to disputes among members.

1. Seek resolution directly. The parties involved shall negotiate among themselves directly or with a neutral party, privately.
2. Seek resolution as a body. The Commission shall work through a conflict or dispute as a collaborative body. The Commission shall decide upon a process for doing so and may agree upon a mediator for this purpose. The mediator must be acceptable to all key stakeholders.

3. Allow a third-party [Select Board] to resolve the issue in the best interest of the Town. Only if the Commission is unable to resolve a dispute privately or as a group, may the Commission by simple majority vote to seek assistance from the Select Board or other Third-Party. The decision of the third-party shall be final.

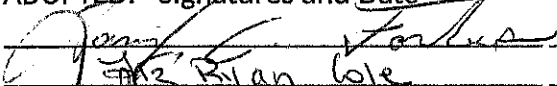
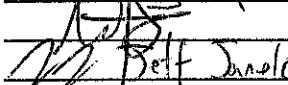
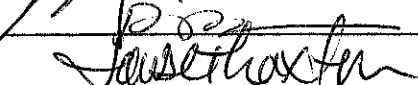
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. All meetings of the Commission are meetings in the public, not of the public. Members of the public shall be afforded reasonable opportunity to express opinions about matters considered by the body, so long as order is maintained according to these rules.
2. Prior to any action taken by the Commission on a specific agenda item, time shall be afforded for open public comment.
3. Comment by the public or members of the body must be addressed to the presiding member or to the body, and not to any individual member of the body or public.
4. Members of the public must be acknowledged by the presiding member before speaking.
5. If a member of the public has already spoken on a topic, he or she may not be recognized again until others have first been given the opportunity to comment.
6. Order and decorum shall be observed by all persons present at the meeting. Neither members of the Commission, nor the members of the public, shall delay or interrupt the proceedings or the peace of the meeting or interrupt or disturb any member while speaking. Members of the body and members of the public are prohibited from making personal, impertinent, threatening, or profane remarks.
7. Members of the Commission and members of the public shall obey the orders of the chair or other presiding member. The chair should adhere to the following process to restore order and decorum of a meeting, but may bypass any or all steps when they determine in their sole discretion that deviation from the process is warranted:
 - A. Call the meeting to order and remind the members of the applicable rules of procedure.
 - B. Declare a recess or table the issue.
 - C. Adjourn the meeting until a time and date certain.
 - D. Order the constable to remove disorderly person(s) from the meeting.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT and ANNUAL ADOPTION OF RULES

1. The Commission acknowledges it is important to reflect collectively on what is learned during the course of its work, and to set aside time to do this periodically. This development work may be assisted by qualified neutral parties. The time and attention of all members of the Commission is needed to be effective.
2. These rules may be amended by two-thirds vote of the Commission and must be readopted annually.

ADOPTED: Signatures and Date

	06/06/2023
Ryan Cole	06/06/2023
	06/06/2023
Jeff Ingle	06/09/2023
	6/6/2023
Joseph Thaxter	6/6/2023

