

**TOWN OF ESSEX
81 MAIN STREET CONFERENCE ROOM
PLANNING COMMISSION
DRAFT MINUTES
March 13, 2025**

PLANNING COMMISSION (PC) PRESENT IN ROOM: Joshua Knox, Chair; Georgia Lavigne, Vice-Chair; Jonathan Schumacher, Clerk; Ian Carroll; Dustin Brusco; Trefor Williams and Paula Duke.

PLANNING COMMISSION ATTENDING VIRTUALLY: None.

PC ABSENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT IN ROOM: Katherine Sonnick, Community Development; and Kent Johnson.

OTHERS PRESENT IN ROOM: Aaron Martin, PW Director; Sean Neely (Stantec); Sai Sarepalli (CCRPC); Lynn & George Reynolds; Marybeth Redmond; Steph & Jay Meunier and Ken Signorelli.

OTHERS VIRTUALLY: Sharon Kelley, Zoning Administrator; Jean O'Sullivan, Economic Development Coordinator; Brian Clifford; L. Whitmore; Sharon Zukowski; David & Lisa Goodrich; Patty Davis; J. Percy; Eleni Churchill; Emily O'Hara; Robert ?; Admin ?; Johnny Mendee; Ken Signorelli;

AGENDA ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Knox called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 2: ADDITIONS/ CHANGES: None.

AGENDA ITEM 3: APPROVE AGENDA: Board Member Duke Moved and Board Member Brusco Seconded a Motion to approve the agenda. The Motion passed 7-0.

AGENDA ITEM 4: PUBLIC TO BE HEARD FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA: None.

AGENDA ITEM 5: PRESENTATION – SAND HILL ROAD TRUCK TRAFFIC STUDY:

Aaron Marint,

The meeting focused on reviewing the project area, specifically Lower Sandhill Road and the Sandhill Industrial Park. The discussion centered on analyzing truck traffic, particularly heavy trucks associated with commercial and industrial development in the area. The team also reviewed existing conditions and future projections, including potential geometric improvements, intersection realignments, and safety enhancements. The study area was described, including its zoning and surrounding residential and industrial developments. The meeting also highlighted the focus on Class 7 through Class 11 trucks, which are regulated for travel along Lower Sandhill Road. The team discussed the goals of the study, which include analyzing truck traffic, determining deficiencies in the roadway, and developing recommendations for moving forward. The conversation ended with a review of the study area's development status and a summary of public input received so far.

AGENDA ITEM 6: DISCUSSION – FINALIZING QUESTIONS REGARDING STATE OF VT WOMEN'S CORRECTIONAL AND REENTRY FACILITY:

- a. Letters received from the community

Next steps

- Planning Commission to review and finalize questions for the State regarding the women's correctional facility proposal at the next meeting.
- Planning Commission members to consider specific deliverables and goals for potential working groups on RPD, PUD regulations, etc. Next zoning, and 40th and Allen zoning for discussion at the next meeting.
- Staff to prepare for internal town discussions on the correctional facility proposal, including with police, fire, rescue, and public works departments.
- Georgia to update the list of questions for the State, categorizing them by recipient (State, town lawyer, internal staff, etc.).
- Ken to coordinate with the State to schedule future meetings for answering questions about the correctional facility proposal.
- Planning Commission to consider inviting other committees and the public to join potential working groups at the next meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 7: REVIEW PLANNING COMMISSION WORK PLAN:

- Create workgroups or subcommittees
Review statutory requirements for workgroups or subcommittees.

AGENDA ITEM 8: MINUTES: FEBRUARY 13, 2025

Vice Chair Lavigne Moved and Commissioner Carroll Seconded a Motion to approve the minutes with the following changes:

Line 17, add Lynn Smith.

Line 26, after “Bruso” add resigned and”

Line 121: delete.

Line 164: Change to “Planning Commission”.

The Motion passed 6-0.

AGENDA ITEM 9: OTHER BUSINESS

**Meeting summary for Town of Essex Planning Commission
(03/13/2025)**

Quick recap

The Planning Commission meeting covered several key topics, including a truck traffic study for Sand Hill Road, discussions about a proposed women's correctional facility, and zoning updates. The commission reviewed the traffic study's findings, addressed community concerns about truck traffic, and finalized questions for relevant parties regarding the potential prison sites. Additionally, the commission discussed the formation of working groups to address zoning updates and improve the process for future discussions.

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- Ken to coordinate with the State to schedule future meetings for answering questions about the correctional facility proposal.
- Planning Commission to consider inviting other committees and the public to join potential working groups at the next meeting.
- Sharon to review meeting recording to verify and correct any substantive changes to the minutes as needed.

Summary

Lunar Eclipse and Sand Hill Road

The meeting began with a discussion about the lunar eclipse and its duration. The speaker then moved on to the agenda for the meeting, which included a public hearing and a presentation on the Sand Hill Road truck traffic study. The speaker also addressed a previous meeting's discussion about the State women's correctional facility, stating that it should not be part of the public hearing. The speaker then introduced Sean Neely from Stantec to present the Sand Hill Road truck traffic study.

Truck Traffic Analysis on Lower Sandhill Road

The far.

Truck Traffic Study on Sand Hill

The meeting discusses a traffic study focusing on truck traffic in the area, particularly on

Sand Hill Road and nearby intersections. The consultants present data on peak hours and heavy vehicle counts, while commissioners raise questions about the study's scope and methodology. They suggest including weekend traffic patterns, considering all vehicle classes, and examining the full traffic impact beyond just trucks. The consultants agree to provide more comprehensive data in future presentations. A local resident notes that truck traffic is constant, with heaviest volumes early in the week and significant car traffic related to a nearby business.

Truck Traffic Issues on Sand Hill

The community discusses various options for addressing truck traffic issues on Sand Hill Road, including a jug handle from Route 289 and extending Thompson Drive. Residents express concerns about safety, noise, and air pollution due to heavy truck traffic in residential areas. They argue that the industrial park development has proceeded without adequate infrastructure to support the resulting traffic. Some suggest focusing the traffic study specifically on trucks rather than all vehicles. Residents also request additional studies on noise and air pollution, and emphasize the need for alternative routes that don't bisect residential zones.

Planning Commission Reviews Correctional Facility

The Planning Commission reviews questions regarding the proposed women's correctional and reentry facility. The document includes questions from commissioners and the community. Commissioners discuss prioritizing the questions and expressing concerns about the state's clarity and consistency. A former state representative, Mary Beth Redmond, clarifies that local representatives did not invite this project, and urges giving state officials an opportunity to respond to questions. She suggests pushing for one location instead of two. The Economic Development Commission's vice chairperson reminds the Planning Commission of their resolution on the matter. The commission discusses the zoning of potential locations, noting they contain both industrial and residential areas.

Planning Commission Discusses Prison Sites

The Planning Commission meets to finalize questions for relevant parties regarding potential prison sites in Essex. They discuss changing question 5 to ask why both proposed sites are viable, rather than if they are viable. Ian suggests focusing on one site, specifically Saxon Hill, to push the state for more detailed information. The commission debates this approach, with some members preferring to give the state another chance to provide thorough reports on both sites. They also discuss their authority to limit site options and the need for impact assessments on community services. Lisa, a resident who joined late, raises concerns about the types of offenders who might be housed in the facility and mentions a video discussing using a South Burlington property as a step-down facility for men.

Essex Correctional Facility Zoning Debate

The meeting focused on the potential establishment of a correctional facility in Essex, with discussions on its impact on local services like police, fire, and rescue, as well as the wastewater system. The attendees debated the role of Essex residents in the decision-making process, with some expressing concerns about the location and its potential effects on the town. The meeting also touched on the possibility of a town-wide vote on the issue, with a discussion on the required percentage of voters for a petition. The final decision on the zoning change would be made by the Select Board, with the potential for a town-wide vote if a certain number of voters sign a petition.

Planning Commission Reviews Reentry Facility Questions

The Planning Commission reviews and categorizes a list of questions related to the proposed women's reentry facility. They decide which questions should be directed to the State, which should be handled internally, and which require input from the town lawyer or other parties. The commission discusses the need for clarity in their questions to ensure good answers. They also consider expanding some questions to gather more comprehensive data, such as extending the timeframe of a previous study on the impact of correctional facilities. The group emphasizes the importance of understanding the potential economic impact and traffic implications of the facility.

Planning Commission Forms Working Groups

The Planning Commission discusses the formation of working groups to address big zoning updates. They identify four main areas of focus: PUD regulations (including steep slope considerations), ARPD, 40th and all, and aligning zoning with the town plan, particularly for the 80/90 upper Main Street area. The commission agrees that working groups are preferable to subcommittees to avoid the need for quorums and public hearings. They also briefly discuss the history of the etc. Next plan and its relationship to zoning regulations.

Planning Commission Improves Working Group Process

The Planning Commission discusses improving the process for working groups by establishing clear scopes, deliverables, and timeframes. They agree to focus on specific topics like RPD, PUD, and Ethan Allen zoning at the next meeting, where they will define goals and challenges before creating working groups. The commission considers involving other committees and the public in these groups. They also review and approve the minutes from the previous meeting, with some minor grammatical corrections suggested.

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The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

PLANNING COMMISSION

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By: _____
Joshua Knox, Chair