TOWN OF STAMFORD, VERMONT

PLANNING COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes — November 9, 2026

DRAFT — PENDING APPROVAL

Members Present: Lisa Gramlin, Chair, Alden Finney, Jim Stimpson, Marta Miller, and Pam Tworig.

Members Absent: Natalie O'Neil, Debra Burchard

Visitors: Samantha Page and Callie Fishburn from the Bennington County Regional Commission, Debra Righi, and James RIghi.

Call to Order:

Lisa Gramlin called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Reading and Approval of Records:

No minutes were approved due to lack of quorum.

Hearing of Visitors:

No Visitor Comments.

Discussion:

Callie Fishburn and Samantha Page from the Benington County Regional Commission came to gather feedback and answer questions on the first sections of the new Town Plan.

Town Plan positioned as vision and policy foundation, not regulation

– Supports future Bylaws, grant applications, Select Board decisions, and state-agency review.

– Bylaws and ordinances remain vehicles for enforceable land-use rules.

– Policy language still matters because Act 174-compliant energy plans receive "substantial deference" in Public Utility Commission proceedings.

Stronger language reserved for highest-priority issues

– Planning Commission wants legal guidance on distinctions among "shall," "must," "will"

– Specific wording considered important for wind facilities, solar facilities, data centers, and Public Utility Commission matters.

– Commission wants to identify critical sections requiring maximum protection rather than applying equal intensity throughout plan.

Energy & Flood Resilience chapters scheduled for review at the next meeting

– Substantial policy discussion expected on renewable-energy siting and related standards.

– Following package: housing and transportation.

– Final package: economic development, community facilities, and consistency with state planning goals and other plans.

– Consultants indicated a complete draft may be ready around late winter.

Bylaw rewrite

– board members favor rebuilding bylaws from the ground up rather than repeatedly patching existing text and trying to make it work.

– Concerns include current bylaws being difficult to read, internally inconsistent, and hard to interpret by both residents and town representatives.

– Members discussed retaining legally required wording while adding accessible explanations.

– Possible format: enforceable legal provisions paired with plain-English guidance on permits and requirements.

– Commission wants Bylaws understandable to residents without specialized legal knowledge.

Infrastructure constraints affect housing strategy

– Members linked infill housing and smaller lot sizes to the need for municipal water and sewer.

– Existing wells and septic systems provide a basis for limiting applicability of some state housing expectations.

T**ax burden remains a primary concern for residents and the planning concern**

– Members emphasized residents' difficulty paying taxes and the need to keep municipal expenses down.

– Planning Commission discussed whether cost containment should be an explicit planning criterion.

Regional planning event announced for November 19 at 5:30 in Sunderland, VT town office.

– Open to the public, Bennington County Regional Commission and VLCT will be present.

VLCT – future support to towns is uncertain.

OLD BUSINESS:

Lisa needs to get signatures from Select Board members for our application for the Municipal Planning Grant that is due 12/2/26. If awarded, the grant will be used to help prepare new Zoning Byaws. She will attend the next meeting and then forward the signed application to BCRC.

Adjournment:

MOTION to adjourn by Lisa Gramlin. SECONDED by Jim Stimpson. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Next Meeting: November 23, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pam Tworig, Clerk

Stamford Planning Commission