

Planning Commission Reporting Form for Municipal Plan Amendments

This report is in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4384(c) which states:

“When considering an amendment to a plan, the planning commission shall prepare a written report on the proposal. The report shall address the extent to which the plan, as amended, is consistent with the goals established in section 4302 of this title.

A comprehensive update of the Waterford Town Plan was undertaken in 2015-2016, updating all sections, reassessing goals, and adding new sections on Flood Resilience and Economic Development. Both the new Economic Development section and Flood Resilience section set forth goals and action steps that are consistent with the goals of the Regional Plan and the State. The Economic Development section focuses on agriculture and home-based businesses as particular aspects of the local economy to be encouraged. The Flood Resilience section outlines goals and action steps intended to mitigate potential impacts due to flood hazards and maintain good water quality by reducing stormwater runoff from new development and protecting the River Corridor from incompatible development and uses.

The goals and action steps pertaining to each section of the Plan which are summarized in the implementation table at the end of the document are consistent with the State planning goals articulated in State statute.

If the proposal would alter the designation of any land area, the report should cover the following points:

- 1. The probable impact on the surrounding area, including the effect of any resulting increase in traffic, and the probable impact on the overall pattern of land use.**

The amended Town Plan proposes two specific zoning districts changes, both of which are identified on the zoning map accompanying the Plan. An area on Route 5 in the western corner of town that is currently zoned Industrial Commercial is proposed to be changed to Rural Residential. The area is currently in residential use, which is found to be the most appropriate use for the area in the future. This change would not impact surrounding properties, and would lessen the potential for future negative traffic impacts that could result if a commercial establishment were developed in this location.

The second area is located on Route 18 near the intersection of Duck Pond Road, and is an area that has been in continuous industrial and commercial use for about 50 years. A precast concrete plant operates in this location, as well as a commercial bakery and an excavating business. The area is currently zoned Rural Residential, and is proposed to be rezoned to Industrial Commercial, to more accurately reflect the site's appropriate current and future use. It is noted that the expansion of the existing uses or the addition of

commercial uses in this location would be subject to the conditional use review and performance standards currently contained in Waterford's zoning bylaw. It is further noted the Planning Commission may create additional performance standards or conditions for any development within the Source Protection Area of Stiles Pond, in which these existing commercial and industrial operations are located. It is not expected that the change in zoning category will have a negative impact on surrounding area, and will not increase traffic since the property is currently being used for industrial and commercial uses. If new or intensified uses of the site is proposed, a traffic study may be warranted as part of the site plan review.

While neither of the proposed zoning category changes are expected to change the way the areas are currently used, it will clarify on the Town's zoning map what is expected for future land use in these locations.

The Plan also proposes that an overall reduction in the permitted residential density in Town. While the existing built residential density is approximately 1 dwelling per 40 acres, the current zoning regulations permit 1 house per 2 acres Town-wide. The Plan notes that lower permitted residential densities would be appropriate in areas containing productive agricultural land and forest blocks important for both wildlife habitat and forestry uses, although specific areas have not been identified for rezoning. A future proposal to rezone particular areas in town for a lower density will be based on the locations of these important land resources.

The Flood Resilience element of the Plan contemplates the amendment of the town's flood hazard regulations to include restriction of development activities on lands adjacent to streams and within "River Corridors," as mapped by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. It is expected that restricting the development of land in flood and fluvial erosion hazard areas will have a long-term beneficial impact to the municipality, as it would mitigate against future flood-related damage and the human and financial costs associated with it. Some of the land included within the State-mapped "River Corridor" is already subject to development restrictions under Waterford's current zoning regulations, since they are within the mapped flood hazard areas of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The State River Corridor and the recommended setbacks to smaller streams is based on a methodology developed by the State's river scientists.

2. The long-term cost or benefit to the municipality, based consideration of the probable impact on:

(A) the municipal tax base; and

(B) the need for public facilities;

Neither of the specific proposed changes in zoning category are expected to have an impact on the municipal tax base or increase the need for public facilities. It is expected that reducing permitted residential density in appropriate areas of Town will have the positive effect of protecting valuable land resources which are of

economic and scenic importance to the Town, and preventing overdevelopment which could place burdens on the Town's limited municipal services.

3. The amount of vacant land which is:

(A) already subject to the proposed new designation; and

(B) actually available for that purpose, and the need for additional land for that purpose.

The vast majority of acreage in Waterford is currently zoned Rural Residential. The Economic Development section for the Plan identifies agriculture and forestry uses of the land as important components of the local economy, and these uses of land are permitted in all zoning districts, including the RR district.

There are currently three compact areas in town zoned industrial commercial. The proposal to remove one area from this category and add another area to this category will result in a slight increase in the area of land zoned industrial commercial. Two of the areas (one existing and one proposed for the industrial commercial zone) have existing commercial industrial uses which will have some limited room for expansion. The third area which is currently zoned industrial commercial is located at the border with St. Johnsbury near the intersection of Rt. 18 and the Interstate Highway interchange. This area is currently in agricultural use.

4. The suitability of the area in question for the proposed purpose, after consideration of:

(A) appropriate alternative locations;

(B) alternative uses for the area under consideration; and

(C) the probable impact of the proposed change on other areas similarly designated

The proposed changes in zoning classification are appropriate due to the lands' current use and location. No alternative locations for these industrial commercial uses have been found to be more appropriate. No impacts to other areas designated Rural Residential or Industrial Commercial are expected.

5. The appropriateness of the size and boundaries of the area proposed for change, with respect to the area required for the proposed use, land capability and existing development in the area.”

The size of the area proposed to be rezoned to Industrial Commercial use follows that area where existing commercial and industrial uses have been operating, and where land disturbance has historically occurred, and is therefor appropriate.