

Plainfield Planning Commission Minutes

Monday January 5th 2026

Present: Will Colgan, David Scheckman, Karen Storey and Jesse Cooper

Will called the meeting to order and asked for a motion to the minutes of the last meeting. Jesse made the motion and David seconded it. The motion was approved.

Will emailed out some changes to the draft zoning for the Village District dimensional standards. David had mentioned the previous version was confusing. Will cleaned it up and listed the conditional lot size options as “(see conditional use)” after the permitted uses. It was agreed that this was a better format for that section. The next item surrounded the Development Review Board (DRB) ability to request a traffic opinion or a traffic study and when each of those would be relevant. Will had sent out the Montpelier standard that said if the a proposed development increased the traffic by 75 new trips during peak ours on a class 1 state highway then a licensed engineering study would be required. This mirrors the state requirement.

David had questions about whether this threshold was the best for Plainfield and specifically the village. Jesse wondered how the number of trips are determined. Will said Montpelier is basically using what the state standard is and we can research how the number of trips is calculated. Since it’s the state standard should the zoning just reflect that? David said the engineering study for the East Hill project said there would be 39 cars per rush hour based on 40 units. But that 39 trips in Plainfield could have a bigger impact depending on how much existing traffic was on Main St. Jesse said the study should also show the impact on surrounding roads. David suggested having some standard that would give the DRB more guidance and less total discretion on deciding when to do an opinion or full engineering study. Karen said now that she’s living on Rt 2 she experiences difficulty getting onto Rt 2 due to the traffic. Karen suggested lowing the threshold to 50 for the town. David said that would be a start since the PC was not expert in this field. Will suggested going with that in the Montpelier language and see how it goes for the hearings.

The next item was how to determine when amendments could be made to a subdivision plan after it’s complete. Will again took the Montpelier language. Lot lines can be changed by the Zoning Administrator and municipal utilities can be changed by the Director of Public works. Will suggest the Public Works Director be replaced by the Waste Water Commission or staff and the Road Foreman. David was worried that this could over ride the engineering work. He suggested that the engineer of the plan should be involved in any changes. The lot line adjustment was not a problem with the PC. Will said he would create language that had agreement between the engineer and town public works staff that would allow an administrative change to the plan. The change should not result in a material change to the development.

There was a discussion about meeting times. Karen can’t do the 6 pm start for 2 months so we will put that off. Will can make the next meeting on the 19th so that will be moved to Thursday the 15th at 7 PM. Will asked the PC to think about having the regular meetings on other days or the week so it would allow the Select Board members to attend and PC members could attend the SB meetings. No decision was made but the possibility would be explored.

The proposal to create a separate zoning district for Goddard through interim zoning was discussed. The proposal would basically eliminate the need for zoning permits for any previous existing use on campus and would eliminate subdivision and PUD reviews. None of the PC members thought this was a good idea. Will said there could be reasons to treat the campus somewhat differently since it is a single owner and perhaps some negotiations on the details would be worth looking at. David said that Goddard is looking at ways to avoid the appeal process. He said eliminating all appeals wouldn’t be fair to the people it town. Recently a garage in town needed to get a conditional use permit for the business even though it was a garage before. If a use lapses for a year or more a new permit is required. Will said if this proposal would be looked into further he would agree with Peter Youngbaer who said the town should have it’s own legal council. Karen did not like the idea of a separate zoning district for Goddard. She thought it would be unfair for one part of town to be exempt while trying to enforce the zoning on other parts of town.

Karen, Will, Sandy Vitzhum and Mike Davidson had met in the fall to agree on a format to provide zoning permits for each building on campus. A list of each building with the present and assumed future uses was created. Karen would issue permits for each permitted use and the conditional uses could be done at a DRB hearing. This process has not been completed and the PC agreed that this would be the best way to bring Goddard into compliance with the town zoning.

Will suggested a motion the “the Planning Commission will, instead of pursuing the separate district for Goddard for the time being we want to follow through the initial zoning compliance procedure that was developed with the Zoning Administrator and work the Goddard to find if that process could work.”

Jesse seconded it and asked that we answer their request for the separate zoning district.

David said the PC should advise the select board and inform Goddard that the new district proposal is a long term effort that needs further discussion and clarification. There was an ongoing process within the regulations we have now. We advise continuing with that process because it could expedite projects for Goddard.

The response to Goddard should be slow down, there is this process that can work.

Karen said the process could be completed in 45 days if it started back up.

The motion was approved.

The separate zoning proposal will be tabled in favor of the existing process. The Select Board will be notified and Will said he can contact the CVRPC and some other towns to see how separate districts for previous college campuses have worked out.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15