

**Minutes Rochester Planning Commission
Public Hearing on the Draft Rochester Zoning Bylaw**

**October 24, 2023
Rochester Town Office and via Zoom**

Present: Chair Dan McKinley, Sandy Haas; Julie Martin, Doon Hinderyckx, Zoning Administrator

Guests: Sarah Wraight, Nancy Woolley, Lois Bond, Martha Slater (by Zoom), ORCA Media

Call to Order Dan called the duly warned public hearing to order at 6:02

The purpose of the hearing is to hear public comments on the proposed amendments to Rochester's zoning bylaw. Dan opened the hearing by describing the process that has led to the current proposal, noting that the current bylaw was adopted in 2009. Since that time we have amended the Town Plan. With major assistance from Sarah Wraight and Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission, the new draft has a significant reorganization and reflects relevant changes to state law. In particular, the draft includes revised criteria for accessory dwelling units and reduces the minimum lot size in the Business-Residential zone from ½ acre to 1/5 acre. Each zone has lists of permitted uses and prohibited uses, with any unspecified use subject to review under conditional use criteria. The draft also requires setbacks (riparian buffers) from streams mapped by the U.S. Geological Survey.

Nancy Woolley inquired about whether the screening requirements would apply to junkyards. It was clarified that all rules apply to projects at the initial permitting stage.

Lois Bond asked how the riparian buffer rule would apply in cases where a tiny brook becomes a raging stream as happened during Tropical Storm Irene. The draft specifies that a stream must show on the U.S. Geological Survey.

Nancy Woolley asked whether the draft addresses short term rentals. The board made clear that any regulation should be done by Selectboard ordinance. She also asked about the time limit for completing permitted building projects, which is three years.

Martha Slater asked whether an accessory dwelling unit can now be separate from the main home. The answer is yes.

Doon asked whether there were other issues that the Board wanted to address, but did not. Dan noted the need to protect forest integrity and the limitations of zoning for that purpose.

The public hearing was closed at 7:00. The board then discussed the process going forward, which will include review by the Selectboard and another public hearing.

Adjourned: 7:18 pm