

BETHEL PLANNING COMMISSION  
**Minutes: 04/15/15 Public Forum and Meeting**

**Attending:** Eric ‘Rick’ Benson [DRB], Andrew Delaney [ PC Chair], Fred Dieffenbach [PC], Peter Dohrn [PC], Mary Floyd [Conservation Commission], Carla Hodgdon [PC], Emily Miller [Conservation Commission], Carl Russell [Selectboard], Chris Sargent [TRORC], Cecil Washburn [PC].

**Call to Order:** 7:05 PM.

1. **Public Forum:** Chris Sargent had prepared an excellent PowerPoint presentation defining the pertinent issues under consideration including basics of flood regulation, facts and figures specific to Bethel, types and levels of regulation available, and ‘pro’s and ‘con’s of regulatory options. The Regional Planning Commission had also produced several maps with upland streams, parcel lots defined, and River Corridor areas delineated. General discussion then began. Questions and comments ensuing included:
  - a. People DO build near streams- how can this be avoided?
  - b. What have surrounding towns done? [Sharon, Royalton, Rochester and Pittsfield now prohibit new development in Floodplain. Mapped river corridor areas is fairly new, however, Sharon prohibits new development within 50’ of all streams. Braintree incorporated Fluvial Erosion Protection Areas five years ago.]
  - c. Floodplains have long been regulated. Regulation to protect along upland stream areas is relatively new based on more recent flooding experienced. The changes under consideration would assure that future development occurs more safely.
  - d. The ‘State’s’ layered financial assistance via the Emergency Recovery Assistance Fund is to encourage towns to maximize safety for residents. Obviously, higher assistance levels benefit town residents after flood damage to existing infrastructure.
  - e. From available maps, it was good to see that only ten lots appeared to be affected when considering a 50’ setback and/or River Corridor areas. It was questioned whether these lots were free-standing or portions of larger parcels divided by streams or roadways [‘spaghetti lots’ along Camp Brook Road, Geoff Gilman’s property near Skyview Lane, Balser’s] as well as whether lots included adequate acreage for new development to occur outside the River Corridor or a 50’ setback [Wade Floyd’s]. The vast majority of landowners would not be impacted by any change.
  - f. The Town Plan includes large conservation districts: consideration of River Corridors enlarges the conservation component.
  - g. It is possible that maps do not accurately reflect some local topographical detail. If landowners question whether their property falls within a floodplain or river corridor area, they may hire an engineer to evaluate and file a letter with FEMA.
  - h. Should Town Listers be encouraged to re-evaluate properties on which no new development can occur? Can a homeowner wishing to develop get a variance to do so if their property failed to meet regulatory requirements?
  - i. The Planning Commission will continue work on drafting amendments to the current Zoning Ordinance. A Public Hearing will be held before proposed changes are transmitted to the Selectboard. The Selectboard, after taking the Planning Commission’s proposal under consideration, also holds a Public Hearing before taking action. Interested parties will have ample opportunity for comment.
2. **Minutes of 03/18/15 Meeting:** Approved as distributed in Draft on 03/26/15.
3. **Correspondence:** None.
4. **Discussion of Public Forum comments regarding Zoning Ordinance Amendments:** Deferred until next meeting.
5. **Other:** No items.
6. **Next Meeting / Agenda Items:** Wednesday, MAY 20<sup>th</sup> 2015 at 7:00 PM in the Bethel Town Office Conference Room. Agenda items: (a) Start discussion of possible Zoning Ordinance amendments; (b) Other items as indicated.
7. **Adjourn:** 8:35 PM.