

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WARREN PLANNING COMMISSION PROPOSES ZONING DISTRICT CHANGES IN HISTORIC WARREN VILLAGE

Since the beginning of 2008, the Warren Planning Commission has explored revision to the village zoning districts. These revisions include expansion of the Warren Village Historic Residential District (WVHR) as well as the creation of a new mixed-use district located between the core Warren Village Commercial District and the Warren Village Historic Residential District. In Fall 2008, the PC mailed out a survey “Warren Village 2020” regarding these possible zoning changes to all Warren registered voters AND property owners (results can be found in the Warren Town Plan Appendix A.3). The survey was followed up with a public forum in November 2008 in order to get direct input from the public regarding these proposed changes. While the PC would like to have completed these zoning changes in 2009, other more pressing issues came before the commission, including the re-write of the Town Plan which was recently approved by the Select Board. At this time, the PC is looking to receive further comment from the public in order to submit the Village zoning changes to the Select Board for approval.

Warren Village Historic Residential District changes: Changes to this district include the following:

1. Alignment of District boundaries along existing property line boundaries or significant contours in the land;
2. Extension of the district to the north in order to include an area north of Route 100 which includes West Hill Road and Ellen Lane. This area was historically significant to the Village since its founding, and therefore should have been included in this district;
3. Extension of the district to the south in order to include all of Main Street and the south entrance to the Village;

4. Reduction of the minimum lot size to $\frac{1}{4}$ acre (currently 1 acre zoning), and reduction of the side setback to 15 feet (currently 20 feet). Reduction of the minimum lot size does not increase lot density as current regulations permit 4 units / acre (multi family).

The new Warren Village Mixed Use District includes the following:

1. New district surrounds the current commercial District except along the river side with an extension down Main Street to the covered bridge. No properties in the current commercial district are included in the mixed use district; all properties in this new district are currently in the village residential district;
2. The district is being created with the express purpose to strengthen Warren Village's status as a Town center in order to promote its social, governmental, commercial and residential functions in the community, while taking special care to protect the residential character and the quality of life enjoyed by its residents. To this end, all properties are required to maintain at least 40% of total enclosed floor space dedicated to long term residential use;
3. This district will be a bridge between the true commercial and residential districts. Thus, while height limitations and the front setback remain consistent between all districts, the side setback is proposed to be set at 10 feet (to match that of the commercial district) and the rear setback to be 15 feet (commercial = 10 feet; residential = 20 feet). One should note that properties abutting the river will continue to have a significant (100 foot) setback from the river as mandated by the state, which overrides the district standards;
4. Proposed conditional uses within this district remain consistent to those conditionally permitted in the both the commercial and residential districts;
5. Any new commercial activity proposed in this new district will be required to meet parking requirements as already established by the current zoning code;

During the PC's review and proposed creation of the mixed use district, existing village septic capacity has been studied and currently there exists sufficient capacity for both commercial and residential expansion in this zone while maintaining the required excess capacity of the system. At this time, the Warren Village septic system is under utilized so additional users would permit the system to operate in a more cost effective manner for all users.

Overall, it is not the intent of the Warren PC to radically alter the character of Warren Village. However, the PC is exploring ways in which to concentrate and promote development in a manner which minimizes sprawl in the Warren community. In addition, the PC hopes the added commercial opportunity afforded by this change will encourage local residents to invest in the community, particularly Warren Village, so that the Village will continue to enhance the quality of life for all residents of Warren and the communities of the Mad River Valley. It is the hope of the Warren PC that Village residents, particularly those whose properties will be located in this new district, will understand this change as a positive enhancement to the long term future of their property.

To this end, the Warren PC will hold a Public Meeting dedicated to discussing the Warren Village Zoning District changes on August 8, 2011, 7 PM at the Warren Municipal Building. All public input is welcome. In the event one is not able to attend this public meeting, comments may also be directed to Ruth Robbins, Planning Commission Assistant at planning@warrenvt.org or by mail: PO Box 337, Warren, VT 05674. In order to help facilitate the discussion on August 8, the Planning Commission would appreciate receiving comments from those unable to attend by mail or e-mail prior to the public meeting.