

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT 2005

The Planning Commission engaged in two major activities in 2005 – (1) finalizing the new Town Plan (the “Plan”) that was adopted by the Selectboard on May 24, 2005, and (2) working on major revisions to the town’s Land Use and Development Regulations, i.e. the zoning regulations.

The new Plan replaces a Plan adopted in 1999. The State of Vermont requires each town to update their Plan every five years. The Plan defines a long-term vision for the Town and a roadmap for achieving that vision. The Plan addresses historical and cultural resources, natural resources and fragile areas, population trends and projections, energy, housing, transportation, community services and facilities, education, local economy, land use and child care. Copies of the Plan are available at the Town offices or on Warren’s web site at <http://www.warrenvt.org/>. Planning Commission meeting agendas and minutes are also available at this site.

The process of revising the zoning regulations has been split into two separate amendments that will be done sequentially. The purpose of the first amendment is to bring Warren’s zoning regulations into compliance with recent changes in the Vermont Planning & Development Act (24 V.S.A. Chapter 117), the mandatory provisions of which went into effect on September 1, 2005 and are binding on the town. These include new statutory limitations on the local regulation of certain uses, such as accessory apartments, mobile home parks and public facilities, and new procedural requirements for the issuance of permits, development review board hearings and decisions, and appeals to Environmental Court. They do not include any changes to existing zoning district dimensional requirements, district boundaries, or development review criteria under subdivision, conditional use, planned unit and planned residential development, or flood hazard review, except as required under state law.

The Planning Commission held a required public hearing on December 5, 2005 to solicit public comments on the proposed amendment. The amendment was then transmitted to the Selectboard for consideration. The Selectboard has scheduled a public hearing on January 31, 2006 for further consideration of this amendment. Copies of the proposed amendment are available at the Town offices or on Warren’s web site at <http://www.warrenvt.org/>.

The Planning commission has started considering numerous other potential changes to the zoning regulations, many of which are proposed in the new Town Plan. This will result in a second proposed amendment that will deal with substantive changes in such things as zoning district dimensional requirements, district boundaries, development review criteria under subdivisions, conditional use, planned unit and planned residential developments, and proposals to foster affordable housing.

Major focus over the new year for the Planning Commission, in addition to the zoning update, will be on: (1) developing a plan for improvements to the Town garage facility and (2) developing a long term plan for all other Town facilities and Town owned land.

The Planning Commission meets at 7:30 p.m. on the second and fourth Monday of the month at the Municipal Building.

Planning Commission

John Donaldson, Chair
Laura Crandall, Vice Chair
Donald La Haye
Jim Sanford

John Goss
Mike Ketchel (new member in 2005)
Lisa Miserendino