

**Town of Amherst
Planning Advisory Committee
Minutes**

Date: February 3, 2025
Time: 4:30 pm
Location: Council Chambers, Town Hall

Members Present Ronald Wilson, Citizen Representative, Chair
Jim Lamplugh, Citizen Representative, Vice Chair
Councillor Charlie Chambers
Councillor Terry McManaman
Councillor Dwayne Ripley
Creighton McCarthy, Citizen Representative

Staff Present Andrew Fisher, Planning & Economic Development
Torben Laux, Planner
Emily Wainwright, Dangerous/Unsightly Premises Administrator
Sean Payne, Corporate Communications Officer
Natalie LeBlanc, Municipal Clerk
Cindy Brown, Administrative Assistant

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order.

1.1 Territorial Acknowledgement

The Chair gave the Territorial Acknowledgement.

2. Approval of Agenda and Acceptance of Minutes

2.1 Approval of the Agenda

Moved By: Councillor Ripley

Seconded By: Councillor Chambers

That the agenda of the Planning Advisory Committee be approved as circulated.

Motion Carried

2.2 Acceptance of the Minutes - January 13, 2025

The Chair called for any errors or omissions in the minutes. There being none, the minutes of the January 13, 2025 meeting of the Planning Advisory Committee were accepted as included in the agenda package.

3. Municipal Planning Strategy / Land Use Bylaw Review

Andrew Fisher presented the draft Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw included in the agenda package. At this time, he is looking for feedback from the Committee, with a view to bring final drafts back to this Committee at their March meeting.

Ron Wilson asked if the proposed increase in the number of units permitted as of right is something that is unique to Amherst or is this something broader that is happening across Nova Scotia. Mr. Fisher answered that many of the communities that have received the accelerated housing fund are looking at ways to allow more housing to happen faster. Mr. Wilson asked if there had been any consultation with developers. Mr. Fisher replied that yes there has been some consultation and staff plan to do more before the March PAC meeting.

Jim Lamplugh expressed his concerns about what would be permitted 'as of right' in the new plan. He felt that the Town's General Residential Zone is tantamount to an R1 zone, where the expectation of property owners of single-family dwellings is not so see six units next door. Mr. Lamplugh feels that permitting six units as of right could raise issues. Creighton McCarthy suggested that existing four unit townhouses tend to be occupied by an older demographic who may not want more than four unit townhouses; however, he recognized that housing for newcomers and those with families might necessitate more than four units.

Mr. Lamplugh also expressed his concerns about the proposed site plan approval process and with staff being permitted to "stramp and approve" up to twelve units. Mr. Fisher discussed the criteria and process in order for an application to meet the requirements to obtain a site plan approval. Mr. Lamplugh suggested that perhaps at least two members of the Planning Advisory Committee, one citizen appointee and one elected official, be able to review site plans before approval, taking some of the onus off of staff. Mr. Fisher replied that the MGA provides specific approval processes that would likely not allow a small review group, and suggested that any review or approval beyond staff would need to be by full public committee or Council. Creighton McCarthy said he is not comfortable with the site plan approval process, and that he would prefer to keep the same process that is currently in place.

Councillor Ripley clarified that Council can at anytime approve amendments to the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw if there is something that is not working the way they would like. Mr. Fisher said it is a living document and it can be amended going forward.

Councillor McManaman clarified that if we permitted six units as of right that there would still be minimum requirements that would have to be met, such as parking, to which Mr. Fisher confirmed yes. He further asked about boarding houses and how the proposed changes would affect them. Mr. Fisher replied boarding houses have different provisions.

Ron Wilson discussed his concerns about storm water management, particularly the impacts development could have on Dickey Brook. Mr. Fisher discussed the policies that address storm water management, and suggested more could be added to this section of the LUB to address larger scale development.

Mr. Wilson also spoke to Policy 5-30 Flood Plain Zone, and his concerns with climate change and future weather events.

There being no further comments from the Committee, Mr. Fisher will take the comments made into consideration and draft any necessary changes before the March meeting.

4. Dangerous and Unsightly Premises Demolition Update

Emily Wainwright presented an update on the status of the Dangerous and Unsightly Premises Demolitions, memo included as part of the agenda package. Information Item, no action required.

5. Adjournment

There being no further business, the Chair adjourned the meeting.

Natalie LeBlanc
Municipal Clerk

Ronald Wilson
Chair