

## **MEETING MINUTES**

### **JEFFERSON COUNTY PLANNING BOARD**

**Watertown International Airport- Business Center**  
**October 28, 2025**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** David Prosser, Chairman, Lisa L'Huillier, Vice-Chair, Neil Katzman, John Stano, Jean Waterbury, Richard Nuijens, John Stinson, Randy Lake, Donna Dutton.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Hartley Bonisteel Schweitzer, Director of Planning  
Andy Nevin, Senior Planner  
Sam Wilson, Community Development Coordinator  
Emerald Macilvennie, Typist

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** Charles Oliver - GYST Properties Representative,  
Geoffrey Urda - City of Watertown Senior Planner,  
Dave Wilder - Village of Clayton, Mitch Robinson,  
Karen Freeman, and Tiffany Street.

**CALL TO ORDER AND ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM:** Chairman David Prosser opened the meeting at 4:00 p.m. and stated that a quorum was present.

**APPROVAL OF THE September 30, 2025 MEETING MINUTES:** The motion was made by David Prosser, seconded by Richard Nuijens, and carried unanimously.

**COMMUNICATIONS:** Chairman David Prosser asked if there were any communications. There were none.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS (OTHER THAN AGENDA ITEMS):** Chairman David Prosser asked if there were any public comments (other than on agenda items). There were none.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Andy Nevin reports that there is no other new business to share.

A. **General Municipal Law, Section 239m Referrals:**

**1. Champion (T) Charles Oliver Site Plan Review, T Ch 1 - 25**

Sam presented this project to the Board. He shared the locator map, aerial photos, site photos, and the site plan. This project is being reviewed due to its proximity to New York State Route 26. The applicant is proposing to construct a drive-through coffee shop.

He discussed County/State related matters:

A Jefferson County Building permit is required.

As a food service establishment, the coffee shop will also require a permit from NYS Department of Health.

The project is within 500 feet of a NYS Certified Agricultural District. Therefore, an Agricultural Data Statement is required.

Locally related issues discussed:

The local board should verify that the two proposed signs comply with the Town's sign regulations, including the maximum size of 32 square feet and maximum height of 25 feet.

The local board should confirm that there are enough parking spaces for the proposed use and consider updating the Town's zoning code to reduce minimum parking requirements where appropriate.

**Motion: To accept staff recommendation to pass a motion of local concern only with comments stated above, was made by David Prosser, seconded by John Stano, and carried unanimously.**

## **2. Watertown (C) City of Watertown Zoning Law Amendment, C 12 – 25**

Sam presented this project to the Board, displaying the aerial locator map, aerial photos, site photos, and site plan. He explained that this project is being reviewed due to its proximity to New York State Route 3 and Municipal Boundaries. The City is proposing to amend Chapter 310, Zoning, of the City Code, Article III regarding marijuana dispensaries.

He discussed County/State related matters:

New York State General City Law requires zoning amendments to be made in accordance with the community's Comprehensive Plan.

Locally related issues discussed:

The local board should consider expanding the number of zoning districts in which marijuana dispensaries and retail uses are permitted to include areas such as the Downtown and Urban Mixed-Use Districts, consistent with how comparable uses, such as liquor stores, are regulated.

While the proposed amendment would regulate dispensaries through a special use permit process, the board may wish to evaluate whether site plan review, supplemented by the proposed appropriate use-specific standards, would provide a more consistent regulatory framework for these establishments within designated commercial districts.

**Motion: To accept staff recommendation to pass a motion of local concern only with comments stated above, was made by David Prosser, seconded by Neil Katzman, and carried unanimously. Lisa L'Huillier recused herself from voting on this project.**

## **3. Watertown (C) Brandon Blount Use Variance, C 13 – 25**

Sam presented this project to the Board, displaying the locator map, aerial photos, site photos, and site plan. He explained that this project is being reviewed due to its proximity to New York State Route 3 (Arsenal Street). The applicant is proposing to establish a marijuana dispensary

in a Zoning District that does not allow them.

He discussed County/State related matters:

The ZBA should only approve a use variance after the applicant submits documentation to the board that the applicable zoning regulations and restrictions have caused an unnecessary hardship. In order to prove such unnecessary hardship, the applicant shall demonstrate to the board that for each and every permitted use under the zoning regulations for the Urban Mixed Use District:

- (1) the applicant cannot realize a reasonable return, provided that the lack of return is substantial as demonstrated by competent financial evidence,
- (2) that the alleged hardship related to the property in question is unique, and does not apply to a substantial portion of the neighborhood or district,
- (3) that the required use variance, if granted, will not alter the essential character of the neighborhood,
- (4) that the alleged hardship has not been self-created.

Locally related issues discussed:

Alternatively, the local board could consider the merits of changing the zoning so that Marijuana Dispensaries are allowed in the Urban Mixed Use District, if it is in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan.

If the local board makes the determination that the applicant has properly addressed each of the four tests for a use variance, and subsequently grants such use variance, the City should require a special use permit for this project.

**Motion: To accept staff recommendation to pass a motion of local concern only with comments stated above, was made by David Prosser, seconded by Donna Dutton, and carried unanimously.**

#### **4. Clayton (V) Mark Morgia Site Plan Review, V CI 2 – 25**

Andy presented this project to the Board, displaying the locator map, aerial photos, site photos, and site plan. He explained that this project is being reviewed due to its proximity to New York State Route 12E. The applicant is proposing to construct two tri-plex buildings for a total of 6 apartments.

He discussed County/State related matters:

A NYS DOT Highway Work Permit is needed for any work within the NYS Route 12E right-of-way.

Locally related issues discussed:

Due to the increase in impervious surface area, the board should consider requiring a

stormwater analysis to assess potential runoff impacts and identify whether a drainage basin or other mitigation measures are warranted to protect adjoining properties and roadways.

The local board should encourage the applicant to perform a lot line adjustment to ensure that all improvements are included on one parcel.

**Motion:** To accept staff recommendation to pass a motion of local concern only with comments stated above, was made by David Prosser, seconded by Neil Katzman, and carried unanimously.

#### **5. Lyme (T) Kurtis Bennett Special Use Permit, T Ly 4 – 25**

Sam presented this project to the Board, displaying the locator map, aerial photos, site photos, and site plan. He explained that this project is being reviewed due to its proximity to NYS Route 12E and an Agricultural District. The applicant is proposing 30 detached cottages, a lodge with 30 rooms as well as a restaurant.

He discussed County/State related matters:

A Jefferson County building permit is required.

The NYS Dept. of Transportation should be consulted for the change of use for the driveway access onto NYS Route 12E.

The NYS Department of Health must review and approve the proposed water and septic systems for the cottages, lodge, and restaurant. The restaurant will require a separate food service permit.

Federal wetlands have been identified on the site plan near the project area. Therefore, the applicant should contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to ensure that appropriate requirements will be met.

Since the total disturbance is 2.5 acres, a DEC Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will need to be completed.

The project is within 500 feet of a NYS Certified Agricultural District. Therefore, an Agricultural Data Statement is required.

Locally related issues discussed:

The local board should ensure that the applicant label and provide the storm water drainage facilities on the site plan to ensure that there is adequate drainage.

Chairman David Prosser asked if a SEQR was submitted, Sam confirmed that the applicant did submit a SEQR form.

**Motion:** To accept staff recommendation to pass a motion of local concern only with comments stated above, was made by David Prosser, seconded by Lisa L'Huillier, and

carried unanimously.

#### **6. Rutland (T) RIC Development LLC Site Plan Review, T Ru 1 – 25**

Andy presented this project to the Board, displaying the locator map, aerial photos, site photos, and site plan. He explained that this project is being reviewed due to its proximity to New York State Route 12. The applicant is proposing a 5 MW solar powered generation facility.

He discussed County/State related matters:

The Town's solar regulations limit the conversion of prime farmland to no more than 10% within the project area. The proposed layout impacts approximately 99% prime or prime-related farmland (69% prime, 23% statewide importance, and 8% prime if drained), which far exceeds this limit. The applicant should be required to reduce the footprint or relocate panels to ensure that at least 90 percent of the project area is sited on non-prime farmland.

The Jefferson County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board has also expressed concern about converting productive agricultural soils to non-agricultural use.

The glare hazard analysis required by the Town solar law should be provided to ensure any potential glint or glare will be identified relative to Wheeler Sack Army Airfield approach, related low level training flight areas as well as any Watertown International Airport flight patterns.

Any anticipated use of cranes for panel installation onsite should file FAA Form 7460-1 to notify pilots of their location and height.

The applicant should contact NYS DOT as a Highway Work Permit is required for any work within the NYS Route 12 right-of-way is required.

Locally related issues discussed:

The appearance/visibility analysis of the proposed overhead electrical lines and inverters making up the interconnection point should be included in the photo simulation 3. Otherwise the rendering is not an accurate depiction of potential component visibility.

Randy Lake made a comment about the Board adding a request for well kept signage, and more buffering to shield the public from unsightly views created by projects of this nature in the future.

Chairman David Prosser asked if there was mention of battery storage in the site plan, Andy said there was not.

**Motion:** To accept staff recommendation to pass a motion of disapproval due to the majority presence of prime agricultural soils within the proposed site layout, with the comments stated above, was made by David Prosser, seconded by Richard Nuijens, and carried unanimously.

#### **7. Watertown (T) Tracey Holdings Site Plan Review, T Wa 8 – 25**

Sam presented this project to the Board, displaying the locator map, aerial photos, site photos,

and site plan. He explained that this project is being reviewed due to its proximity to Interstate 81. The applicant is proposing to construct an addition to an existing large retail business.

He discussed County/State related matters:

A Jefferson County Building Permit is required.

Since the total disturbance is 3.5 acres, a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will need to be completed and submitted to the Town engineer consistent with MS4 requirements.

The project is within 500 feet of a NYS Certified Agricultural District. Therefore, an Agricultural Data Statement is required.

Locally related issues discussed:

The local board should encourage the applicant to perform a lot line adjustment to ensure that all improvements are included on one project parcel.

**Motion: To accept staff recommendation to pass a motion of local concern only with comments stated above, was made by David Prosser, seconded by John Stano, and carried unanimously. Jean Waterbury recused herself from voting on this project.**

#### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

Andy Nevin mentioned that the board will need to create a sub-committee to discuss potential County Planning Board officers for the next two years at the November meeting. The sub-committee will establish its officers, including a new Chair/ Vice Chair for 2026 and 2027. He also noted that the land use training held at JCC earlier this month was successful, and the training video is available on the Jefferson County Planning Department webpage, for members to utilize to meet the required hours of training.

#### **Adjournment:**

Lisa L'Huillier made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:08 pm, seconded by Neil Katzman.