

Westmoreland Planning Board
Work Session Minutes
November 17, 2025

Attending: Lauren Bressett, Mark Terry, Bruce Smith, John Stronk, Tim Thompson, Liana Capra, Alison Fissette, Lisa Prince.

The session was called to order at 6:00 PM. Lauren Bressett read two letters addressed to the board regarding event ordinances. The reason why this issue was requested to be addressed by the Select Board was discussed. The issues relate to publicly advertised events. Members considered the problems that have arisen as well as how and who addressed them.

It was decided that because private events have not been a concern, there are state RSA's that address any potential issues, and the state police who serve as the law enforcement arm for the town are well versed in these RSA's, that an ordinance relating to private gatherings was not advisable.

Public events were then discussed. The Select Board would be the party addressing a Special Event permit. Guidance was sought from NHMA but has not yet been received regarding what belongs in the regulations regarding the permit and what is required for an actual ordinance. An ordinance defining what constitutes a public event and verifying the authority of the Select Board to address public events was agreed upon. Exceptions to the ordinance were determined. The following was approved:

Ordinance X. Special Public Events

X.1 Pursuant to NH RSA 644:2, the Select Board may require a special event permit for any gatherings open to the public that are advertised via print, social or other media, and/or for which there is any form of revenue gathering. The following exceptions apply:

- a. Properties with an approved site plan for event hosting.
- b. Community events sponsored by the Town of Westmoreland, Westmoreland School, or churches located in Westmoreland.

X.2 Any property owner who violates this ordinance shall be subject to:

- a. A civil penalty up to \$500 per violation, and/or
- b. Suspension of the event by the law enforcement or other authorities.
- c. Each day of violation constitutes a separate offense.

Members reviewed ordinance 438.1 regarding noise. An amendment is required due to state law changes. It was discussed whether additional language, restrictions or other items relating to this ordinance should be added. The group decided to keep current language and add a sentence bringing the ordinance into compliance with state RSA changes as follows.

438:1 No permanent use shall emit noise in excess of seventy (70) decibels. *This shall not apply to agriculture, farms, and farming which are following best practices but does apply to agritourism.*

Alison moved, Bruce seconded that the session be adjourned. Meeting adjourned at 7:13 PM.

Lauren Bressett, Recorder

Frank Riley
1054 River Rd Westmoreland, NH 03467
frank@stonegardenweddings.com
November 17, 2025

Dear Members of the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposal to create a new event permit process requiring residents and business owners to submit additional paperwork in order to host gatherings on their own property.

Our community has always been characterized by its rural charm, quiet nature, and strong neighborly relationships. Westmoreland is a small town without its own police department, and historically, residents have held family reunions, graduation parties, and large social gatherings without conflict or the need for additional regulation. These events have long been part of the fabric of our town and have taken place without significant issues.

It appears that recent conversations around regulations stem from two isolated situations: one event where concerns were raised, the event concluded without incident—and a more recent case involving a new resident hosting loud metal music shows, charging admission, and creating legitimate concerns for nearby neighbors. The issues in this second case include excessive noise, public urination, and unsafe or obstructive street parking, all of which understandably need to be addressed.

However, these concerns point toward enforcement—not additional bureaucracy for all residents. State law already provides mechanisms to address street parking violations, and neighbors can contact the New Hampshire State Police when these issues arise. If parking is the primary safety concern, the town could consider adopting or clearly communicating the applicable RSA addressing parking on town roads. Likewise, if noise is a recurring concern, the town may wish to explore adopting a simple, clear, and reasonable sound ordinance—such as establishing quiet hours after 11:00 PM. This targeted approach would provide tools to address problematic situations without burdening responsible residents who have never caused issues.

Implementing a broad event permit requirement for every resident hosting a private gathering would unnecessarily involve the town in regulating routine family events and personal property use. It raises the question: where does regulation stop? Westmoreland has never required residents to seek permission to have friends and family over, and many of us feel strongly that such a change is unnecessary and inconsistent with the values of our rural community.

As a business owner, these concerns extend even further. I operate Stone Garden, a state- and town-approved wedding venue. If this new permit system is applied to businesses, it could disproportionately impact us as the only event-based business in Westmoreland. We already comply with all existing regulations and approval processes. Adding another layer of permitting—especially one designed in response to a situation that does not involve us—would create unnecessary administrative burden and potential operational uncertainty.

Additionally, as the Town Clerk, I want to be transparent that I have no interest in participating in the acceptance, review, regulation, or enforcement of such a permit process. This proposal would place

administrative responsibilities on the town that are not only unnecessary but inconsistent with how Westmoreland has historically operated.

I respectfully urge the town to take a more focused and practical approach:

- Enforce the existing RSA regarding street parking when applicable.
- Consider implementing an 11:00 PM quiet-hours ordinance if noise is deemed a recurring issue.
- Avoid creating a broad event permit system that burdens responsible residents and businesses for the actions of a single problematic property.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate the work you do for our community and hope the town will pursue solutions that address the problem directly without creating undue regulation for everyone else.

Sincerely,
Frank Riley

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Via email November 17, 2025

I am not in favor of a permit for large events. I think that if they are charging for the event, then they should just go get a site plan.

From my time volunteering on the masterplan committee, I know that Westmoreland residents love its rural character. As we are all aware, a myriad of qualities define rural character: low density development, open spaces, knowing your neighbors, local community events, and privacy. This permit infringes upon what I believe our residents would want. Westmoreland is full of large beautiful yards that are meant to be celebrated on. If people want to enjoy time with their loved ones on their own land, they should be able to do that without going through a lengthy process with the town.

I understand that there are parties where parking becomes an issue. If someone throws a party and has their guests parking in the road, or they are loud past a specified time that should be laid out in our noise ordinance, there should be enforcement. Maybe there could be a small permit process for someone who knows they will have their guests parking on the street. If there has to be a permit, then someone who went through the process of getting a site plan should be exempt.

There are existing state laws that give the selectmen teeth when it comes to enforcing parking regulations, and ensuring the safety of neighbors. I think that this permit is a drastic, complicated solution to an isolated incident. If the selectmen feel this is what the town wants, I propose we hold off on presenting this permit to the town until after the selectmen is able to talk to the town at the next town meeting about it.

Kristen Riley