

TOWN OF WESTMORELAND
PLANNING BOARD
Minutes
March 17, 2026

Planning Board Members Present: Lauren Bressett (Chair), Bruce Smith (Vice Chair), Tim Thompson, Liana Capra, Alison Fissette, Lisa Prince, and Kristen Riley

Master Plan Committee Members Present: John Harris (Chair), Kristen Riley, and Lisa Prince
Chair Lauren Bressett called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Planning Board Representation – Discussed representation in potential litigation involving the appeal filed by Bill and Tina Fletcher regarding the site plan approval for property located at 1071 Route 12 (Map U1-5A). It was agreed unanimously that Town Attorney Mike Malaguti will represent the Planning Board in this matter.

Master Plan Draft Review

Survey Results and Community Impressions

The Committee reviewed survey findings, noting strong community engagement with approximately 450 responses submitted both online and by mail. Key takeaways include:

- A strong preference for maintaining Westmoreland's small, rural character with minimal change
- Continued emphasis on keeping taxes low
- General satisfaction with town services, road conditions, and local government
- A desire to protect natural resources, including forests, farmland, and wildlife habitat
- Moderate support for diverse housing options, particularly senior housing and accessory dwelling units (ADUs)
- Little to no support for higher-density housing such as townhouses and apartments
- Mixed understanding of alternative housing models, including cluster housing and tiny homes
- Visual impact identified as a primary concern for renewable energy projects; solar is more favorably viewed than wind.

Community Forum Planning

A community forum is scheduled for April 11, 2026, to gather additional input, particularly on housing and energy topics. Discussion included:

- The importance of incorporating visual aids (maps, diagrams, and examples of housing types such as cluster developments, cottage courts, and tiny homes)
- The school as a potential venue due to space availability; Chair Bressett will follow up regarding technology capabilities
- Outreach efforts, including contacting survey participants and advertising via Facebook
- Key topics to include housing options, renewable energy (solar and wind), and development constraints.

Review and Improvement of Master Plan Chapters

Discussed revisions to improve clarity and usability of the draft plan:

- Increased use of charts and graphs in place of text-heavy numerical summaries
- Narrative text to highlight key interpretations rather than duplicating data
- Minor updates needed across multiple chapters, including population, economic development, recreation, utilities, transportation, housing, and the county complex
- Adjustments for current conditions, recent legislation, infrastructure limitations, and local context (e.g., Maplewood data and road classifications)
- Recognition of improvements in volunteerism, recreation participation, and community facilities
- Inclusion of a summary of major town accomplishments over the past decade (e.g., fire station, solar installations, trail improvements)

Housing, Utilities, and Land Use Considerations

Discussion focused on several ongoing challenges and data considerations:

- Differing opinions on including detailed demographic data
- Need for clearer definitions regarding housing units, including treatment of Maplewood/assisted living and rental counts
- Increase in solar development activity, with infrastructure limitations (notably lack of three-phase power) restricting larger installations
- Consideration of local ordinances in relation to evolving state laws (e.g., development on Class VI roads and ADUs)
- The development constraints map was identified as a valuable planning tool; additional review and corrections are needed prior to finalization and presentation at the forum

County Complex, Administrative, and Data Considerations

County-level decisions can significantly impact the town, although they are often outside local control. It was recommended that county-related issues be referenced both in the overall plan overview and within relevant sections.

Action Items

- Compile a list of town accomplishments from the past ten years for inclusion in the Master Plan
- Update and clarify data related to solar installations and housing unit counts, including Maplewood/assisted living
- Develop visual materials (maps and diagrams) for use at the community forum
- Coordinate with Southwest Regional Planning Commission and town officials to verify demographic, land use, and infrastructure data (including road classifications and conservation lands)
- Draft and circulate a proposed agenda for the community forum
- Revise or remove outdated or unclear sections of the Master Plan draft, particularly those related to housing, roads, and legislative updates
- Confirm school availability and technical capabilities for hosting the forum
- Advertise the April 11, 2026 community forum

At 8:11 p.m., a motion to adjourn was made by Kristen Riley and seconded by Alison Fissette. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Jodi Scanlan