Westmoreland Planning Board Minutes
August 3, 2026

Members Present:Lauren Bressett (Chair), Bruce Smith (Vice Chair), John Snowdon (Selectman), Jim Church, Larry Siegel (Alternate, seated) Excused: Liana Capra, Kristen Riley and John Stronk

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Lauren Bressett. The chair noted that Larry Siegel was to be seated.

Approval of Minutes - A motion was made by Bruce Smith, seconded by Jim Church to approve the minutes of July 6, 2026, as printed. John Snowdon and Larry Siegel abstained. Motion passed 3-0.

Site Plan Review – After-the-Fact Revised Site Plan Approval
Applicant: JAIL Realty Trust LLC
Property: 917 Route 12

The Planning Board reviewed an after-the-fact application for a revised site plan originally approved in 1986. Lauren Bressett did a walkthrough of the Site Plan Application Checklist. Bruce Smith made a motion to accept the application as complete, seconded by John Snowdon. The motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

Tom Hanna of BCM Environmental & Land PLLC, representing JAIL Realty Trust LLC, presented the revised site plan prepared by Tara Kessler. Mr. Hanna explained that the application is for adding an existing garage to the property located on a 10-acre parcel in the Commercial Industrial District. The use is indoor storage of vehicles. There will be no vehicle repairs done in the garage. There is no septic to the garage but there is a water line for occasional hosing off vehicles.

Following Mr. Hanna's overview of the revised site plan the Board reviewed the site plan and made the following findings of fact:

- The Planning Board finds that the property, located at 917 Route 12, is situated within the Commercial Industrial District. The parcel consists of approximately 10 acres with 322 feet of frontage on Route 12, exceeding the minimum frontage requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.
- The new garage is located approximately 300 feet from Route 12, 200 feet from the nearest property boundary, and 195 feet from the nearest wetland, meeting or exceeding all applicable setback requirements.
- Total impervious and structural coverage of the lot will remain less than 20% of the parcel. Existing natural vegetation provides substantial screening, limiting visibility of the garage to a direct sight line down the driveway from Route 12.
- The proposed garage will be used for storage of vehicles already associated with the property and does not represent a change in the existing use of the property.
- The addition of the garage is not expected to result in an increase in traffic. Exterior lighting associated with the new garage is downward-directed facing Route 12.

Based on the testimony presented, the site plan, and the findings of fact, the Planning Board determined that the revised site plan complies with the applicable provisions of the Westmoreland Zoning Ordinance.

Bruce Smith made a motion to approve the after-the-fact revised site plan as presented, based on the findings of fact. The motion was seconded by John Snowdon and passed unanimously, 5-0.

Master Plan Review

The Planning Board continued its review of the draft Master Plan, focusing on the organization of the document, long-term priorities, and the overall narrative.

Larry presented a detailed review of the draft, noting that while it contains valuable information and data, it lacks a cohesive framework that ties the various sections together. He suggested that preserving the Town's rural character should be identified as the primary guiding principle, with the remaining goals organized to support that objective. He also observed that while there is a good summary of data, conclusions within the draft as a result of the data seem lacking or unclear. For example, the relationship between demographic trends such as increasing median age and income and the community's stated values, should be more clearly explained.

John Snowdon expressed support for the overall desire to preserve the town’s rural character but discussed the financial implications of that desire. He noted that approximately 77 % of the community is enrolled in Current Use, which limits the local tax base. That the ever increasing financial burden on the residents from increased costs of necessary town responsibilities and passing down of state obligations onto the local level by the legislature is a big concern. The Board agreed that the Master Plan should better address the need to find balance between protecting the Town's rural character while identifying sustainable ways to support municipal services, including roads, schools, and other infrastructure.

The Board then reviewed and reorganized the proposed Master Plan goals to better reflect long-term priorities and agreed that preservation of the Town's rural character should remain as the first goal.

There was discussion about the relationship between housing, economic development, and demographic trends. Members noted the need to consider opportunities for appropriate housing density in selected areas to provide affordable housing options while keeping more restrictive zoning in other areas to preserve the open vistas. The board also discussed the need for recreational opportunities to help attract and retain younger families, particularly in light of declining school enrollment.

The Board also discussed the increasing impact of state legislation on local land use authority. Members expressed concern that state housing mandates continue to reduce local control over zoning decisions and emphasized the importance of educating residents about how state legislation can affect local planning, zoning, and municipal finances. The Board noted that while it continues to communicate with state officials regarding proposed legislation, broader participation from residents in communicating these concerns to elected officials at the state level is essential to effectively advocate for the Town's interests.

Other Business

The meeting concluded with the introduction of resident Frank Mazzola, who has lived in Westmoreland for 15 years. Mr. Mazzola shared that he has experience participating in the

development of three master plans while at Keene State College and expressed an interest in serving on the Planning Board.

At 7:28 p.m., a motion was made by Larry Siegel, seconded by Bruce Smith, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting recorded by: Jodi Scanlan