

Pomfret Planning Commission Meeting

4/21/2026

DRAFT

Present: Bill Emmons, John Moore, Doug Tuthill, Nelson Lamson.

Absent: Cy Benoit, Tyler Wellington, Jack Pearson

Guests:

Call To Order/Agenda Changes/Public Comment

Bill Emmons Chair called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.

The Planning Commission meeting focused on reviewing and approving minutes from February 8th and April 7th, 2026. The February meeting covered discussions about floodplain maps, garage permits, and land designations for Pomfret, including concerns about Tier 2 lands and the Appalachian Trail conservation status. The April meeting addressed feedback from the Two Rivers Regional Plan regarding land use mapping, with particular attention to zoning requirements and transportation planning.

Two Rivers Regional Plan Objections

The group discussed objections to the Two Rivers Regional Plan, particularly regarding the 5-acre density and the expanded village area designation for South Pomfret. John shared draft language for the Pomfret town plan expressing these objections, including concerns about public sewer and water infrastructure limitations. Douglas emphasized that Pomfret residents have voted three times to maintain 2-acre zoning, and the group agreed to review the plan section by section to refine the objections further.

Pomfret Forest Coverage Language Revision

The group discussed revising text about Pomfret's forest coverage and conservation areas. They agreed to modify the language from specifying "80 %" forested to "approximately 78% forested" to allow flexibility. The commission also decided to remove specific references to "conserved lands along ridgelines and hillsides" and "large private forest land holdings," opting for more general

language about private forest land and habitat continuity within and around Pomfret. The discussion ended with consideration of how to address the reliability of existing data for designating specific areas.

Pomfret Wildlife Habitat Data Review

The group discussed the reliability and usage of wildlife habitat data in the context of Pomfret's town plan. They agreed to remove specific language about regulatory purposes and data unreliability after determining the data was old and not suitable for regulatory use. The discussion highlighted that while current forested areas (78% of Pomfret) and state best management practices already address environmental protection needs, there was no specific scientific evidence or landowner input identifying additional wildlife areas requiring protection. The group concluded that Pomfret's existing forested lands, steep slopes, and conserved areas already meet land requirements for future planning.

Pomfret Forestry Protections Discussion

The group discussed forestry protections and land use designations in the Pomfret area. They reviewed concerns about the Two Rivers Regional Plan's mapping of rural, general, rural agricultural, and rural conservation areas, particularly noting discrepancies in conserved land calculations (6,400 acres versus 2,400 acres reported by the plan). The team worked on refining language around these issues, with Douglas providing guidance on grammar and phrasing, particularly regarding the use of "non-conserved" land and proper sentence structure.

TROC Land Use Plan Revisions

Douglas and John discussed revisions to a document regarding TROC's regional land use plans, particularly focusing on mapping issues and terminology. They agreed to remove the term "legally conserved" and instead use "conserved land," with specific attention to how conserved acres are not properly mapped according to the Vermont Protected Land Database. The discussion also covered concerns about non-conserved land being incorrectly labeled as rural conservation and density calculations affecting development in small lots.

South Pomfret Village Designation Revisions

The group discussed revisions to text regarding the South Pomfret Village area and its designation in the Two Rivers Regional Plan. They clarified that while the area is designated as a village area in the regional plan, there are discrepancies between their local plan mapping and the regional plan's expansion requirements. The team agreed to revise the text to state that South Pomfret objects to

the Two Rivers expanded village area due to lack of public sewer and water infrastructure in the proposed expansion area.

Rural Development Planning Discussion

The group discussed building opportunities in rural areas, particularly around South Pomfret Village where there are no public sewers and water. They noted that landowners could potentially apply for planned unit development (PUD) status to build multiple houses in rural areas with proper septic systems. The discussion included specific examples of existing developments, including properties on Allen Hill Road and Jeff Nichols' complex. The conversation concluded with reflections on legislative processes and the importance of public involvement in decision-making, particularly regarding Tier 3 areas and road rules.

Land Conservation Strategy Discussion

Douglas and John discussed the challenges with land conservation maps created by the Vermont government, emphasizing the importance of engaging landowners collaboratively rather than imposing decisions. They highlighted that effective conservation requires convincing landowners of the benefits, rather than simply designating areas as conserved. Douglas also criticized the state legislature for not addressing broader issues like housing shortages and economic challenges while focusing solely on land conservation goals.

South Pomfret Infrastructure Planning Discussion

The group discussed transportation and infrastructure plans for South Pomfret, with John Town noting that the area lacks sidewalks and dedicated bicycle facilities but doesn't have significant growth to justify future additions. Douglas expressed skepticism about infrastructure investments, particularly regarding bike paths and traffic improvements, arguing that they represent unnecessary expenses for limited benefits. The discussion touched on low public participation in government meetings and concerns about property rights related to conservation efforts, with John suggesting that trust in government decisions is crucial for successful conservation programs.

Regional Significance Criteria Discussion

The group discussed concerns about regional significance criteria in an implementation chapter, particularly regarding wildlife habitats and natural communities. John expressed disagreement with the idea that developments in rural conservation areas should be subject to regional plan oversight, arguing that many of the specified criteria don't truly represent regional significance. Douglas agreed to review the specific criteria (number 12) and discuss it further with John to better understand the regional impact requirements.

Respectfully Submitted

John Moore, Chair,