



Rural Municipality of West River Planning Board Committee Minutes

Meeting No	2025-18	Time	6:00 PM
Session	Regular - Public	Date	Thursday, March 13, 2025
Chair	Helen Smith-MacPhail - Mayor	Location	Afton Community Centre
Adoption status	Approved	Contact Person	Susan Morse - CAO
Attendance	Mayor Helen Smith-MacPhail, Deputy Mayor Shaun MacArthur, Councillor Aaron MacEachern, Councillor Daniel Sud, Councillor Steve Pollard, Susan Morse – CAO, Ehi Itua – Administrative Assistant		
Regret	Councillor John Yeo, Councillor Lillian MacCannell		
Guest	Nil		

- **Call to Order**

Mayor Helen Smith-MacPhail called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

- **Adoption & Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved as circulated. It was moved by Deputy Mayor Shaun MacArthur, seconded by Councillor Steve Pollard, and unanimously carried.

- **Declarations of Conflict of Interest**

Nil

- **Recommendation Items**

- **PLB.25.18.1 – Land Use Bylaw Amendments to Consider**

Decision Type: Action

Status: Recommended

Background:

PLB 24.13.3

Description:

The CAO presented a report outlining possible amendments to consider for the Land Use Bylaw. The report included content of the current Bylaw's provisions, and relevant provisions from other municipalities' bylaws. The Committee discussed the report and identified amendments that are of high, low and future priority to the municipality.

Secondary Suites – The current Land Use Bylaw requires a development agreement for secondary suites. They must be serviced by the main dwelling's water and sewer systems. The Bylaw does not restrict the use of secondary suites as short-term rentals. The size restrictions for secondary suites adhere to the National Building Code. The Committee acknowledged that West River is a tourist destination and agreed that imposing a restriction requiring secondary suites to be used solely for long-term housing (over 30 days) and prohibiting their use for short-term rentals or tourism accommodations would be prejudicial to residents. It was noted that the Bylaw already provides clear guidelines short-term rentals within the municipality. The Committee recommends the following amendments for Section 4.18 of the Land Use Bylaw – remove section (e) requiring a development agreement, include a provision for ensuring the septic system is certified to support the secondary suite. Include an exception to allow for separate water/sewer when it is not feasible to service the suite by the main dwelling's systems, prohibit secondary suites on non-confirming lots, and limit the number of secondary suites permitted on a single lot to one. The CAO will present these recommendations to a planner for further review.

Site Specific Amendments in RA Zones – The current Land Use Bylaw permits clustered housing in Rural Residential (RR) Zones as a site-specific amendment. The Committee recognized that many farms are multi-generational, and it is often the practice to build more than one home on a single parcel of land. They discussed the feasibility of clustered housing in Rural Area (RA) Zone to allow for one additional dwelling on a property, subject to similar regulations as those for secondary suites. The Committee recommends that a Section in the Bylaw could read "clustered housing is allowed in both RR and RA as a site-specific amendment. The CAO will present this recommendation to a planner for expert opinion.

Short-Term Rentals – Short-term rentals are currently allowed in the municipality and are licensed by the Province. In certain municipalities, their bylaws stipulate that the dwelling shall be occupied as the primary residence` by the principal operator of the short-term

rental. RMWR's land use bylaw does not have this stipulation. The Committee discussed the potential implications of restricting short-term rentals in the municipality. They recognized that West River is a popular tourist destination with many seasonal properties and several tourism accommodations already operating in private homes and secondary suites. The Committee recognized that in context of the current housing crisis it is important to increase the availability of long-term rental housing. However, if restrictions on short-term rentals were to be considered existing operators could be "grandfathered in," with the restriction applying only to new operators. The Committee concluded that this issue does not pose immediate concern in the municipality and should be placed on the "unknown/low priority" list. The CAO was directed to confirm the number of short-term rentals currently operating within the municipality.

Variances – The Committee discussed the possibility of increasing the threshold of variance for Council approval without a public meeting from 10% to 20%, with any variance exceeding 20% requiring a public meeting. After consideration, the Committee decided that no amendments are currently necessary for Section 11.4 of the Land Use Bylaw.

Final Approval for subdivisions – Surveys Required – Section 13.15 of the Land Use Bylaw requires a final survey plan showing all lots pinned and certified by a professional land surveyor as one of the conditions before final subdivision approval is granted. This includes both the parent parcel and the new parcel. The Committee considered adding a provision like “Where a parcel that is being subdivided will result in a remanent parcel that exceeds 10 acres in Lot Area, the pinned Survey Plan requirement may be waived for the remaining portion of the parcel from which a lot is being subdivided provided a plan of subdivision drawn accurately to scale on a provincial property map is submitted and the application conforms with all other Sections of this Bylaw.” This amendment would only apply to Rural Area (non-commercial zones). The new lot will always require a survey. The Committee discussed that proposed amendment is in line with the practice in other municipalities and provincial requirements. The Committee referred this item to the CAO to consult with surveyors, investigate the issue further and report back.

Road Standard for Subdivision - Section 13.9 of the current bylaw states “all new streets or extensions to existing streets or to private rights-of-way shall be streets and no subdivision

shall be permitted of a lot served by a private road.” According to provincial standards, all public roads must be paved. The Committee discussed the pros and cons of this provision. They agreed that most private roads in the municipality are not properly maintained, approving subdivisions with private roads holds liability concerns particularly in the event of an emergency as private roads are often not easily accessed by emergency vehicles. The Committee also discussed the option of establishing standards for private roads should the amendments to this provision be considered. The Committee recognized that road standards are a barrier to small developments. The Committee referred this item to the CAO to confirm the status of limitation with a planner.

Accessory Structures – This item was deferred to the next meeting due to time constraints.

Fences – This item was deferred to the next meeting due to time constraints.

Zoning Amendments – The municipality currently has five development Zones – Rural Residential, Rural Area, Commercial Industrial, Parks & Recreation, Environmental Risk. The Committee discussed the potential need for an additional zone to accommodate multiple unit dwellings. The Committee referred this item to the CAO to seek expert opinion from a planner.

Height Limits – This item was deferred to the next meeting due to time constraints.

RVs/Encampments/Etc - This item was deferred to the next meeting due to time constraints.

- **Informational Items**

- **PLB.25.18.2 – Permit Report**

Decision Type: Information

Status: Received

Description:

The CAO presented a summary of permits issued from February 2025 by RMWR.

The CAO has contacted Registered Professional Planner to preparing a report on the rezoning application request from PID#681239.

- **PLB.25.18.3-** Rezoning Request Update – PID#202671

Decision Type: Information

Status: Received

Description:

The applicant has presented new survey plans for the subdivision. Municipal Staff have received written confirmation from the property owners agreeing to convey Fraser Lane to the Government of Prince Edward Island. The application will be further considered by Council at the next meeting.

- **Delegations & Public Input**

- Carol Carragher urged Council to carefully consider what should be permitted in the municipality with regards to zoning amendments. She reminded Council of the reasons for amalgamation and the need to protect the community’s rural nature. Mayor Helen Smith-MacPhail replied that the Official Plan emphasizes the rural nature of the municipality and the importance of considering future needs and potential developments. She thanked Ms. Carragher for her thoughtful concern and perspective on the matter.

- **Adjournment**

- Deputy Mayor Shaun MacArthur to adjourn the meeting at 7:18 PM.

Helen Smith-MacPhail	Susan Morse
Mayor _____	Chief Administrative Officer _____