Minutes not yet approved
Approval and any edits to be made in succeeding minutes

Bloomfield Town Plan & Zoning Commission – September 17, 2026 Special Meeting Minutes

There was a special meeting for the Town of Bloomfield's Town Plan & Zoning Commission held on September 17, 2026 at 7:00pm in a hybrid meeting style. The in-person location was Bloomfield Town Hall – Council Chambers, 800 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield, CT and the virtual location was via Zoom.

RECEIVED
SEP 24 2026
12:23pm
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
BLOOMFIELD, CT

1. **Call to Order**

Chair Lester called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

2. **Roll Call**

Present: *in-person:* Chair Byron Lester, Kevin Gough, Renae James, Jennifer Marshall-Nealy, Stephen Millette, Roger O'Brien (Alternate), Leon Peters *via Zoom:* Dwight Bolton, Deserae Cotton (Alternate)
Absent: Eunice Medwinter (Alternate),

A quorum was established with 7 regular members, and 2 alternate members present.

Also present: Jonathan Colman, Director of Building and Land Use; Lynda Laureano, Assistant Director of Building and Land Use; and Nicholas Gabuzda, Environmental Planner; Justin LaFountain of Goman + York

3. **Old Business**
   a. Commission's Final Draft Review of the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)

Chapter 1

Mr. LaFountain introduced Chapter 1, which covers statutory requirements, consistency with the Capitol Region Council of Governments' comprehensive plan, the update process, community engagement, and the Plan's organization. Commissioner Gough asked about the "locational guide map" on Page 10, noting that while it shows conservation factors such as forests and drinking water watersheds, the "activity zones" referenced in the text are not clearly identified in the map key. Mr. LaFountain said the plan has been in process for about five years, and that Goman + York was hired to refine the plan and correct Bloomfield references, not to revise maps. Mr. Colman confirmed the Town Council funding did not include map revisions.

Commissioner O'Brien noted the map comes from the state's 2025–2030 Conservation and Development Locational Guide Map and is intended to show general consistency with the state plan. Commissioner Gough said the document is difficult for the public to read because the narrative references unlabeled "activity zones," and some mapped features, including large pink areas, are not explained in the legend.

Mr. Gabuzda explained that the map reflects new 2025–2030 state guidance, different from the guidance available when the planning process began. After reviewing the latest guidance, it was confirmed that the map does show activity zones, but the legend does not identify them. Staff indicated that adding the activity zones to the legend should be feasible.

Commissioner Gough recommended revising the public input language to reflect that town participation was limited rather than extensive. Commissioner Marshall-Nealy suggested renaming the document "Plan for Bloomfield's Future" and changing the print color from green to black for readability. She also questioned describing Bloomfield Town Center apartments as "numerous," noting that only two or three buildings have been constructed. She also requested that the location of the June 2023 public workshop be revised to identify it specifically as the Alvin and Beatrice Wood Community Center. She also corrected

the formatting of the "Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Services" department name to ensure it is accurately represented as a single entity rather than separate departments.

Chapter 2

Mr. Colman and Mr. Gabuzda confirmed that the executive summary was updated to reflect the other chapters and the Commission's direction for the revised POCD. The commission requested clearer identification of the color-coded references. Commissioner Gough confirmed that the introduction and executive summary are complete, aside from future corrections for typos, spelling, grammar, and the previously discussed activity map key.

Commissioner James asked whether the community vision on Page 18 had changed since the previous draft was received. Staff confirmed it remains unchanged from the original plan and had previously been approved by town officials and departments. Commissioner Marshall-Nealy asked how substantive data concerns should be handled. Chair Lester clarified that minor narrative or typo issues may be raised during the meeting, while broader data concerns should be sent directly to staff. She suggested a wording change on Page 17, concerning Bloomfield's 2024 estimated population. Commissioner Gough requested that school population and enrollment trends be made consistent throughout the document. He noted that Page 86 provides a more complete explanation, including homeschooling and out-of-district attendance, and recommended aligning the Bloomfield population section with that language. The Commission requested clarification of the housing goal on Page 23 regarding the "full range of property tax relief authorized by Connecticut general statute," suggesting that the language specify relief for qualifying populations, including existing programs for veterans and seniors.

Chapter 3

Mr. LaFountain explained that the chapter had been substantially revised to remove incorrect out-of-state references, and tailor the plan to Bloomfield, with added emphasis on sustainability, resource protection, the East Coast Greenway, and other trails. Commissioner Gough noted that prior versions included habitat data from the natural diversity database that is not in the current draft. Mr. LaFountain explained that some maps and tables were removed because they were illegible, outdated, or could not be regenerated, though key maps were updated where possible.

The Commission discussed a Page 34 discrepancy in the DEEP water quality classification for the North Branch of the Park River, which is listed as "A" despite concerns that the river does not support aquatic life or recreation. A re-evaluation of the classification was suggested.

Concerns were raised that the current farmland soils map shows all of Bloomfield, including developed areas, and does not clearly identify the limited land that remains farmable. Commissioner Gough requested reinstating the 2012 farmland clusters map, noting it better identifies viable farming areas and could be added to or replace the current map.

Staff clarified that this request concerns the farmland section, not the already finalized future land use map, and indicated no objection to including the 2012 map if it can be technically integrated. Mr. LaFountain also acknowledged that the current map is drawn from state data and may have accuracy limitations.

The Commission also requested verification of the forest land mapping and data table, updated East Coast Greenway information from the Town Engineer. Commissioner James commended Mr. Gabuzda for his work on the Sustainable CT portion. Commissioner Marshall-Nealy stated that she will email additional Chapter 3 notes to staff.

Commissioner O'Brien recommended removing "zoning regulations" from the agricultural land preservation goal, revising agritourism language from "review and revise" to "consider revising," and designating the commission as lead, with staff as partner, in Strategies 1.1 and 1.2. Commissioner Gough proposed allowing property owners to request agricultural zoning, while Chair Lester noted that the concept had been previously discussed and no need for a separate agricultural zone had been identified. The commission reached consensus to remove the phrase "zoning regulation" and make the agreed role changes in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4

Commissioner Millette requested consistent colors for Bloomfield, Hartford, and Connecticut across the maps. Commissioner Peters requested a clearer definition of "starter houses" and their role in housing diversity and zoning goals. The commission discussed balancing Bloomfield's single-family character with demand for smaller, lower-cost homes. Rising land costs and lower returns make starter homes difficult to build, so the commission supported developing town incentives with the Town Council and other groups. Commissioner James requested that Strategy 2.3 identify specific senior-support services, as other strategies identify financing details. She also recommended defining Goal 1's "diverse housing options" as housing type, not ethnicity, including single-family and multifamily homes, apartments, and age-restricted condominiums. The Commission agreed to replace "without adversely impacting single-family neighborhoods" in Strategies 4 and 4.2 with language supporting housing diversity "where appropriate," subject to zoning controls. Chair Lester asked if container homes would be considered when referring to diverse housing options. Commissioner Gough recommended replace the word "affordable" instead "attainable" housing to address seniors seeking to age in place or downsize. He made comments related to the table on Page 45 and opined that data in the narrative and table do not match. Mr. Gabuzda confirmed that there was a consensus to prioritize the data presented in the text over the data presented in the graphs.

Chapter 5

Commissioner Gough stated that many of the chapters share recurring issues regarding the presentation of goals and data. He noted changes that need to be made to the number of Town of Bloomfield employees. He also noted that the table of top taxpayers is inaccurate. Commissioner James observed that the current goals focus heavily on large businesses in Bloomfield and suggested that more attention should be directed toward supporting the town's diverse small business community. She proposed that Strategy 1.1, which focuses on streamlining permitting and licensing, should be expanded to include a review of Town regulations to ensure they are not unnecessarily prohibitive or burdensome for small business owners. She discussed the importance of reducing regulatory hurdles for small businesses, citing previous examples such as a smoothie shop and a barbershop that were required to undergo a special permit process when they should have been handled administratively.

Commissioner O'Brien recommended changing the wording of Section 5.1 to be updated to "implement the goals of the Bloomfield Town Center Plan adopted in the spring of 2025," a change intended to express support for the plan's goals while maintaining flexibility for potential project responders. Commissioners agreed to swap the roles of lead entity and partner entity in Section 3.2, designating the Commission as the lead and staff as the partner. A review of the legend on Page 113 revealed inconsistencies in terminology, and the Commission identified correct language to ensure consistency. The Commission reached a consensus to consolidate the various subcategories under the Department of Public Works into a single, simplified heading to reduce wordiness.

Commissioner Bolton left the meeting at 8:40pm.

Chapter 6

Commissioner Marshall-Nealy questioned the accuracy of a statement in the mobility section, which claimed that Bloomfield has close access to Interstate 84 and recommended that the reference be removed from the document. There was a consensus to remove the section regarding roadway capacity and cost comparisons, as the narrative is confusing and the mathematical basis is unclear. Commissioner James confirmed with Mr. LaFountain that priority levels labeled as low, medium, or high within the document are intended as placeholders, and the Commission is responsible for determining the final designations.

Chapter 7

The proposed goals and priorities for the POCD are intended as a flexible framework, with high, medium, and low designations serving primarily as a barometer for scheduling tasks. Prioritization of goals does not have implications for grant eligibility, as the primary objective is to formally list them as specific goals. There is a proposal to elevate the funding of the town's traffic calming program to a high priority, a change supported by the Commission due to recent events. Mr. LaFountain suggested that the Commission may want to wait until the public hearing phase to finalize further changes to the plan, as public feedback may necessitate additional adjustments.

Commissioner O'Brien requested that the Town Plan and Zoning Commission (TPZ) be explicitly listed as a partner in the capital budget process within the narrative on Page 95, noting that state statutes provide the Commission with a role in this area. Commissioner Gough identified a need to update the section on schools on Page 85 to reflect that the number of schools has decreased from seven to five.. He recommended reorganizing the infrastructure section. The Commission discussed including a utility map. Mr. Gabuzda stated that a solar map is considered a significant document that should be kept separate from other utility maps.

Mr. LaFountain stated that policies, goals and other changes can be implemented quickly, whereas adding detailed maps would require more time and additional Pages. Additional information can be added to the document at any point during the 65-day review period without requiring formal changes to the core content. Once the revisions are finalized, a date for a public hearing will be determined. The commission agreed to prioritize finishing the revisions before setting a formal deadline for submission to the Council.

Commissioner Marshall-Nealy raised a question regarding the Global Magnet Experience School entry on Page 86, suggesting it should be removed because the facility is no longer a school. Mr. LaFountain hesitated to remove it as it has not been officially closed and is still Town-owned. She also clarified the location of the BPS Board of Education building.

Chapter 8

Commissioner Gough proposed a reorganization of Chapter 8, Cultural Resources, specifically suggesting that the page containing "Historical Resources and Museums" be moved forward two pages to precede the "Wintonbury Historical Society" and "Preserving Historical and Cultural Resources" sections. Commissioner O'Brien requested that Strategy 4.4 be revised to state "consider revising" rather than "review and revise." He also proposed the total deletion of Section 4.7, which pertains to the establishment of an agricultural zoning district.

The Commission discussed the inclusion of an agricultural zoning district. Commissioner Gough stated that this has not been discussed previously, while other Commissioners stated that it had. Commissioner

Millette noted that past discussions determined that the language was too vague. The Commission reached a consensus to remove Section 4.7 from the document, specifically citing the word "district" as the primary point of contention. Chair Lester stated that the Commission would not prevent residents from bringing up the topic of agricultural zones in the future. Ms. Laureano confirmed that agriculture and farming are permitted by right in every district, rendering specific regulations for an agricultural zone unnecessary. Commissioner Peters requested that the colors on the table be corrected.

Chapter 9

Commissioner O'Brien proposed specific changes to the narrative regarding the land use map, arguing that the current description incorrectly characterizes the map as merely advisory rather than a regulatory tool. He recommended deleting the fourth paragraph on Page 107 and replacing it with language stating that the future land use plan is a key component of the Plan of Conservation and Development. He also suggested deleting the first sentence on Page 108, which states that Bloomfield's proposed land uses are based on existing zoning districts and land uses, characterizing this as the opposite of the actual process.

Commissioner Gough suggested that the Commission review the language used in the Windsor Locks Plan of Conservation and Development for comparison, noting that their discussion of the topic is accurate. He raised concerns regarding the current land use section of the plan, specifically that it lacks sufficient detail and point-by-point guidance on how specific areas of town should be developed.

Commissioner Gough expressed a desire to rename zoning categories such as "Open Space 1," "Open Space 2," "Mixed Use 1," and "Mixed Use 2" to titles that are more descriptive rather than nebulous. A disagreement occurred regarding the origin of the current category names, with Commissioner O'Brien stating that Commissioner Gough had previously voted for and created the titles, a claim Commissioner Gough denied.

Chapter 10

Mr. LaFountain noted that there were no edits provided for Chapter 10 and suggested that consolidating the list on Page 113 would be beneficial to reduce the number of acronyms. Commissioner O'Brien emphasized the importance of ensuring that changes made in individual chapters are reflected in the implementation section.

Commissioner O'Brien proposed a revision to the acknowledgement text to state that the POCD was originally researched and drafted by FHI Studio, then revised by the Plan and Zoning Commission and staff, with assistance from Goman + York. Mr. LaFountain confirmed that outdated information, such as the title for India Rogers, had already been corrected in the current version of the document.

It was moved by Commissioner O'Brien and seconded by Commissioner Millette to send the POCD document as amended tonight, such as policies, goals, strategies and tasks, to CRCOG and the Town Council in the days ahead and notify other parties as required to start the 65-day review period. During the 65 day review period, correct word errors and inconsistences between narrative and charts and graphs and add other suggested maps where feasible. Staff is to provide a corrected version of the Plan to the Commission 7 days prior to date of the adoption public hearing.

Discussion ensued. Commissioner Gough made comments regarding binding the final copy. The motion was approved unanimously by a 7-0-0 vote. YES: K. Gough; B. Lester; R. James; J. Marshall-Nealy; S. Millette; L. Peters; R. O'Brien NO: None ABSTAIN: None

Mr. Colman recognized Mr. LaFountain for his contributions to the project, both in his former role Town Planner and subsequently as a consultant to the town. He also commended the Commission for their professional and courteous conduct throughout the review process, with the suggestion that their behavior sets a positive tone for other boards and commissions in the community. Clarification was provided regarding a name change for the document, which was officially updated to "Plan for Bloomfield's Future".

4. **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner James; seconded by Commissioner Marshall-Nealy and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:46pm.

The next regular meeting is September 24, 2026.