

Town of Stanford Zoning Commission

May 18, 2026

Meeting Minutes

Present: Thomas Angell, Eric Haims, Charlie Cunningham, Wendy Burton, Steve Horowitz

Absent: Don Smith

Meeting begins at 7:10 pm

Discussion on public comments of Local Law #1, 2026

Mr. Angell had various conversations with the Town Supervisor, Julia Descoteaux, Town Board member, Charlie Cunningham, and Nina Peek, Consultant from EDR, and it was discussed that perhaps Local Law #1 probably should not continue based on the feedback received so far with regard to its completeness and needed updates.

Mr. Angell wanted to address two issues. The first issue being if the Commission wants to continue to work on Local Law #1; or, do they want to hold off until more substantive work can be done. The second question was if the Commission would like to continue working with Ms. Peek now that her contract has been exhausted and exceeded, or do they want to look for another consultant with a different skill set to create a more complete local law.

Mr. Angell explained that the ADU law and Right to Farm law were drafted by him, and Mr. Horowitz has been working on the home occupations law, but neither of them have the bandwidth to rewrite the Zoning Code, so this is where the need for a consultant was determined, especially since the current Code has bits and pieces that do not work. Mr. Angell explained that Ms. Peek had expected Mr. Angell and Mr. Butts to do the legal review for the Code, but this type of action seems to require a team to create a complete product with lawyers and planners. Mr. Angell said the level of expense to complete this product could be more than they can afford. Ms. Burton said the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan allowed them to create the Zoning Commission that would hopefully solve some of the issues the Planning Board, Building Department, and Zoning Board of Appeals have had with ambiguity with the Code. Mr. Angell agreed that the idea of reorganizing the Code was necessary but if the framework is not done completely, it is hard to hang things off of it to move forward properly. Mr. Angell said in his opinion, the law should be complete and that the town should be able to defend it, and to know what is in it. Mr. Angell said a law firm with a background in zoning work would have a concept of how to deal with the issues we have within our Code. Ms. Burton asked if the current budget was \$75,000 for a consultant; it was agreed that this was correct and that \$4,500.00 had already

been spent.

Mr. Cunningham said Ms. Peek exceeded her \$3,000.00 contract by \$1,500.00 and was supposed to let them know when she exhausted her contract and that this equaled \$4,500.00. Ms. Burton said they probably would not have told her to stop in the middle of the project anyway. Mr. Cunningham questioned whether they want to continue to spend money on each detail of the Code by editing Local Law #1 or rather get a full, complete, reorganization done by Ms. Peek or someone else. Mr. Angell said that anytime the physical Code books get an update, it costs \$5,000-\$6,000.00 so they would like to be mindful of that.

Mr. Horowitz said after hearing the public comments from the May 14 Town Board meeting, he felt the disorganization and ambiguity are an impediment for Local Law #1. Mr. Horowitz suggested that the focus could solely be on the organization of the code, and then chapter by chapter they work on ironing out specific issues within each part of the code. Mr. Horowitz said there are a lot of mistakes and vagueness in the current code and it has been 40 years of using this code and cannot be fixed quickly. Mr. Horowitz said if there is a way to use only the structural system that Ms. Peek created, and not the other changes, maybe they could work off of that. Mr. Horowitz said if they had a structure they liked, they could then work on each section. Mr. Angell said it would be a whole rework because that is not simply what Ms. Peek did, she changed things as she reorganized. Mr. Horowitz said any “changes” that we brought up in Local Law #1 they would not do. Mr. Horowitz asked how problematic has working with the current code been, and Ms. Burton said it has been messy at times with the ZBA and Planning Board and it is necessary to clean up the code. Mr. Cunningham said he believed a lot may have changed when the reorganization was carried out and that there may have been more substantive or judgmental changes that were deemed necessary but were not easily identifiable by the public. Mr. Cunningham asked whether the Commission should focus on a total completed work product or get a true reorganized structure and then work section by section as Mr. Horowitz suggested. Mr. Haims said knowing the cost would be helpful.

Mr. Angell said he would prefer a consultant that allows for the Zoning Commission to work with the consultant through the process instead of just delivering a canned product. Mr. Angell said they could do it through RFPs or just hire people because it is a professional service. Mr. Angell said the larger issues are zoning because we only have 3 zones, and the use table and definitions have not been worked on since its adoption.

Ms. Burton suggested that the Town Board give priority items to the Zoning Commission to provide more direction. Ms. Burton said they should find a firm that can write ordinances. Mr. Angell and Mr. Cunningham said we need a firm that can do both consultation and legal work. Ms. Burton pointed out that firms that are too far away could cause more fees with

commuting. Ms. Burton suggested looking up North or in the Albany area since they may be more familiar with rural communities.

The Commission agreed that they would like to avoid doing an RFP. Mr. Cunningham suggested asking the New York Associations of Towns for recommendations.

The Commission decided they would like to reach out to some firms that have a team of both a planner and a lawyer. The Commission would also like to reach out to the New York Association of Towns to get more information about land use planning and potentially obtain grant money. Mr. Angell said there is a firm in Rhinebeck that has good land use background.

Mr. Angell said he would like to have the comments from the public at the Zoning Commission meetings instead of waiting for comments until the Town Board meetings. In this way the Zoning Commission would have time to adjust if necessary. Ms. Burton said having the previews had helped so the law is not getting rewritten. Ms. Burton would like to see more interaction with the public at the Zoning Commission meetings and get to a product that they are proud of and can defend.

The Commission agreed that the plan is to table Local Law #1 and to search for other firms by word of mouth and via New York Association of Towns to find a team that can help create a more complete product. The Commission would also like the support of the Town Board to use the Zoning Commission meetings as a forum for the public to help mold the Code. There is still a seat available on the Zoning Commission as well.

Discussion on Home Occupations

Mr. Horowitz said this edit has a lot of capitalizing, and a couple of new defined terms. Mr. Horowitz explained that he does not define items twice within the draft and that he also found it confusing using Ms. Peek's ordering system that combines both letters and numbers to organize the sections, but he stuck with it for the time being.

Mr. Horowitz said the major addition to this draft is "Minor Retail Coffee Bean Store" so an applicant could sell coffee beans as retail at a roadside farmstand. Mr. Cunningham questioned the need to add such specific items, so Mr. Angell asked what would be the bottom line that would trigger the need for a home occupation special use permit because the Planning Board does not have much guidance from the Code at this point.

Mr. Horowitz said the draft provides a list of prohibited home occupations, but Mr. Cunningham said he would like to see the definitions be tied more to the land use, not so much the specific occupations and provided examples of operating hours and traffic as possible limitations. Mr.

Angell said that the Planning Board once had an applicant for a home occupation that was a home for the dying within her residence, and the Planning Board was able to classify it as a home occupation. Mr. Angell gave an example of a publisher that works from their home online and rhetorically asked if that would be classified as a home occupation, and the Commission agreed it would not. Ms. Burton asked if there is a way to simply find a way to say home occupations are permitted as long as they are not disruptive, and Mr. Horowitz said the draft has a number of provisions that do that already. Mr. Angell pointed out that a member of the public can get many deliveries a day now with online shopping and so limiting the number of deliveries a day for a business may not be an important factor since lots of people get deliveries who are not running a business. Ms. Burton pointed out that the list of prohibited uses would be disruptive as home occupations. Mr. Angell said that if they wanted to pass this as a standalone ordinance, they would have to come up with definitions for each prohibited use. Mr. Horowitz said the draft contains many characteristics that are intended to define the home occupation as accessory to the primary residential use. Mr. Angell said what the Commission needs to do is come up with a threshold for what requires a special use permit for a home occupation and what does not. Mr. Horowitz gave an example of an occupation of the home as a regulation.

Mr. Angell asked if the public interface is what we are trying to regulate. Reduce disruption. Mr. Angell asked how will they regulate what constitutes needing a home occupation.

Mr. Horowitz explained that there is a difference between a home professional office and home occupation.

Mr. Angell said there are uses that are permitted that are not in the Code, they would have to go to the Town Board.

Mr. Angell asked Mr. Horowitz if he could consider a list of criteria that triggers the need for a home occupation. A general list that applicants can review to see if their business would require a home occupation.

The Commission agreed that in-person transactions should be a stipulation.

Ms. Burton motioned to approve the April 30, 2026 minutes with the amendments made by Mr. Cunningham. Mr. Horowitz seconded. All in favor, Mr. Angell, Mr. Haims, Mr. Cunningham, Ms. Burton, Mr. Horowitz. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:48 pm