

WEST WINDSOR PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes

July 1, 2009

Present: Barbara Truex, Hal Pyke, Joe D'Anna, Glenn Seward, Mark Isenberg, Tom Kennedy, Martha Harrison

1. Call to Order - Chair Hal Pyke called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.
2. Changes or Additions – Addition to draft subdivision regulations for Selectboard to consider. Hal said the Town of Manchester has a subdivision process similar to ours but it is informal so they don't get caught up in potential appeals at each step, as happened with the Hunt Road development in Windsor. Hal presented the Planning Commission with a draft paragraph, which could be added to the subdivision regulations to enable this type of informal review if the Planning Commission thinks it's a good idea. Joe said he thinks it's a good idea. The PC talked about where the paragraph might be inserted. Mark asked if the informal review is at the applicant's discretion. Hal said yes. Hal noted that the applicant could waive the sketch plan review if they come in with a well-developed preliminary plan. The PC agreed that the draft paragraph could be added to Section 2.3-1, between (A) and (B). **Barbara made a motion to recommend to the Selectboard that they include the draft paragraph on informal review in the Subdivision Regulations prior to their public hearing.** Mark asked how this came about. Hal said this came out of Manchester's subdivision regulations. Mark asked if it works well for Manchester. Hal said that both Norwich and Manchester indicated that the informal review works very well. Mark asked if the other towns have a similar protocol. Hal said in substance they do although their process is not as sharply defined as ours, which is laid out in phases. Martha said Manchester has an optional informal review, followed by a formal review. Martha said she doesn't know whether, in Manchester, they just continue their formal review until the final plat is approved because that could be a long process. Mark said the process seems daunting. Glenn said that's why the informal review appeals to him – the process can be explained and the applicant's concerns can be discussed without ramifications. Mark said if it's non-binding, there's not a lot of accountability and things might be said that come back to haunt you. Mark said that the informal review will add to the burden of the town officials who participate. Hal said he thinks that's why Manchester has applicants sign a document agreeing that the review is not binding on anyone who participates. Hal said the informal review would not be on the record. **Joe seconded the motion.** Glenn noted that the informal review is purely voluntary. **Hal called for a vote on the motion, which passed unanimously.** Mark asked how quickly the DRB would have to respond to a request for an informal review. Hal said he thinks that's up to the Chair of the DRB. Mark said some government processes are only there to retard progress. Hal said this town has never operated that way.
3. Prepare for Public Forum on Housing & Natural Resources – Tom Kennedy asked how the PC plans to advertise the forum. Hal said flyers have been posted around town. Tom suggested asking Tom Kenyon to mention it in his column. Martha said the flyers also went home with the school kids and will be available at the bean supper. Tom suggested making them available at the General Store. Mark suggested having them available at the 4th of July barbeque also. Tom said the guest speakers are going to impart information, but are not going to be able to answer specific questions about West Windsor. Tom asked

the PC what they want the people who attend the forum to do. Tom said he will facilitate the forum. Tom said the purpose of the forum is to educate people and get a sense of how they feel about these things. Tom said the forum will be less specific and more conceptual than the public hearings on the zoning regulations. Tom said after each speaker, he could pose the question, "What do you think we should do about this in West Windsor?" Tom asked if the PC wants to establish a dialogue with the people who attend. Hal said yes. Martha said if Anne Cooley is going to present possible solutions to the affordable housing problem, it would be nice to gauge people's comfort level with the different solutions. Barbara suggested asking the speakers for ideas on how to reconcile the two very different housing and natural resource "camps." Hal talked about the need for affordable housing as outlined in the "Housing Challenge" video. Tom said the PC could present some information on the average sale price of a house and/or a lot and the average household income in West Windsor. Tom suggested keeping it simple and letting people talk. Hal said the state is moving towards school consolidation. Hal added that the town may need to consider a cooperative law enforcement arrangement with a neighboring community and asked where we find people to work in that capacity if the town can't provide housing. Hal said proponents of natural resource protection tend to fight against development and how do you reconcile those two points of view in a community. Tom said the PC should not try to respond to people's comments but should just write them down so we can hear as many different ideas as possible and then, if there's time, people can prioritize their top five. Hal suggested meeting between now and July 21st to iron out the details for the public forum. Hal said the PC should steer the discussion away from "my lot" questions and keep it more broad. Barbara said the PC should make it clear that the Town Plan is just speaking to the basic philosophy of the town. The PC decided not to have a break in the middle of the forum. The PC agreed to hold the forum in the downstairs hall if possible. Tom asked the PC if they want to try to engage the people who attend the forum in the process of revising the Town Plan. Tom said he can post West Windsor's current Town Plan on the Regional Planning Commission's website, but he doesn't want it as a handout at the forum because he wants people to talk from their gut. Tom said if the ski resort comes up, we can let people know that we'll talk about that at the economic development forum. Martha said she would like to see the town have a housing commission, but she doesn't know if there is enough interest in the community. Tom said, in the past, this community has not been interested in affordable housing but the state is now saying that towns have to address the issue. Tom said, "Should we have a housing committee?" could be one of the questions. Tom said the PC would need to think about who would shepherd that committee. Tom said he will email the two speakers tomorrow. Tom said the PC should just listen at the public forum and not correct people.

4. West Windsor Town Plan: Review and update - The PC quickly reviewed the revisions to Chapter 3 (Utilities & Facilities). Martha said that April Harkness is not aware of any recent water quality testing on Mill Brook. Glenn said he has heard about several major instances of contamination on Mill Brook which were reported to the state but little or nothing was done. Hal said the Town Plan should contain a recommendation that residents contact the town if they are aware of issues like this and that the town test the water. Hal said to allow that type of situation to continue is unacceptable. Mark asked if the PC wants to encourage the town to incur the expense of water testing. Hal said

absolutely. Barbara agreed that the town should at least test periodically. Glenn agreed. Martha said she asked for input on Chapter 4 from Mike Spackman, Tom Kenyon, Jim Kenyon, Nancy Gaynor and Kenny Burke. Barbara asked what is meant by “establish access to the Cady Mausoleum?” Glenn said you can only access the outside of the mausoleum. Glenn asked about the status of the mausoleum. Martha suggested asking Tom Kenyon for an update. Barbara asked if there needs to be a change to the Town Plan recommendation about the mausoleum. Glenn said, when he was on the Selectboard, they had two or three site visits up there. Glenn said he will contact Tom for an update. Hal suggested tabling further review of Chapter 4 pending the receipt of updated information. Barbara asked if it’s true that West Windsor residents can take their recycling to Windsor. Martha said she used to take her recycling there. The PC discussed the Education chapter, noting a 7-year decline in local school enrollment, which has shown signs of reversing in the past year or two. Barbara suggested that the Town Plan include a recommendation that the town stay involved in regional school consolidation discussions. Martha asked the PC if they would like to get some feedback on chapter 5, or a position statement on consolidation, from the school. Hal said the PC should consider a recommendation that the school board look into the possibility of merging with adjoining towns that have low enrollment. Barbara suggested, “The town needs to stay involved in regional school facility discussions as consolidation occurs throughout the state and our area.” Martha asked if there should be a couple of sentences before that sentence, describing the situation. Barbara said yes, we need to have a statement about declining enrollments. Martha said the DCF website supposedly has a reliable up-to-date directory of child care centers, but it doesn’t have any listings for West Windsor, so she’s not sure how reliable and up-to-date it is. Martha said she’s pretty sure there are licensed providers in West Windsor and there is the after-school program at Albert Bridge. The PC agreed that the revised wording is fine and the after-school program should not be mentioned. The PC agreed that it is not necessary to mention Act 60 and Act 68. The PC agreed to send chapter 5 to the school board for their review and comment. Regarding the Recreation chapter, Mark recommended including mountain bikers in the first paragraph. Glenn suggested mentioning Sports Trails of the Ascutney Basin (STAB). Barbara asked if there is a statute that protects landowners from liability when they allow people to walk on their property. Martha said she thinks there is, but she can’t cite it. Barbara said she thinks it would be worth mentioning in the Town Plan. The PC agreed. Martha asked the PC if they want to mention ancient roads in the Recreation chapter or in some other chapter. The PC agreed to insert ancient roads into the last sentence of the first paragraph under “Trails.” Martha also asked the PC if they want to include something about current use because, on the one hand, it preserves large tracts of land but, on the other hand, people with land in current use often post “no trespassing” signs. Barbara said she thinks the state is now allowing forest lands used for recreation to qualify for the current use program and suggested further research to confirm. Glenn said if the state is allowing that it could be incorporated into the last sentence of the paragraph. Glenn suggested including the Cady Trail under “Public Recreation Areas.” Hal suggested striking the last sentence under “Commercial Recreation Areas.” The PC agreed with both suggestions. The PC then edited the recreation policies and recommendations. There was some discussion about how the town could ensure that people have the opportunity to enjoy noncommercial forms of recreation. Glenn suggested that the town develop a recreation

plan. Barbara suggested that the town provide incentives for people to keep their land open. Barbara asked if the Bicentennial Trail is well marked. Glenn said he hasn't been up there in awhile. Barbara asked if the town has a trail map already. Martha said there are maps but she doesn't know if there is one "master map." Barbara said a town recreation plan should include a comprehensive trail map and a plan for maintaining trail signage. Glenn said STAB has done an amazing job of developing and marking trails. Mark said the snowmobile club does a nice job also. Hal said starting next year the state is going to require that towns submit a comprehensive list of every trail and road they want to preserve.

5. Minutes – June 17, 2009: **Barbara made a motion to approve the minutes of June 17, 2009, as written. Glenn seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. June 26, 2009: Barbara made a motion to approve the minutes of June 26, 2009, as written. Mark seconded the motion, which passed with Glenn abstaining because he was not present. June 29, 2009: Glenn made a motion to approve the minutes of June 29, 2009, as written. Joe seconded the motion, which passed with Barbara and Mark abstaining because they were not present.**
6. Other Business – Next meeting: The PC agreed to meet to discuss the upcoming Public Forum on Wednesday, July 8th at 10:00 AM if Tom Kennedy is available.
7. Adjourn – **Joe made a motion to adjourn at 8:40 PM. Mark seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison