

WEST WINDSOR PLANNING COMMISSION

Draft Minutes
January 25, 2010

Present: Hal Pyke, Glenn Seward, Mark Isenberg, Joe D'Anna, Jason Rasmussen, Mike Spackman, Martha Harrison

1. Call to Order – Chair Hal Pyke called the meeting to order at 6:40 PM.
2. Changes or Additions – None
3. Discuss Transportation chapter of Town Plan – Jason said some of the mileage data on the town highway map needs to be updated. Martha noted the reclassification at the end of Blood Hill Road. Jason said if there are any biking facilities that the Planning Commission (PC) is considering, they could put them on the map. Martha said it has come up a few times that residents would like to be able to bike but they don't feel it's safe. Jason said the PC should think about how wide the town wants the roads to be. Hal said there has been discussion about widening Route 44 between Seems Road and the Post Office, where a lot of people walk. Joe asked if people have expressed a desire for bicycle paths. Hal said yes. Joe suggested adding some wording to that effect. Hal said the PC could craft a specific recommendation for action. Martha asked Jason if West Windsor's traffic volumes are still increasing. Jason said no; they are steady or declining. Jason said the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission (SWCRPC) can supply updated traffic information. Jason noted that 7% of the traffic on Route 44 is truck traffic and 6% of the traffic on the Brownsville-Hartland Road is truck traffic. Mark said seasonal information would be helpful. Jason said there is no seasonal data specifically for West Windsor but the statewide average traffic is 2.4 times higher during winter peak. Jason said he will provide the PC with some language on seasonal traffic. Jason said Connecticut River Transit does provide "on demand" service in West Windsor now. Jason said Vermont Transit is now Greyhound. Jason said he will find out if the bus companies provide transportation to Burlington. Martha asked about the Pedestrian Master Plan that was completed in 1999. Jason said he would give the PC a copy. Jason said the data in the Commuter Patterns section can't be updated at this point because some of it is from the 2004 survey and some of it is from the 2000 Census. Jason said detailed data from the 2010 Census will not be available until about 2013. Hal said, with the closing of the talc plant, the information on where West Windsor workers live has probably changed. Joe noted that the veterinary clinic and the humane society have opened since then so the numbers may not have changed much. Glenn said he doesn't think the ski area has changed much. The PC agreed to eliminate the four tables in the Commuter Patterns section. In response to a question from Joe, Mike described the various road classes. Martha asked Mike if he remembers the conversation about widening Route 44 out to the post office. Jason said Tom Kenyon asked the Agency of Transportation (AOT) if they could widen Route 44 and AOT agreed but said it was low on their priority list. Mike said if that's a goal, it should be included in the Town Plan. Mark directed the PC's attention to #8 under "Policies." Mike suggested mentioning Route 44 specifically. The PC agreed. Jason asked about the road policies as reflected in the subdivision regulations. Hal agreed that the transportation chapter could reference the subdivision regulations. There was a question about road standards relative to the number of lots served by the road. Mike said if there are three or more lots, the road has to have its own name. Martha said if the road serves two or more lots, it's considered a development road. Glenn agreed. Jason asked if the zoning

regulations have driveway standards. Martha said yes. Hal said the Development Review Board should be mentioned. Glenn said the B-71 standard should also be mentioned. Mike asked if the B-71 standard applies to private roads. Glenn said it does where the private road accesses a town highway. Mike asked whether driveways along a private road have to meet the standard. Glenn and Hal said they don't think so. Glenn said there are specific driveway standards that the DRB reviews, even on private driveways along private roads. Mike said he thinks there could be trouble if nobody were reviewing how accesses are installed on private roads because the property owners could petition the town to take over the road. Glenn said the DRB does not review the intersection of a driveway and a private road but there are specific driveway standards. Martha said when the subdivision is initially approved, the Selectboard approves the intersection of the private road with the public road and the DRB approves the number of lots in the intersection but, beyond that, the property owner just has to meet the driveway standards. Glenn said with a new subdivision, there could be stipulations about driveways when the DRB reviews the project. Mike and the PC agreed that it is better to spell out driveway specifications when the subdivision is being created. Jason said the Selectboard only has authority within the right-of-way. Jason said if the bylaws allow, then the DRB can look at driveways in more detail. Conversely, Glenn said, the town has very little say over driveway access points on private roads in existing subdivisions. Hal said he will look at the language in the zoning and subdivision regulations again. The PC agreed that if the regulations don't already require driveways on private roads to meet B-71 standards, they should. Jason asked the PC if they are concerned about driveways coming off Route 44 east where the road is twisty. Hal said it's well posted and people tend to slow down to 40 miles per hour. Hal said the town should consider a left turn lane for westbound traffic on Route 44, at the entrance to the Resort. Mike agreed that future development on Ski Tow Road should trigger a review of that intersection. Jason asked if the zoning or subdivision regulations enable the town to require traffic studies. Hal said yes. Martha asked about the sentence discouraging driveways that are more than 400 feet long. Glenn said it seems arbitrary. The PC agreed to delete that sentence. Hal asked if the subdivision regulations require a second entrance for subdivisions that exceed a certain size. Glenn said he doesn't think so. Mike said that is an issue sometimes when the highway department has to close a road for maintenance. Martha asked Mike if he remembers the Conservation Commission coming up with a policy on the maintenance of scenic roads. Mike said no and added that there are no designated scenic roads in town. Joe asked about the difference between a scenic road and a scenic byway. Jason said "byways" are usually state roads. Glenn asked Mike if he has seen the state standards for local scenic roads. Mike said yes. Jason said most highway departments don't like the standards. Hal said some of the transportation policies could probably be condensed or simplified. The PC reviewed and modified the transportation policies and recommendations. There was discussion about whether the town should encourage the widening of roads to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists and horseback riders, or the narrowing of roads to facilitate slower traffic speeds. Mark said widening the roads erodes the aesthetic integrity of the community and the Town Plan should specify that trees, roots, stone walls, etc. should be preserved. Mike said the PC should keep in mind the policies that the Selectboard has to have with regards to safe travel on the highway. Glenn suggested language that indicates the need for balance between maintenance techniques and aesthetics. Martha asked the PC if they want to include a recommendation on traffic calming measures. Mike suggested an island at the intersection of Route 44 and Ski Tow Road. Glenn agreed. Jason suggested a recommendation to consider

improvements to that intersection. Martha suggested that the PC include reviewing the Pedestrian Master Plan as a recommendation for action. Martha also asked the PC if they want to include a policy or recommendation on ancient roads and trails. Hal suggested mentioning that the Conservation Commission is developing a plan to meet state requirements for ancient roads. Jason agreed that the Town Plan should mention that the CC is investigating the issue. Mark asked about town policies on ATVs. Mike said Reading has a policy. Jason said he would try to get a copy of Reading's policy.

4. Review revised draft of Town Plan Energy chapter – The PC agreed that the Energy chapter should mention the creation of an Energy Committee and the Committee's involvement with drafting the chapter. The PC agreed to move the purpose statement to the beginning of the Energy chapter and remove "Purpose" as a subheading. Martha agreed to ask the Energy Committee for the source of the data presented in the chapter. Jason asked the PC if they want to address the commercial production of energy. Jason said the Public Service Board will take a town's plan into consideration during a Section 248 proceeding. Mark recalled a PC discussion about the potential for the erection of turbines on the mountain. Jason said if West Windsor had strong language in its Town Plan, it might make a difference. Hal said Matt Dunne has been working with some engineers on the possibility of creating two large biomass plants in Vermont and, with the talc plant sitting vacant, that could be a potential site. Hal noted that we don't have anything addressing that in the town plan. Mark said it would be a good idea to state that the town embraces the possibility of commercial alternative energy production. Hal suggested a policy to encourage renewable energy systems that have minimal impact on the rural character of the town. Jason said the town might not like all the trucks associated with a biomass plant, the aesthetics of wind turbines, or the glare from solar arrays in certain locations. Jason said the issues depend on the specific type of alternative energy. Hal said that's why he suggested an all-encompassing statement. Jason said the town might want to be as specific as they can on systems that they have jurisdiction over, e.g. small wind turbines that are not net metered. Jason said the SWCRPC can work with the PC and the Energy Committee on energy planning over the next few years. Mark asked Jason if other towns have language about the balance between commercial power production and rural character. Jason said he will look into it. Jason said it wouldn't hurt to specify energy projects that the town knows it is interested in pursuing. Everyone agreed that the town is interested in making municipal buildings more energy efficient.
5. Prepare for Land Use Forum – Jason said he sent a copy of the revised flyer to Sharon Murray. There was discussion about the type and length of Sharon's presentation.
6. Minutes: December 16, 2009, January 6, 2010 – The PC agreed to defer consideration of the minutes until their next meeting.
7. Next meetings: February 10th and February 17th
8. Adjourn – **The PC adjourned by consensus at 8:40 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison