

WEST WINDSOR PLANNING COMMISSION

Draft Minutes
February 17, 2010

Present: Hal Pyke, Glenn Seward, Joe D'Anna, Barbara Truex, Jason Rasmussen, Martha Harrison

1. Call to Order – Chair Hal Pyke called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.
2. Changes or Additions – None
3. West Windsor Town Plan: Review and update Land Use chapter – Hal said the data at the bottom of page 12 will need to be updated. Jason said he will ask April to do some calculations. Barbara said the name of the Resort should be updated to include Orange Lakes. Martha said she thinks it is still called the Ascutney Mountain Resort. Hal agreed that chapter 2 should recognize the Orange Lakes timeshare project. Barbara noted that the talc plant is no longer “active.” Joe asked if there are still pastures and agricultural fields along Route 44. Jason said in many cases the Town Plan should be more specific with more precise language. The Planning Commission (PC) agreed to keep the paragraph about the 2004 survey results. The PC discussed including waiver language in the zoning bylaws and agreed that it would be a good idea. There was discussion about the increasing number of people who push the limits of the zoning regulations. Barbara expressed an interest in limiting new regulations to those areas where people are consistently crossing the line. Glenn agreed. Barbara suggested mentioning in the Town Plan the feedback that the PC received during the public hearings on the zoning regulations. Jason asked what specific issues generated the most feedback at the public hearings. The PC agreed that density and large lots were controversial. The PC agreed that the density-based zoning concept presented by Sharon Murray was clearer than the concept proposed by the PC two years ago. Hal said things like that can be included in the policies or the recommendations for action. Hal said five-acre zoning doesn't allow for affordable housing and the one-acre district is relatively small. Martha said she's not crazy about the idea of limiting the number of building permits issued each year. The Planning Commission agreed to eliminate that sentence. Jason suggested language requiring phasing. Martha said there is phasing language in the PUD section. Martha suggested being more specific in the paragraph that begins “All new development should blend into the existing landscape.” Glenn agreed that the language should specifically address ridgelines. Jason suggested that blending into the landscape might be appropriate in rural districts, but not in the village. Jason suggested moving that paragraph to the “Rural Residential” section of Future Land Use. The PC reviewed the current zoning map and found it reasonably consistent with the Future Land Use section of the 2005 Town Plan. Hal said the Secondary Growth district would lend itself to density-based zoning. Martha said if the town were to adopt density-based zoning, all the other regulations would still be in place to protect steep slopes, wetlands, and the like. Barbara said it would be nice to avoid ridgeline development that glares at you from a view shed. Jason said it depends on what's important to the community. There was discussion about the recently cleared ridge in Happy Canyon and the town's limited ability to regulate logging. Hal suggested including some language on building envelopes in the subdivision regulations. Glenn suggested site plan review for ridgeline development. Barbara suggested a recommendation to that effect. Jason said there are sample ridgeline ordinances available. Jason said the PC should be clear about what they mean by “ridges” and suggested mapping them. Jason said the language under “ridgelines”

on page 16 should be specific. Glenn suggested involving the Conservation Commission (CC) in ridgeline identification and mapping. Jason said the PC could probably use a topographic map to identify ridgelines. Barbara said historically some of the ridges were bare due to sheep farming. Jason said the PC could specify that ridgeline development refers to buildings not pastures. The PC looked at the map showing topographic features and identified several scenic ridges. Jason said the PC could include ridgelines in a scenic inventory or develop a ridgeline protection overlay. Hal said most of the scenic ridgelines are at 1500 feet. Glenn noted that there are a few that are below 1500 feet. Jason said it's common for towns to specify that they don't want roads at elevations over 1500 feet. Jason said towns typically map out a ridgeline overlay district if they want to regulate ridgeline development. Martha suggested that the PC include "consider establishing a ridgeline overlay district" as a recommendation for action. The PC agreed. Jason said where there are regulations in place, the cost of hiring landscape architects often discourages ridgeline development. Barbara suggested investigating a community clustered septic system for the village. Hal said packaged systems require about the same amount of maintenance as sewage treatment plants but on a smaller scale and he doesn't know where the town would locate a packaged system. The PC agreed to include general language on sewage disposal systems. Jason asked the PC members if they are okay with the language on Resort development. Glenn said the Resort should have its own subheading. There was discussion about the language on Resort density and the affiliation of development with Resort uses. Hal said he thinks the language should be strengthened. Jason suggested adding a policy specifying that future development at the Resort shall be Resort-related. There was discussion about possible language. Martha said the restrictions on development in the Resort/Conservation district are spelled out in the zoning regulations. Hal agreed but said the Town Plan should provide a basis for the zoning. Jason agreed. Martha suggested talking about the Resort/Residential and Resort/Conservation districts separately. There was discussion about the documents that constitute the Resort's Master Plan. Hal said he would like to look at the court order again. Glenn summarized his understanding of the basic elements of the Master Plan. Hal read the purpose statement for the Resort/Conservation PUD district from the zoning regulations and suggested using the same language for future land use in the Resort/Conservation district. Martha asked what "affiliated with the Resort" means. Glenn said former PC Chair Chris Callahan was very concerned that any future development in the Mile Long Field area be tied into the Resort. Martha said she thinks the idea was that, because the ski area loses money, Resort housing development should help subsidize the ski area but how that would be accomplished is unclear. Jason suggested moving some of the statements about Resort development to the Policy section. Barbara said the statement about limiting the impact of Resort development on the village is important. The PC agreed that, currently, the road network at the Resort makes no accommodation for pedestrians and future development should address that issue. Jason said Planning Commissions are not required to address cultural resources in their Town Plans. The PC agreed to eliminate Recommendation #2. Martha suggested investigating some of the non-regulatory means of protecting natural resources that Sharon mentioned. Jason asked the PC members if they are interested in "village center" designation, which would allow property owners to get tax credits for fixing up historic structures. Barbara said that sounds like a reasonable recommendation. Jason suggested a Policy saying that development should be consistent with the Future Land Use map. Martha asked what happens if the PC tries to develop zoning regulations that are consistent with the Future Land Use map and gets shot down; then there are two competing

maps. Jason said the deadline for zoning and subdivision regulations to be consistent with the Town Plan is 2011. Jason said now is the time for the PC to make decisions about what they, and the community, want the town to be like in the future. Glenn said the public hearings on zoning (in 2007 and 2008) gave the PC a good idea what the community wants, although some of the preferences expressed were contradictory. On the one hand, Glenn said, people want their families to be able to afford to live here but, on the other hand, they value large tracts of open land. Barbara asked how many of the people who move to Brownsville want to live in the village; most seem to want large lots. Barbara said maybe West Windsor should remain a rural community. Glenn agreed and said he thinks most residents feel that way. Glenn said it's unfortunate that young families can't find a place to live here but that's a fact of life. Martha said she wonders if a build-out analysis would help illustrate what five-acre zoning could look like. Barbara said she doesn't think working people will move here because there's nowhere to work. Martha said Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center (DHMC) employees might want to live in West Windsor. Hal said DHMC is going to spend a lot of money on their physical plant. Hal said people who need affordable housing are not going to be able to spend \$60,000 - \$90,000 for a one-acre lot and another \$150,000 to put a house on it. Barbara said the problem with affordable housing is that we have no employment center. Barbara said affordable housing needs to be near public transportation. Hal said he thinks the village should still be the primary growth area. Glenn said the people who have the resources to buy large tracts are helping to keep the town the way it is. Martha noted that some people who buy large lots also put up "no trespassing" signs and restrict access to recreational trails so even though the town looks the same, it isn't. Barbara noted that the cyclists and the snowmobilers are working on that. Jason said he thinks build-out analysis is most useful to illustrate proposed zoning changes. Jason suggested including a build-out analysis with the sewer line feasibility study. Barbara suggested including ridgelines in Recommendation #4. The PC agreed. Martha asked the PC if they want to incorporate any of Sharon's other suggestions into the Land Use chapter. Hal said density-based zoning, building envelopes, and scenic view sheds should be referenced. Martha asked about conservation subdivisions. The PC agreed to include those as well. Barbara suggested that the Town Plan include a recommendation to investigate all the tools mentioned as a means of protecting forest land, agriculture, and open space, while preserving landowners' rights. Jason suggested mentioning each tool and stating its purpose; building envelopes to protect natural resources; density-based zoning to encourage affordable housing. The PC agreed that it would not be difficult to map overlay districts. Barbara asked the PC what they want to do with the lighting standards. Martha suggested working appropriate language into the Town Plan wherever possible. Barbara suggested that "adopting outdoor lighting standards" should be a recommendation. Glenn said the PC might want to consider a minor update of the zoning regulations after the Town Plan is done. Jason said there might be some instances where the regulatory burden could be reduced slightly, as with administrative review. Martha noted that the existing zoning regulations allow for administrative review. Jason reviewed the maps with the PC. Jason asked the PC if they'd like to include trails on the base map. Hal said he thinks that would be premature. As an alternative, Jason suggested that the Town Plan include a policy to maintain trail connectivity. Glenn suggested asking the CC if the trail maps are at a point where they could be included. Jason said the plan could at least include some of the trails. Glenn said he thinks that would be great. Barbara asked about the vernal pool maps. Glenn asked about the status of the ancient roads research. Martha said none of the five remaining roads being researched qualify as "unidentified corridors" so they are not

in danger of being lost until 2015. Jason said the current town plan has a base map, a natural resources map, a current land use map and a future land use map. Jason asked the PC if they would like separate maps for each type of natural resource. Jason asked the PC if they would like to include the wildlife suitability map or the deer yard map. Jason said the wildlife map is not definitive so it's a little harder to work with from a policy standpoint. Glenn said he thinks both maps should be included. Martha said if all the maps are going to be included, they should probably be referenced in the narrative. Martha asked how the wildlife suitability map would be used. Jason said wildlife habitat is referenced in the Natural Resources chapter. Glenn said it is also referenced under "Conservation Areas" in Chapter 2. Martha asked what "Natural Heritage Inventory Sites" are and whether West Windsor has any or not. Jason said he will check with April. Jason said the PC could look at the wildlife suitability map in relation to the conservation district. The PC talked about the value of mapping "current use" relative to the amount of time it would take the Listers to produce the data. Barbara said she likes having all the natural resources on one map. Jason said the SWCRPC could just update the map. Barbara suggested identifying scenic ridgelines on the topographic features map. Hal and Barbara expressed a preference for color coded maps. Jason said the base map should identify the different classes of roads. Jason said he thinks the Natural Resources map is a little hard to look at. Jason said the maps need to show agricultural soils, well head protection and flood areas. Jason asked the PC if they want all the natural resource information on one map or on separate maps. Martha suggested having regulatory information on one map and non-regulatory information on another. The PC liked that idea. Martha noted that West Windsor regulates development on slopes over 20% and the topographic features map shows slopes over 25%. Jason said he will see what he can do about that. Glenn said he would like to see if the zoning can be changed to ½-acre on the east end of town from the bridge to the town line. Jason asked about additional changes to the future land use map, other than separating the Resort and the Village. There were none.

4. Discuss opportunities for public input on Town Plan at Town Meeting – Martha asked the PC if they would like her to put together a list of key recommendations to hand out at Town Meeting. Martha said the PC could ask people to vote for the ones they feel are most important. Hal suggested that Martha circulate a draft by email for the PC to consider. Glenn asked if it's premature to solicit feedback. Martha said it could be premature, but it would be nice to take advantage of having a captive audience.
5. Minutes - December 16, 2009: **Barbara made a motion to approve the minutes of December 16, 2009, as written. Glenn seconded the motion, which passed with Joe abstaining.** January 6, 2010: The Planning Commission agreed by consensus to defer consideration of the January 6, 2010 minutes until the next meeting. January 25, 2010: **Barbara made a motion to approve the minutes of January 25, 2010, as written. Glenn seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.** February 10, 2010: **Glenn made a motion to approve the minutes of February 10, 2010, as written. Hal seconded the motion, which passed with Barbara abstaining.**
6. Adjourn – **The PC adjourned by consensus at 8:50 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison