

## WEST WINDSOR PLANNING COMMISSION

### Minutes

August 5, 2009

Present: Hal Pyke, Joe D'Anna, Glenn Seward, Barbara Truex, Martha Harrison, David Jaacks

1. Call to Order - Chair Hal Pyke called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.
2. Changes or Additions – None
3. Energy Coordinator – Hal read part of the document “Energy Coordinator: Roles & Responsibilities” and said he would arrange interviews with the two people who have expressed interest.
4. Approve amended report on Subdivision Regulations – Martha gave the Planning Commission members a final copy of the Subdivision Regulations. **Barbara Truex made a motion to approve the Planning Commission’s revised report on the proposed Subdivision Regulations. Glenn seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.** Martha said the Selectboard is hoping that the Planning Commission will be present at their hearing on Monday to help answer questions about the regulations.
5. Review revisions to the Recreation chapter of the West Windsor Town Plan – Hal read the section of the Recreation chapter that has to do with Sports Trails of the Ascutney Basin (STAB). David said he is a member of STAB. David said STAB’s map only covers the trails that are on public land because private landowners do not want the trails that are on their property to be on the map. Barbara said there are snowmobile trails on private land and there are maps for those. David said there’s a disconnect between the bicycle association and the snowmobile association because of the difference in the fees charged by the two associations. David said Jim Lyall created the map. David said private landowners seem to be comfortable with STAB members using the trails, partly because STAB has its own insurance policy and partly because, if there’s a problem, they know they can contact STAB because STAB is the only group they’ve given permission to use the trails. David said the STAB website keeps members updated on the condition of the trails. Hal said all the various trail groups should be involved in the creation of a Recreation Plan. **Glenn made a motion to accept Chapter 6, Recreation, as amended. Joe seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**
6. Review & update the Housing chapter of the West Windsor Town Plan – Hal said even one-acre zoning is beyond the means of many younger people who are just starting out and, in his opinion, the PC should address that in the Town Plan. Glenn said the current town plan puts all the responsibility for rising property values on the resort. Glenn said he thinks rising property values have more to do with West Windsor’s attractiveness to the horse community. Barbara said she thinks property values have escalated because of the state statutes on appraisal. Glenn said if somebody puts up an 8,000 square foot house on a large lot right next to you, what does that do to the value of the neighborhood. Hal said if the lot is more than 25 acres, they usually put it in current use and then they don’t pay their fair share of taxes and the rest of us have to make up for those lost taxes. Hal said most of those people are not younger, full-time residents who are going to serve on the fire department or put kids in the school. Martha said 42% of the property in town is owned locally and 58% is owned by folks who live elsewhere. Glenn said he doesn’t think the town can change that with zoning. Glenn said he likes the idea of changing the zoning to allow smaller lots in the area adjacent to the existing sewer line. Hal said according to the article *Housing & Vermont’s School Enrollment*, between 1995 and 2000, only six other states lost more of their young, single, college-educated people than Vermont. Barbara said you could look at it the other way; people with large parcels are paying a tremendous amount in taxes and they aren’t putting kids in the schools or stressing the infrastructure. Barbara said if you’re going to point the finger, point it at the state’s tax structure. Glenn said he’s not saying that large lots are detrimental to the town, but that’s what is driving the market. Barbara agreed that the number of

large parcels does affect the availability of land. Glenn said the large parcels help keep open space. Glenn said he thinks there's a very limited area in this town that can be steered toward affordable housing. Barbara agreed. Barbara pointed out that there are many large tracts of buildable land that are owned by individuals who are not making cookie-cutter subdivisions and that accounts for a lot of the beauty of this town. Barbara said she thinks affordable housing should be focused in areas where the required infrastructure already exists. Hal said the state is in a better position than the town to provide incentives for affordable housing. Hal cited the article, "Rethinking Local Affordable Housing Strategies," which has some good suggestions for stimulating affordable housing. Barbara pointed out that tax increases affect disposable income. Barbara said if we address this issue properly then some of the properties owned by elderly people could be available to the next generation. Barbara said allowing "granny flats" would take care of multiple families. Martha said one problem with accessory dwelling units is the requirement that they have to be 30% or less than the size of the single-family house. Martha said the state does allow towns to be less restrictive than that, which is one way that West Windsor could promote affordability. Martha said West Windsor also allows two-family houses in most districts. Barbara suggested considering a sliding scale for the size of the accessory dwelling, depending on the size of the lot since larger lots have greater water and septic capacity. Hal said clustering and set asides could also help. Barbara suggested that the Housing Chapter include information about the dramatic escalation of property values that resulted from the reappraisal and changes in the state statute regarding property taxes. Hal read some notes that Martha had sent to the PC last fall. Hal said there is a lot of indifference to the idea of extending the sewer line into the village. Martha noted that it seems like a contradiction to designate the village as an historic design review district and a primary growth district. Glenn agreed and mentioned the controversy, awhile back, over the possibility of the Bascom Farm being divided into quarter-acre lots. Hal said there are areas adjacent to the existing sewer line that would be ideal for moderate income housing. Barbara asked if there is any public transportation that serves West Windsor. Barbara said the people who need "workforce housing" are working in the Hanover/Lebanon area. Hal said anyone who can afford a \$350,000 house can probably find one in that area. Hal said the housing prices in that area are atrocious. Barbara said the transportation link is important. Martha said the pellet plant may start operating, which would provide some jobs but, even if it doesn't, if you want the school and the fire department, you have to have some housing. David said among his friends, who have children in Kindergarten or 1<sup>st</sup> grade, the two employment centers are in the Hanover/Lebanon area and the Springfield area. David said West Windsor is chosen over the surrounding towns because of Albert Bridge. David said he thinks many of the young single college-educated people who leave Vermont come back when they're older, after they've found a spouse. David said Vermont's social scene doesn't lend itself to retaining young single people. David said the most appealing idea he's heard in the last three years is the possibility of EC Fiber coming through because a lot of people's jobs are highly dependent on the internet. David said as the sewer line was the key infrastructure of the past, high-speed internet service is key for the educated individual who is making a purposeful choice to move back to Vermont. Barbara noted that the PC has addressed that issue in another section of the Town Plan. Hal agreed that high-speed service is key. Hal said there have been discussions about merging the West Windsor and Reading schools but so far that hasn't worked out. Hal said West Windsor would like to keep its culture and its small town environment, but we need to find a way to attract younger people to the community. Barbara asked Martha if the statistics in the report will get updated. Martha said yes. Martha said she has some recent statistics from the Vermont housing data website. Barbara said she is particularly interested in the drop in the number of seasonal units due to conversion to year-round use. Martha said the information on the number of seasonal units is from the 2000 census so it won't be updated until after the 2010 census. Hal agreed that some older people who had second homes in West Windsor are retiring and becoming year-round residents therefore reducing the number of seasonal units. Hal said he thinks the PC should

outline what they'd like to see in the Housing Chapter. Glenn said he thinks the introductory paragraph could be consolidated and he thinks the PC has come up with 3 or 4 practical affordable housing goals. Martha asked if everyone is comfortable with the idea of decreasing the minimum lot size near the sewer line. Everyone said yes. Glenn said the idea of increasing the size of accessory dwelling units is easy and practical. Glenn said he thinks development of the resort should be encouraged provided that there is required workforce housing there. Glenn said if we want to bring young people into town, there's no better way to provide jobs for them than having the resort there. Hal said the least expensive resort condos are \$225,000. The PC agreed that they like the idea of requiring developers to include a certain percentage of affordable housing in their developments. Martha asked the PC what they think about working with the Rockingham Area Land Trust. Joe said there's a nice-looking cluster of three 4-unit houses on Route 5 in Hartland. Hal said he would take a look at it. Glenn said he thinks #5 under the current Housing Policies is fine. Martha suggested wording it a little more specifically. Glenn agreed. Hal said he will try to find out what the Rockingham Area Land Trust is doing in Windsor. David said his understanding is that state scrutiny is much higher for multi-unit buildings and the required infrastructure, including fire suppression systems, significantly increases the cost and decreases the affordability. David added that the available water supply is not always adequate for sprinkler systems. There was brief discussion about the talc plant, the condos at the Resort and the former Mt. Ascutney School with respect to building codes and water supply. Barbara said it might be necessary to stick with small clusters of single-family homes. Hal agreed, assuming there is adequate water supply. Barbara said for a fire suppression system, you'd have to either put in a second well or a water tower. David expressed interest in the Energy Coordinator position. Hal gave him some additional information. The PC members introduced themselves and invited David to share any additional ideas he might have.

7. Approve Minutes - July 1, 2009: **Barbara made a motion to approve the minutes of July 1, 2009, as written. Glenn seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.** July 8, 2009: **Glenn made a motion to approve the minutes of July 8, 2009, as written. Hal seconded the motion, which passed with Barbara abstaining.** July 21, 2009: **Glenn made a motion to approve the minutes of July 21, 2009, as written. Barbara seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**
8. Other Business - Barbara asked if the PC is going to work with Tom Kennedy on August 19<sup>th</sup> to draft the housing chapter. Martha offered to draft something for the PC to look at. The PC agreed that the three goals discussed are reasonable. Joe asked if there are a lot of people who work at the Resort. Glenn said in the late 1970s to mid 1980s, there were more than 200 people on the payroll and 100% were from this area. Barbara said she heard that there are hardly any local people who work there now. The PC agreed to ask the Resort and Orange Lake how many of their current employees live in town. Glenn said he would contact Tom Kenyon to find out what questions he has about the subdivision regulations so the PC can be prepared to answer them.
9. Adjourn – **Joe D'Anna made a motion to adjourn at 8:27 PM, which passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison