

WEST WINDSOR PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes

July 8, 2009

Present: 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 10:05 AM.
2. Changes or Additions – Energy Coordinator: The Planning Commission (PC) agreed that Martha should send letters to potential candidates for the position.
3. Prepare for Public Forum on Housing & Natural Resources – Glenn asked Tom what the expectations of the state are as far as affordable housing is concerned. Tom said each community has to, at a minimum, address affordable housing. Tom said one could make the argument that West Windsor's zoning regulations do not support affordable housing. Tom said the town can make housing more affordable through zoning or by working with the Rockingham Area Land Trust, for example. Tom said he thinks the forum should be a discussion on attitudes and concerns about housing. Glenn said Martha had an idea about rezoning the area adjacent to the sewer line to allow for clustered affordable housing. Glenn asked Tom if that could be brought up. Tom said yes, but suggested talking about location rather than density. Tom said the PC should just try to get a sense of whether or not people are willing to address the issue of affordable housing. Hal said the policy statements in the existing town plan are broad and supportive, but none of them have happened. Tom said those statements lack specificity. Hal said he is concerned about "spot zoning." Tom said rezoning for affordability would not be spot zoning. Martha said she thinks a lot of people misunderstand the meaning of affordable housing. Tom agreed. Martha asked if the PC should give some statistics at the forum. Tom said no. Martha said she was just thinking about providing the average cost of a lot, the average cost of building a new house, and the percentage of housing that is owned by non-residents, because of the effect on the school. Tom said that would be okay. Tom said the introductions and presentations will probably take about an hour. Tom said the regional planning commission can provide a screen. Tom said Hal should introduce the members of the PC and talk broadly about what's going on and then he (Tom) will talk briefly about the town plan and introduce the speakers, who will each speak for about 20 minutes. Then, Tom said, there will be time for questions and he will have some questions prepared to stimulate conversation if necessary. Tom said Jens Hilke is going to talk about the necessity for large blocks of undeveloped land for wildlife habitat. Tom said it seems like there are certain areas of town that are very important to people and it might be nice to create a list of those areas and get a sense of whether people think those areas should be protected or left to the forces of the free market. Tom said if there's time the forum could discuss water quality, streams, buffering and that sort of thing. Hal said the natural resource section of the town plan is also vague and generalized. Tom said we'll have a flip chart and he'll use the example of Mile Long Field where attitudes had a far reaching impact on what the Resort could do. Tom said there may be other areas like Mile Long Field that people feel strongly about. Tom said the PC can create clear language that development should be on the edge of fields. Hal said, other than Mile Long Field, he doesn't hear much about conserving anything. Tom said if the STAB folks come to the forum, they may talk about the importance of the bike trail network. Tom said there are various interest groups that may want to be heard and the PC needs to filter

that information. Hal said another concern is access to private property for recreational trails. Hal added that the Conservation Commission is working on the ancient roads issue right now. Martha said nobody seems to want affordable housing in their backyard. Glenn said the property values in town are so high that they preclude the development of affordable housing. Tom said in Windsor, they purchased property at fair market value and used federal dollars to buy down the price. Tom said in return the amount of money that a homeowner could realize on resale would be restricted. Using Armory Square as an example, Hal said bureaucracy prevents people from pursuing federal funding for affordable housing. Tom agreed that bureaucracy discourages the private sector but does not necessarily discourage non-profit organizations. Hal said he would suggest caution when using state or federal funds to support housing or preservation efforts. Tom said the regional planning commission will develop an agenda for the forum, include Martha in a conference call with the guest speakers, and bring a screen and laptop for the powerpoint presentations. Tom said he hopes the forum will attract a cross-section of the town. Mark said he will bring coffee and muffins.

4. Adjourn – **Glenn made a motion to adjourn at 10:35 AM. Mark seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison