

## WEST WINDSOR PLANNING COMMISSION

Draft Minutes  
November 16, 2009

Present: Joe D'Anna, Barbara Truex, Glenn Seward, Hal Pyke, Bruce Boedtke, Martha Harrison, Laura Stillson, Deb Shearer

1. Call to Order –Chair Hal Pyke called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.
2. Additions/Changes – None
3. Review Energy Forum flyer – The Planning Commission (PC) reviewed the questions on the flyer. Barbara asked what authority towns have to regulate large solar arrays. Martha said if the array is regulated by the Public Service Board then the town cannot regulate it through zoning. However, Martha said, if there were language in the town plan stating that the town doesn't want acres and acres of solar panels, then the Selectboard or the Planning Commission could use that language to comment on the application to the Public Service Board. Barbara said there should be cautionary language regarding cell towers and wind turbines. Hal noted that there is language in the zoning regulations about wireless telecommunication facilities. Martha said the PC could put language in the town plan encouraging residential-scale alternative energy and discouraging commercial-scale alternative energy. Hal noted that the PC received a letter from Elvin Kaplan and Lee Monro asking the PC to include language in the town plan to protect Mile Long Field as a valuable natural resource. Barbara noted the difficulty of trying to protect natural resources while allowing alternative energy structures which tend to be large and highly visible. Bruce said the town's jurisdiction over alternative energy structures is pretty limited. Bruce added that it might be beneficial if someone wanted to convert the talc mill to a bio-energy plant and provide power to the town at half the current rate. Hal said commercial-scale alternative energy structures could be allowed in the Light Industrial/Commercial district. Bruce said he thinks the Public Service Board makes the final decision. Deb said a town in upstate New York prevented a commercial wind facility. Barbara suggested putting in language encouraging alternative energy but not at the expense of natural resources. Joe noted that there is some good language in Chapter 3. Hal said there may be some people who would say that wind turbines don't detract from scenic values but he doesn't think the town would appreciate that. Martha said she has talked to several people who would love to see a wind turbine on Mt. Ascutney. Bruce noted that there is a ridge near Sunapee with 13 wind turbines. Brief discussion followed.
4. West Windsor Town Plan: Review Chapter 7 (Natural Resources) – The PC reviewed the most recent revision of chapter 7. Hal said he will check to see if cultural resources are one of the required elements of a town plan. If they are not, the PC agreed to remove the reference to cultural resources from the chapter heading. Bruce suggested adding Mile Long Field to the first paragraph under "Natural Resources." There was discussion about whether any portion of Little Ascutney Mountain is in West Windsor. The PC agreed to remove the reference to Little Ascutney Mountain. Bruce suggested specifically mentioning open fields as a natural resource worthy of protection. Deb noted that there is such a recommendation under the Scenic Areas section. Martha said open meadows are also mentioned in the Wildlife Habitat section. The PC talked about inserting a paragraph on the current use program in the Agricultural and Forest Lands section. Glenn said he thinks there should be some mention of the program in this section. Barbara suggested

mentioning the number of acres enrolled in the program in West Windsor. Bruce said he thinks there may be some revision to the current use laws in the near future because the state needs revenues. Bruce said there is a tipping point at which development detracts from the values that attracted people to the town in the first place. Glenn said a sewer line would factor into that and would have as many negative impacts as positive impacts. Bruce said he doesn't see this town funding a sewer line extension. Barbara suggested mentioning that the town boards are aware of the threats to the town's natural resources and are establishing regulations to address them. Bruce suggested a statement that natural resources should be given a high priority relative to development design. Barbara agreed. Hal asked if there is some language in the town plan about discouraging the construction of new roads. Barbara said yes. Glenn said that language is under "Road Policy and Maintenance" in the Transportation chapter. Bruce said road runoff is one of the biggest threats to surface waters and stormwater systems make a huge difference. Bruce said he'd rather see roads a little narrower with some stormwater treatment incorporated. Glenn mentioned the B-71 standards. Glenn said in considering road width, ditch depth, tree cutting, and canopy maintenance, there has to be a balance. Bruce agreed. Regarding wildlife habitat areas, Bruce noted that there have not been any studies done to identify them and suggested some language to encourage identification. Martha said that deeryards have been identified. Bruce agreed but said that deeryards are dynamic. Martha said regional planning has a wildlife suitability map, which is not cut and dried but indicates areas where further investigation is warranted. Bruce said that's perfect. Laura noted a bobolink habitat near Mile Long Field and asked who she should approach about recording this type of information. Bruce and Glenn suggested the Conservation Commission. Bruce suggested that Laura also contact VINS about the bobolink habitat. Glenn said he doubts that the town would fund wildlife habitat mapping and suggested that the town closely monitor state mapping efforts. Bruce said he likes the idea of a wildlife suitability map. Glenn asked if the intention is to have mapping that can be used in conjunction with zoning regulations. Bruce said yes. Glenn said natural resource and wildlife habitat maps would have to be included in the town plan and the zoning regulations in order to have any teeth. Laura asked why vernal pools are the only habitats currently being studied and asked if the focus could be broadened. Martha said she thinks that it could be if someone were willing to do the work. The PC agreed to keep the Wildlife Habitat section separate from the Natural Resource section. The PC agreed to leave the Scenic Areas section unchanged and made a minor change to the policy on lighting. The PC agreed to review the local scenic roads policy and recommend its adoption if it hasn't already been adopted. Martha said the zoning regulations address lighting. The PC agreed to strike the scenic area recommendation on preserving the night sky. Hal asked if the Historical Society gets involved with housing preservation in this town. Laura said no and added that she thinks it's disappointing that they don't. Glenn asked if there are funds available for maintaining the Cady Mausoleum. Hal said he's sure that there are. Laura said the Historical Society has talked about documenting all the old barns in town. Martha noted that the village is a designated historic district and the renovations to the front of the Grange Hall were disapproved by some state historic organization. Hal agreed that it would be difficult to do anything to the old houses in the village. Barbara suggested that the town protect places of significant value through education. Hal agreed that it would be nice to have an education statement under Historic Resource Policies and suggested "Encourage public education about significant historic

sites and structures.” Laura said the Historical Society is talking about having the school kids do research on all the old school houses and is starting a kids’ newsletter. Glenn suggested adding a recommendation that the town consider creating a design review district in the historic village area. The PC reworded the policy on encouraging rehabilitation that preserves the character of the town. Barbara asked if the Energy Committee is working on the Energy chapter of the town plan. Hal said yes. Glenn asked Martha if she sent the latest draft of the Natural Resources chapter to the Conservation Commission. Martha said yes and added that she invited them to the meeting tonight. Laura said the Conservation Corps is willing to work on trails. Laura asked who deals with the Bicentennial trail. Glenn said the Town Forest Committee. Laura asked if they have maps. Glenn said he doesn’t know. Laura said she wants to make sure that any work done on the trail is done on town land, not private land. Martha said she will check to see if there is a copy of the Bicentennial trail map at the Town Hall.

5. Other Business - None
6. Adjourn – **Barbara made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 PM, which passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison