

## WEST WINDSOR PLANNING COMMISSION

Draft Minutes  
September 2, 2009

Present: Hal Pyke, Joe D'Anna, Glenn Seward, Barbara Truex, Mark Isenberg, David Jaacks, Win Johnson, Ted Emerson, Ted Siegler, Martha Harrison, April Harkness, Sue Greenall, Erik Schutz

1. Call to Order - Chair Hal Pyke called the meeting to order at 7:15 PM.
2. Additions/Changes – None
3. West Windsor Town Plan: Review & Update Natural Resources Chapter – Hal asked Ted Siegler to outline the Conservation Commission's concerns with regard to the Natural Resources chapter of the Town Plan. Ted said the issues are broad and not necessarily limited to the Natural Resources chapter. Ted said he thinks it would be useful to have a discussion about vernal pools in the Natural Resources chapter, with reference to a vernal pool map. Sue Greenall said there is a statewide mapping program in process. Ted said the Conservation Commission (CC) has an overlay map of the town with the vernal pools that have been identified to date. There was discussion about the state's requirements for vernal pool mapping. Sue said she could give April Harkness a copy of the form. Win said the Vermont Center for Eco Studies is coordinating the project. April asked how many vernal pools have been mapped so far. Sue estimated thirty. Ted said he thinks it's closer to fifty. Ted said the CC is also concerned about maintaining open fields. Ted asked if it is important to the town to maintain pastures that are not feasible for hay and, if it is, who should be responsible for that. Ted said the "Top of the World" was open field but is now juniper and is disappearing. Ted asked if the town is interested in maintaining it. Win said there are bird species that depend on open meadow habitats. Ted said he thinks the Town Plan should recognize this issue and the CC might be willing to work on a management plan. Ted said there is a need for a dedicated funding source to protect conservation land; it's not going to be done through zoning so it's going to have to be done through acquisition. Ted said the CC is approached every year by landowners who would like the town to purchase a conservation easement on their property but without a funding source they cannot respond in a timely manner. Win said he knows of a town in New Hampshire where the penalties for taking land out of current use are put into the conservation fund. Win said there is an incredible complex of trails that STAB is building and those trails could disappear in an instant. Ted said the CC is going to have a hard time protecting the trail network. Ted said he thinks the town should look at acquiring the major trails in town because they are extremely important to the town's economic and recreation value. Ted said the CC is fighting to keep trails open even on land where they have an easement. Ted said kids don't ride their bikes to school anymore because their parents don't believe it's safe and if the town can't separate bicycle traffic and car traffic, they're not going to solve that problem, not just for kids but for adults who don't ride for the same reason. Ted said the town can take land by eminent domain or raise money to buy property. Ted said you can't rely on volunteer landowners to always do the right thing. Ted said if trails are important to the town then the town is going to have to take a much bigger role in acquiring and maintaining them. Glenn said he agrees. Hal said perhaps the town could set up something akin to the capital equipment

budget. Ted said changes in ownership patterns are a big problem because part-time owners who live somewhere else have more fears about allowing people on their land. David said STAB has made inroads into communicating with landowners about trail usage. David said landowners are concerned about big events and lots of groups from out of town. Ted offered to review the language that the PC comes up with. Ted said the CC would like to see incentives for energy conservation and alternative energy development. Ted asked if the current town plan would prohibit wind mills, for example. Ted asked what role alternative energy should play in town. Ted said the PC would be heavily involved if someone proposed a wind farm or a large array of solar panels. Ted said many town plans are incorporating a climate change component these days and suggested that the PC address the issue. Ted said the CC would also like to see an emphasis on historic resources in the town plan. Ted said, as part of their research, the CC is committed to developing a map of ancient roads, which could be included in the town plan. Sue said the logging associated with current use is affecting ancient roads and historic structures and it would be nice to have some protection for these resources. Ted said the CC is also concerned about the issue of high-speed internet access and how important it is for the town. Ted said he thinks there are a lot of contamination issues in the town center and the PC should consider extending the sewer line. Ted said he doesn't see how the town can expand density or encourage business development without some kind of sewer system. Hal said he has talked to the Windsor Town Manager about establishing a "fire district" so that we can have a separate system tied in with Windsor but his sense from the general public is that it's not crucial enough yet. Ted said he has heard the argument that those who tie into the sewer system would face hefty fees. Ted said a sewer line could expand potential commercial activity in this town. As a result, Ted said, there aren't very many jobs in town. Ted said he thinks the town plan should address this issue. Hal agreed. Hal talked about the need to address the housing issue to attract younger people with children who can sustain our school. Win said when the question was thrown out at the public forum about whether townspeople want more kids in the school, there was silence until he "took the bait." Win said he hopes there are more people who feel the way Hal does. Hal said school systems are starting to consolidate and he suspects that there will be more of that unless there is growth in the number of young people coming to West Windsor and the surrounding communities. Mark noted that the PC has discussed several of the issues that Ted raised so some of the verbiage is already in the town plan. Ted said, of interest to him personally are the current restrictions on home businesses which require the business owner to occupy the home where the business is located. Ted said he doesn't think this restriction is reasonable. Ted said if he wants to have his business in West Windsor, he either has to have it in his home or in the middle of the village with no water and no sewer. Hal said there are many people in West Windsor who live by internet connection to Boston or New York and it has been a sore point with them that this part of Vermont is lagging behind in high-speed access. Hal said the PC will review the chapters that have already been revised to see if any additional revision is necessary. Win said the final chapter of the current town plan, the implementation chapter, is too vague. Hal agreed. Ted gave some examples of some specific goals that could be included. Ted said coming up with a detailed implementation plan will require Selectboard action in terms of budgeting and programming. Hal agreed with Ted and said one of the charges of the PC is to develop long-term capital budgets. Glenn said the PC has been paring down the

action items to include the things that are truly achievable. Ted offered to have the Conservation Commission review chapters of the Town Plan. Sue said if the CC came up with a detailed map of vernal pools, would the PC consider putting in language to protect those pools from development. Glenn said the PC would consider including that as a recommendation for action. Hal agreed and said the PC would consider the same action with trails. Barbara said many of the CC's suggestions would make nice addendums to existing paragraphs in the Natural Resources chapter. Barbara said vernal pools could be included in the wetlands section. Mark asked if the PC is going to encourage zoning action that prohibits disturbance of vernal pools or just encourage the preservation of vernal pools. April said vernal pools are not regulated by the state. Hal said he thinks there should be language referencing the map that the CC is working on and recognizing the need to preserve vernal pools for wildlife habitat diversity. April said the Regional Plan says that vernal pools should be identified and protected under Municipal Plans. April suggested that the CC recommend a goal or policy. Barbara suggested adding vernal pools to the first item under "Natural Resource Recommendations." Barbara suggested adding "and create a program to encourage the mowing of unused pastures to maintain open space" at the end of item #8 under "Scenic Area Recommendations." Barbara suggested adding "Create an historic site map" under "Historic Resource Recommendations." April said she thinks the CC is talking about a locally significant historic site map, including cellar holes and the like. Barbara said the PC has already addressed EC Fiber and the Town Energy Committee. Barbara said the PC may want to revisit the sewer line issue because the proposed language has more to do with housing. The PC reviewed their proposed recommendations, in chapters 3 and 10, with regard to the sewer line. April asked the PC what they think about a funding source for land acquisition. Hal said he thinks the town plan could encourage the Selectboard to establish such a fund in the town budget. April said she thinks the PC should consider including more information on primary agricultural soils and fluvial erosion hazards in the Town Plan. April offered to draft some related language, which might be helpful if the town is ever seeking funding for related projects. Mark noted that the supports for the various bridges over Mill Brook could be undermined by erosion. Mark asked if the town maintains Mill Brook at all by removing deadfall, for example. Glenn said he thinks that's up to the property owner. April asked the PC if they want to mention invasive, exotic species. Barbara asked what the town could do other than help people identify them. April said the PC would have to find out about the standards for removal or mitigation if they want to do more. Barbara said the town plan could encourage property owners to prevent the spread of invasive species, but it would be very expensive to say, "You have to take care of it or the town will take care of it for you." Martha suggested an education effort. Barbara said that would be fine. April gave the PC a series of draft maps extracted from the Regional Plan, based on statewide data. April said the PC might not want to include all the maps in the town plan but they provide useful background information.

4. Executive Session: **Barbara made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. Joe seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.** Following discussion, **Glenn made a motion to come out of Executive Session. Barbara seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Barbara made a motion to recommend to the Selectboard that they establish an Energy Committee and**

**appoint three to five members to serve on the committee. Joe seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.** April recommended that the Energy Committee, if established, take a field trip to a well-established Energy Committee like Putney, Thetford or Norwich. Glenn asked April if she knows of other towns that have funds set aside for conservation easements. April said she would look into that.

5. Approve Minutes – August 19, 2009: **Glenn made a motion to approve the minutes of August 19, 2009, as written. Joe seconded the motion, which passed.**
6. Other Business – April asked about the plan for the next few meetings. Glenn said he thinks two weeks is too soon to draft the Natural Resources chapter. The PC agreed to focus on the Housing chapter at their next meeting. There was discussion about the upcoming Economic Development forum. April said Bob Flint is a possible moderator. April said she thinks Tom Kennedy would like to get speakers who are familiar with rural towns and ski areas and how they can integrate. Glenn said Tom was going to contact someone from the Vermont Ski Area Association. Glenn suggested that Ascutney Mountain Resort and Orange Lake be invited to the forum. April asked if October 7<sup>th</sup> is still a realistic date for the forum. Hal said yes if Tom can line up the speakers. Martha noted that she had forwarded to the PC some information about fireproofing town records. Hal said the PC should project capital budgets for the Selectboard to review. Martha said she was thinking about the fireproofing issue as a possible recommendation for action. Martha also suggested that the PC review the draft revisions to Chapter 4.
7. Adjourn – The Planning Commission adjourned by consensus at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison