

## WEST WINDSOR PLANNING COMMISSION

Draft Minutes

February 19, 2015

Present: Arthur Steinberg, Barbara Truex, Elvin Kaplan, Mark Isenberg, Martha Harrison

1. Call to Order - Planning Commission Chair Arthur Steinberg called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.
2. Changes or Additions – None
3. Public Comment – None; no public present.
4. Review river corridor maps & consider regulatory implications – Martha said the town will have to at least meet the minimum state regulatory guidelines. The Planning Commission (PC) agreed that they do not want to be more restrictive than the state requires. Barbara suggested that the town focus on protecting floodplains and upland forests to try to prevent the river from dramatically changing its course. Martha noted that a substantial section of floodplain is already conserved. Elvin noted that a good portion of upland forest on the mountain will soon be conserved as well. Martha said she plans to investigate “village center” designation to see if there are any development benefits. The PC was concerned about state programs that might come with additional layers of regulation.
5. Discuss reorganization of Flood Hazard Area & River Corridor Regulations - Martha noted the difficulties she has had trying to reorganize the state’s model regulations. Barbara said she thinks anyone building in the floodplain and/or river corridor should sign a waiver indicating that they understand the risks. Martha said she thinks the cost of insurance will be more effective than regulations in discouraging people from building in the floodplain. Martha said she is planning to reorganize the regulations by hazard area and type of development, since those elements are easily known or determined by permit applicants. Barbara reiterated her opinion that protecting upland forests is critical and wondered whether the language in the Town Plan is enough to enable the DRB to prevent people from proceeding with risky or irresponsible development plans. Martha said she can try to include some of the upland forest language from the Town Plan in the regulations.
6. Review progress on implementing Town Plan recommendations – Chapter 2: Regarding recommendation #1, the PC noted that they have begun revising the land use regulations for consistency with the Town Plan and working to ensure that recreational trail easements are in place. Mark asked who would implement recommendation #2. Martha said the natural features listed, other than scenic views and ridgelines, are already mapped on the ANR website. The PC discussed the difficulties associated with their earlier attempt to identify and map ridgelines. Regarding recommendation #4, the PC agreed that, while they may strengthen the outdoor lighting standards at some point, it’s not one of their top priorities for the immediate future. Regarding #5, Barbara said the town has increased support for the purchase of conservation easements, and ongoing non-regulatory protection of natural resources is the purview of the Conservation Commission. Regarding recommendation #6, Barbara noted that the whole town is getting educated about conservation easements due to the town’s involvement with the Trust for Public Land and the Upper Valley Land Trust. Mark noted the conservation opportunities associated with “Current Use.” Barbara suggested creating a brief summary of conservation options for property owners. Martha suggested asking the Conservation Commission if they could provide a summary of the options to include on the town website. Regarding #7, Martha agreed to investigate the pros and cons associated with “village center” designation. Regarding #8, the PC noted that there is some relevant language in the Town Plan but incorporating language into the zoning and subdivision regulations may not be a high priority until there is some means for addressing the difficulties associated with mapping ridgelines. Elvin noted that the policies and recommendations are redundant. Barbara said the policies reflect our philosophy, while the recommendations are action statements. Regarding #9, Barbara said the DRB used the land use regulations to support the renovation of the Yates property. Martha said most applications in the village would probably require a variance because the existing structures are already non-conforming. The PC noted that recommendation #10 has been accomplished. Chapter 3:

Regarding the recommendations in the “Utilities & Facilities” section of Chapter 3, the PC noted that #1 is being implemented. Regarding #2, there was discussion about when the testing should be done and who should do it. Elvin suggested testing before and after the village sewer construction project. Regarding the “Telecommunications” recommendations, the PC noted the pending installation of fiber optic cable along an initial route including Shattuck Hill, Banister Road, a portion of Sheddsville Road, and Bible Hill. The PC felt that recommendation #2 was too vague and should be eliminated from future town plan updates.

7. Other Business – The Planning Commission agreed to meet again on March 19<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM.
8. Adjourn – **The PC adjourned by consensus at approximately 11:05 AM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison