

WEST WINDSOR PLANNING COMMISSION

Draft Minutes

February 23, 2012

Present: Hal Pyke, Barbara Truex, Elvin Kaplan, Al Keiller, Mark Isenberg, Jason Rasmussen, Martha Harrison

1. Call to Order – Planning Commission Chair Hal Pyke called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.
2. Changes or Additions - None
3. Public Comment – None
4. Review sewer acquisition presentation – Hal noted that the presentation did not occur last night due to the power outage. The Planning Commission (PC) discussed some of the comments they heard from those who came to the Town Hall hoping that the presentation would happen. Hal said the meeting has been rescheduled for next Wednesday, February 29th at the same time and place. There was discussion about Aldrich & Elliott’s initial evaluation of the condition of the sewer system and the impact it may have on the purchase price. Elvin questioned the necessity of “pigging” the line given that it is functioning properly. There was discussion about the amount of evaluation that should be done prior to purchase. There was also discussion about who is going to speak at the informational meetings and which issues each speaker is going to address.
5. Prepare for March 29th public meeting on West Windsor’s recreational strengths & weaknesses – Jason asked the PC what information they are hoping to get from the public meeting/SWOT analysis. Hal said it would be nice to find out about the primary recreational interests of the community. Barbara suggested that Orange Lake might be able to provide information on the interests of their guests. Al suggested interested participants, existing infrastructure, and affordability as criteria for evaluating recreational activities. Hal said a true SWOT analysis would start with a discussion of the town’s recreational strengths such as the town forest and the ski area, for example. Jason described a typical SWOT analysis and the PC talked about how they might tailor the process to meet West Windsor’s needs. Mark noted that West Windsor has a number of horse trails, which is one of the town’s recreational strengths, and asked if a SWOT analysis would focus on how the town could enhance that strength. Jason said yes. Mark asked if the goal is to enhance quality of life or stimulate the economy. Jason said the Planning Commission is looking at both recreation and economic development so, to some extent, we’re trying to figure out how they should interrelate. Barbara noted that the closure of the ski area was one of the factors that led the PC to decide to revise the recreation and economic development chapters of the Town Plan. Mark said we’re trying to maintain our identity as a recreational destination. Mark said he would like to explore the economic component of the SWOT analysis. Al said our goal is to explore feasible recreational opportunities that are of interest to the population, can attract outsiders, and have a positive economic impact. Al said he thinks we should do a SWOT analysis of recreation in West Windsor, then make a list of recreational activities, including downhill skiing, and then determine whether the factors that would influence the success of each activity (local interest, visitor interest, infrastructure, cost, time, and economic benefit) are present. Al said this process should bring to the surface activities that are beneficial from both a recreational and an economic perspective. Al said if participants vote for their favorite activities, then the PC can focus on the ones with the highest score. Al said participants can also brainstorm strengths and weaknesses and then rank their importance. In order for this exercise to be meaningful, Al said, we would need a representative group of people. Barbara suggested a night of idea gathering followed by a survey. Barbara said the PC should think about how the town can support the re-opening of the ski area and the diversification of resort activities. Al suggested that Jason articulate, in an email, what the objective of the meeting is. Elvin said he thinks what happens with the ski area is beyond the town’s control.
6. Discuss West Windsor’s energy issues – Martha said the Energy Committee would like some direction from the Planning Commission. Hal said the Regional Planning Commission (RPC) has a lot of energy-related information, which he can email to the Energy Committee. Al asked about the

mission of the Energy Committee. Mark said the Energy Committee was created to take advantage of economic stimulus funding for energy projects. Martha said the Energy Committee has a Kill-a-watt meter that can be borrowed from the library. Jason said the RPC hosts regional Energy Committee gatherings so towns can get ideas from each other. Elvin reported that Paul Biebel has suggested that renewable energy projects should not affect property values. Martha said she remembers this issue being discussed at Town Meeting a couple of years ago. Mark agreed. Hal said the Listers have strict criteria that they have to use to determine fair market value. Elvin said he asked Paul to find out if other towns exempt renewable energy projects. Martha said this issue was discussed at length, then the article was amended, and she thinks it passed. Mark said he remembers the discussion but doesn't remember if the article passed or not. Hal said he doesn't remember anything about this coming out of the state tax department. Martha said she will check the minutes of the 2010 Town Meeting. Jason described the PACE program, which offers incentives to people for making energy improvements to their homes. Jason said some towns are putting solar panels on their town garage.

7. Minutes – January 26, 2012: **Barbara made a motion to approve the minutes of January 26, 2012. Al seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**
8. Adjourn – **Barbara made a motion to adjourn at 8:30 PM. Al seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison