

WEST WINDSOR PLANNING COMMISSION

Draft Minutes

July 26, 2012

Present: Hal Pyke, Elvin Kaplan, Mark Isenberg, Jason Rasmussen, Martha Harrison

1. Call to Order – Planning Commission Chair Hal Pyke called the meeting to order at 6:39 PM.
2. Changes or Additions – None
3. Public Comment – None
4. Economic Development: Review trends in data & discuss next steps – Jason Rasmussen from the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission (SWCRPC) presented charts and graphs showing retail receipts, employment, average home prices and traffic counts for West Windsor over the past 5 to 10 years. West Windsor's retail receipts were down significantly relative to Windsor County. Jason will find out what information goes into the retail receipts total. The Planning Commission (PC) had questions about the employment data, which Jason will look into. Mark noted that with a sample size of 6, no valid conclusions can be drawn from Seth Warren's data on home sales. Jason had additional home sales data from the Vermont Department of Taxes. The graphs show that West Windsor experienced the same economic downturn that the rest of the country experienced in 2008. In addition, the local economy suffered when the Ski Area closed after the 2009-10 season. Elvin noted that people stopped coming to town even before the Ski Area closed. The PC agreed that no meaningful conclusions can be drawn from the existing traffic count data. Martha said better traffic count data would help the PC track the results of efforts to increase the number of visitors. Jason said the SWCRPC could do some additional traffic counts. There was discussion about the correlation between traffic and economic activity. There was discussion about whether or not any of the data is accurate enough or meaningful enough to include in a narrative about economic development in West Windsor. Hal said the information is accurate enough to show trends. Elvin said the data confirm what we already know – that the economy has deteriorated over the past five years. Jason said the bigger question is: What do we do about it? The PC discussed goals. Elvin suggested several possible goals: broadening the recreational opportunities available, increasing the number of recreational activities, and promoting existing recreational opportunities. Jason reviewed the economic development policies and goals in the Town Plan. Elvin suggested putting tourism and recreation as the number one goal. Mark questioned the likelihood of the ski area reopening and suggested trying to attract small groups of mountain bikers and other trail users. Martha said if you want to attract full-time residents, you have to have jobs for them. Mark agreed and suggested focusing on part-time visitors who may eventually become full-time residents. Jason noted the changes in climate and the need to diversify recreational opportunities to make them less weather dependant. The PC agreed that it would be helpful to have data from Burke, VT before and after the Kingdom Trails were established. Elvin suggested developing cross-country skiing and/or zip line venues. Martha said half the trails are on resort property and, if Mile Long Field gets sold, a substantial portion of the trail system may be lost. Jason suggested acquiring easements. Hal suggested improving the Town Hall to make it more user-friendly. Elvin suggested revisiting the idea of the town purchasing Mile Long Field. Mark agreed. Jason asked about festivals and concerts at the resort. Elvin suggested forming a Recreation Committee and hiring a Recreation Coordinator to organize that kind of thing. Martha noted a slow down in the reclamation of the former talc plant property, which may result in it being donated to the town later than anticipated. Jason asked the PC if the town needs an industrial zone. There was discussion about the possible demolition of the talc plant. Martha said if the area behind the talc plant is going to be used for recreation, it might not make sense to have an industrial use with big trucks immediately adjacent to a recreational use with bikes and horses. Jason asked about impediments to home businesses. There was discussion about the need for high-speed internet. Mark requested information on home businesses. Elvin said we should "process" the recreation survey before we go too far with our economic development plan. Martha

asked the PC to summarize their goals. The PC offered the following: increasing the number of visitors to town by increasing the type and number of recreational activities available and promoting those activities; hiring a part-time recreation director; and protecting the existing recreational trail system by purchasing land or easements. Elvin asked each member of the PC to re-write the introduction to the economic development chapter and bring his or her revision to the next meeting. There was discussion about Jim Lyall's efforts to promote the trail network. Mark suggested an advertising budget.

5. Minutes - January 9th: The minutes of January 9, 2012 were tabled. February 21st: **Elvin moved to approve the minutes of February 21st. Mark seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.** June 28th: **Mark moved to approve the minutes of June 28th. Elvin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**
6. Next meeting – Thursday, August 30th at 6:30 PM
7. Adjourn – **Elvin moved to adjourn at 8:10 PM. Mark seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison