

## WEST WINDSOR PLANNING COMMISSION

Draft Minutes  
March 29, 2012

Present: Hal Pyke, Elvin Kaplan, Al Keiller, Mark Isenberg, Jason Rasmussen, Martha Harrison, Dennis Lemire, Courtney McKaig, Tom Kenyon, Matt Kantola, Amanda Paquette, Chris & Nancy Nesbitt, Lee Monro, Laura Stillson, Shirley Ouelette, Meg Clough, Erik Schutz, Cathy Boedtke, Raina White, Susan Yates White, Camden White, Ashley Pakenham, Amy Yates

1. Call to Order – Planning Commission Chair Hal Pyke called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.
2. Review Hathorn subdivision for conformance with Town Plan – **Elvin made a motion to send a statement to the Development Review Board indicating that the Hathorn subdivision is compatible with the Town Plan. Al seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**
3. Minutes: February 23, 2012 – **Al moved to approve the minutes of February 23, 2012. Mark seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**
4. Brainstorming: West Windsor’s recreational strengths & weaknesses – Hal welcomed those present and explained that the Planning Commission is seeking public input in order to update the Recreation chapter of the Town Plan. Hal introduced Jason Rasmussen from the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission (SWCRPC). Jason said the PC is working on the recreation and economic development chapters of the town plan and, to some extent, they overlap. Jason said a town with nice amenities is the kind of town that people want to live in. Recreation is one amenity that a town has some control over and it can be used to attract people to the community. Jason presented a chart with some recreational activities that the PC had brainstormed in advance and asked those present to add to and edit the list. Susan asked if the target audience is adults, kids, or both. Jason said both. Jason noted that the community is aging so one question might be about recreational facilities needed to serve that demographic. Susan said West Windsor kids have to go to other communities to participate in soccer and baseball. Matt said the gym is no longer available so that’s a tremendous asset that we really can’t use, even though we have all the equipment. Susan said the biggest hurdle is having someone to organize it. Jason asked if some of the activities should be lumped together, for example ball field activities v. gym activities. Cathy said she thinks the gym should be one subject by itself. Matt said the gym and the town hall are vastly underutilized. Meg suggested a shooting range. Matt suggested novice-friendly groomed trails for cross country skiing. Elvin suggested including cross-country skiing as a separate activity on the list. Chris suggested adding snow shoeing. Jason suggested including snow shoeing with hiking. Jason asked if non-traditional activities like genealogy should be on the list. Susan said there is a knitting group but she’s not aware of any quilting groups. Hal said there are quilting groups. Chris suggested adding card playing to the list. Matt said it might be more efficient to list venues (town hall, gym, resort) and then list the activities under the venues. Susan agreed and added that horseback riding could be under “trails,” and knitting and card playing could be under “Town Hall” or “Grange.” Martha said there might be an activity that a lot of people are interested in that there is no facility for. Hal said if we already have a venue for a particular activity, that’s obviously a strength. Someone suggested adding cooking to the list, along with brewing. Courtney suggested adding ice skating to the list as a separate item because it requires a facility that we don’t have. Courtney also suggested disk golf. Tom said we may have facilities for some activities but not for others. Jason said that’s the last step for tonight - to figure out if there is existing infrastructure and, if not, what we need to do. Cathy said she is in favor of approaching this from the venue perspective because she doesn’t know how we’re going to make a priority list from all these items. Chris said if you limit yourself to existing venues then you don’t have an open mind to consider new opportunities for which we don’t currently have a facility. Jason said we need to make sure that we have included all the activities that people are interested in. Matt said he’d like to see a ski tow. Matt suggested leasing one of the slopes and building a T-bar. Hal said the PC looked at Arrowhead and Playland at Jay Peak. Matt said he would enjoy getting together with the new owner of the Resort and brainstorming about the recreational possibilities of their facilities. Hal said if we

develop a list of activities that people are interested in, we can talk to the new owner when the Resort gets sold. Jason asked if we want to include downhill skiing on the list or just assume that it's going to happen. Hal said the Resort is definitely going to be sold at some point. Hal added that the town approved the purchase of the sewer and that's going to make a huge difference. Matt asked if the sale of the quad chair lift is a done deal. Hal said yes. Matt suggested a gravity mountain bike park at the Resort. Nancy asked Dennis if the snowmobile club could groom a cross country ski trail next to the snowmobile trail. Dennis said cross country skiers could probably contract with the snowmobile club to do a Nordic track but they'd have to get landowner permission. Courtney suggested orienteering, outdoor concerts, picnics, community gardens, street hockey, and square dancing as additional activities from a survey she conducted. Courtney gave the Planning Commissioners a copy of her survey results. Martha suggested not lumping dancing with singing and music. Matt mentioned Adam Boyce in connection with dancing and/or music. Someone suggested adult education classes. Mark suggested a book club. Tom suggested a recreation web page. Dennis said snowmobiling brings in \$56 million per year statewide, and has a positive impact locally. Dennis asked the Planning Commission to help establish a trail easement on Josie Bernatchez's property. Dennis said the hold up is either with her attorney or with the Town's attorney. Dennis said establishing and preserving a trail there would help the economy of the town. Dennis said the Selectboard has indicated an interest in establishing a 3-season trail from the Bowers Bridge to the Resort, which would provide direct access to the trail system for people staying at Orange Lakes. Dennis asked the Planning Commission to help make the trail a reality. Hal suggested putting that on the priority list. Chris asked if Orange Lake is doing well or not. Hal said they provide vans to take people to Sunapee, Okemo and Killington but there are not many other things for people who stay there to do. Mark said he thinks Orange Lake's business is very sound. Raina said Orange Lake gets upper valley business travelers. Although Orange Lake is not suffering, Mark said, more recreational activities might pull in more people. Tom said mountain bikers spend more money per year than skiers. Raina asked if we're voting for what we're personally interested in or what we think the town would benefit from. For example, Raina said, she likes running but there's already a strong running community so she doesn't think it needs the backing of the town. Jason said this process is helping the Planning Commission to update the Town Plan so they need to assess those activities that have the most interest in the community. Jason said he thinks people should vote for their favorite recreational activities that they think the community will benefit from as well. Chris asked the PC to answer the question. Martha said runners may not need the town's support but the town could host a number of running events every year if there's a strong interest in running. Susan said the town needs a part-time person to organize these things. Dennis said he thinks the PC needs to look at what's going to be beneficial to the town. Hal said, for the Town Plan, we need to recognize things that are broadly supported; things that you can already do individually are less important to this grant. Susan asked if the PC is trying to draw visitors to the area or if they are trying to draw families who want to live in the area. Hal said both. Mark said the PC is looking at Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, and one of the weaknesses is the lack of an organizer to develop races and other activities. Mark said one approach is to look at what we already have that could generate additional recreational revenue. Cathy said, using running as an example, although it's an individual sport, we could have running events. Matt said "Competitive Events" should be on the list of activities. There was discussion about hosting a "tough mutter" in West Windsor. Jason said "competitive events" might be confusing because a number of activities can be competitive. Matt said competitive events bring a lot of money to the general store. Mark said the PC is also interested in things that will attract 10 or 12 more people to the town on any given day, without requiring a big investment of time or money. Mark said a golf course would attract a lot of people, but we'd need to build it. Tom said if running is important to the town, the Selectboard needs to know that so they can consider widening our dirt roads. Hal said we need to get a sense of people's priorities for specific activities and then evaluate them during the SWOT analysis. Chris said he thinks people should vote for what they like to do so the PC can build on a base of what's most popular. Hal said this information is going to get put into the Town Plan so people should vote for the activities that they think will enhance the town and need the imprimatur of

the town plan in order to be accomplished. Elvin said he thinks the PC is hoping to get a sense of the most popular activities. In that case, Chris said, the PC might want to group activities like “Team Sports.” Shirley agreed. Ashley said snowmobiling, biking, hiking, and cross country skiing are big established activities and we can’t possibly go wrong in enhancing and developing more trails for those sports. Those assembled asked Jason to lump all crafts together, and to lump all winter sports together, except alpine skiing. Martha noted that ice skating requires different infrastructure from other winter sports and suggested that it be listed separately. Non-motorized trail sports were all lumped together in the same category. Snowmobiling was kept as a separate activity on the list. Indoor gym sports were lumped together and outdoor field sports were lumped together. Hal urged people to use either list but to choose the activities that they would like to see occurring in town. Music, singing, dancing, educational classes and the like were lumped under “Cultural Activities.” Laura said music lessons are different from hiring a professional band to come and play. Sugaring and gardening were lumped under “Agriculture.” Hunting, shooting, and fishing were lumped together. Water sports were lumped together. “Competitive events” such as the Vermont 50 and the Vermont 100 were suggested as another category. “Motorized trail activities” were also included. Chris suggested “Other” as a category. Hal said “other” doesn’t make sense for the Town Plan. Jason directed those present to put their four stickers on their four favorite activities from either list. After everyone voted, Hal asked if anyone has any thoughts about the feasibility of any of the categories. Hal said the PC will look at the specific list again to see what kinds of things can be bunched into the broad topics and do a broad SWOT analysis. Hal said the PC will have to evaluate the likely success of developing a particular activity within the preferred category. Hal noted that “trail activities” were the most popular and “competitive events,” “cultural events” and “alpine skiing” all ranked high. Hal said we probably already have venues available to develop those activities, but the others may have to wait until the town is prepared to spend money to promote them. Hal said the Planning Commission’s job is to get language into the Town Plan that will allow us to pursue specific things. Elvin noted that every PC meeting is open to the public and encouraged people to attend. Raina asked if the Town Plan can incorporate a communication mechanism for events that already happen. Matt suggested that the town produce a weekly one-page flyer about what’s happening in Brownsville. Mark noted the bulletin board at the store. Hal noted that Tom Kenyon writes a column about Brownsville in the *Vermont Standard*. Hal said we may need a committee or an individual volunteer to take on some of this. Matt said Stowe produces a nice annual events magazine. Chris said if property values have dropped because the mountain is closed, we can assume that values would increase if the Ski Area re-opened, estimate how much additional tax revenue would be generated, and set some of that aside to hire a part-time recreation director. Hal said the Planning Commission has that information. Nancy said if more people signed up for the website emails that Martha sends, more people would be aware of what’s going on. Nancy suggested that the town encourage people to sign up.

5. Adjourn – **Elvin made a motion to adjourn at 8:00 PM. Hal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison