

**TOWN OF WESTMINSTER  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
JULY 14, 2014**

Members Present: John Medeiros (Chair); Chris Vincent (Vice-Chair); John Barnett (Clerk);  
Matt Conklin, Kathy Kingston, Randy Major

Others Present: Russell Hodgkins (Town Manager & Zoning Administrator)

**CALL TO ORDER:** Medeiros called this Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:05 PM in the Westminster Town Hall. He noted that all members were present. He advised that meetings are tape recorded therefore asked anyone wishing to speak to identify themselves.

**ADJUSTMENTS TO AGENDA:** There were no adjustments to the Agenda.

**ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES – June 9, 2014:** Kingston / Vincent moved to approve the Minutes of the June 9, 2014, meeting as printed. With five members in favor, the Minutes were approved by a 5-1-0 vote (approved, abstained, opposed) vote. Barnett abstained from the vote.

Medeiros pointed out that at the bottom of page 2, last paragraph, in the June 9<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes it mentions up-dating the Town Plan to show examples of what the Town has done since the last Town Report. He will work on a draft of the projects that have been implemented and bring it back to the next meeting.

**COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC COMMENT:** There were no communications or Public Comment at this meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS (Action & Discussion):**

**Proposal for Special Meeting – Water & Sewer Feasibility:** The PC members discussed having a Special Meeting on extending the water and sewer lines. Medeiros felt this meeting should have a lot of advance publicity. This would be the first step toward moving forward. Conklin advised that Mr. Dufresne is willing to talk to the PC members about a feasibility study and how they can fund it. Dufresne has been an engineer in the water and sewer field for a lot of years. He sent Conklin some information on different options. Conklin would like to attend a Selectboard meeting to see if there are funds available for the study. If so, it would avoid having to take out a loan or apply for a grant. Major heard there were other previous studies. Hodgkins noted that about 15-to-20 years ago one was started. He was asked, as a contractor, for some preliminary numbers however there was not enough demand for it so it did not move forward. Since then a lot of things have changed like the Industrial Park and the Industrial buildings along Route 5. Two businesses are interested and, if approached, might be willing to participate in the costs. Conklin pointed out that once the water line construction was started the engineer's fee would be included in the grant but there is nothing like that for the sewer. Medeiros felt this calls for more research. The PC is not authorized to make any decisions at this time as it would first have to be presented to the Selectboard. Hodgkins advised that the next Selectboard meeting is on July 22<sup>nd</sup>; one to three members should appear at that meeting. He will try to generate the information from the meeting with Marquis and Romano on this matter.

**Conklin / Vincent moved to have Mr. Dufresne attend the PC meeting on Monday, August 11<sup>th</sup> to discuss studies for the extension of the water and sewer lines and to look at the funding available for a Feasibility Study. The motion was approved by a 6-0-0 vote.**

It was agreed to have Conklin be the communicator with Dufresne. If Dufresne is not available on August 11<sup>th</sup> the alternative date would be September 8<sup>th</sup>.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**Act 250 Business, if any:** There was no pending Act 250 Business at this time.

**PSB Business, if any:** With reference to the last meeting minutes, Hodgkins clarified that there are actually 75 acres in the so-called Industrial Park. Susan Gay owns 42 acres that is 100% Agriculture Overlay. It can only be developed with agriculture. Westminster Business Park, LLC owns the 33 acres which is for Commercial/Industrial use only. This is where the five acres of solar array will be located. Medeiros noted that the PC members previously agreed with the solar array if it stays within the 33 acres.

**Town Plan – Continuation Page 54 - Land Use:** Medeiros questioned if the PC members want to recommend a change to the Districts and, if so, what will the outlines of the growth centers be? Major felt they have suggested two: 1) around the slaughter house on the Back Westminster Road; and 2) near the Medeiros house. Hodgkins pointed out that there no longer is a “RR District” as it was changed to “RU District” but it remains “Rural-Residential District”. That needs to be changed in this section. The PC members continued their discussion on “growth centers”. Vincent mentioned it would make sense to have a growth center where they are proposing to have a Water and Sewer Feasibility Study. Medeiros noted that they already talked about a growth center by Int. 91 Exit 5. This should be put on the map. Hodgkins pointed out that new growth areas should be areas that are not yet developed. Vincent said they also want to bring things out of the flood plain. Medeiros stated there is a distinction between Current Use and Proposed Use. They could leave this section as is. There was discussion regarding non-conforming uses. Barnett said just because a use is changing it does not mean they have to change the zone. He felt they should consider the fact that as a PC they have the power to change the Zoning Bylaw which is what would govern what the zones are. A plan does not govern that as a plan makes recommendations. Hodgkins stated the Bylaws have to mimic the Town Plan.

Page 54, Third Paragraph: Medeiros read this paragraph. He noted that Jewell used to say if they look at the Town of Westminster map it does not look like we are protecting or maintaining the historic pattern of Village Centers; it looks like we are building residential districts along the main road. That is not wrong but it is not consistent with compact Village Centers. Vincent noted that we do have a few Village Centers. Kingston felt they could get into PUDs but people come to Vermont and want space around their houses. Medeiros asked if they want to treat each Village District as having their own economic plan. Kingston noted that each Village District is different and has its own characteristics.

**Page 54 & Page 55, Residential District (R):** Copies of Article VII: Planned Unit Development (PUD) was included in the member’s packets. Medeiros feels this meets the need that has been described in the past as it enables people to have housing that is sufficient for several families living in one place. Density is an issue and this makes it permissible. Hodgkins advised that minor PUDs are for four families or less. There was a consensus to add a few sentences to explain that this is the method to provide higher densities in Residential Districts. This is limited to families in the Residential Districts only.

**Wildlife Corridors:** Kingston pointed out that as the world keeps getting more populated there is a big effort going on to protect more territory for the wildlife to have access to the river. They should be more aware of where these corridors are. Should they consider not allowing PUDs in the conservation areas? She will work on drafting something on this. Barnett felt there is something in the Town Plan already; they need to look at it. Hodgkins noted that there is nothing in the Bylaws about animals

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

**Columbus Day, Monday, October 13<sup>th</sup>:** Hodgkins advised that the PC members need to think about an alternate date for this regular meeting day as it is a holiday. It will be discussed at the next meeting.

**Sandwich Boards:** Hodgkins brought the sandwich board outside the Town Hall to the PC members' attention. There will be a Special Meeting on Tuesday, August 12<sup>th</sup>. The Selectboard has brought in front of the taxpayers what information they have been given from the State about changing the Westminster Charter. He urged the members to come to the meeting, ask questions and be informed on the issues. Legal counsel will be present as it is an important step. This is about three positions: the Clerk, the Treasurer and Assessment Form of Listing. If approved, it will give the Selectboard the authority to appoint rather than elect these positions. This was brought to their attention by all the fraud that has been going on with public funds. Right now the same person is the Clerk, Treasurer and Financial Officer.

Primary Voting Day is Tuesday, August 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Development Review Board Meetings:** Future Agenda discussion should include having a PC member present at the DRB meetings. The PC creates and the DRB enforces. They should talk about how the PC can support the DRB and how can the DRB support the PC.

**DATE OF NEXT REGULAR MEETING** – August 11, 2014 at 7:00 PM.

**ADJOURNMENT: Conklin / Vincent moved to adjourn this meeting. The motion was approved by a 6-0-0 vote at 9:06 PM.**

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Signature of Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Prepared by: Regina Borden, Recording Secretary

(**Note:** These are unapproved Minutes. Corrections, if necessary, will be found in the Minutes of the August 11, 2014, Planning Commission meeting.)