

**TOWN OF WESTMINSTER
PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING
MARCH 24, 2014**

ORIGINAL

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

Members Absent: No members were absent.

Others Present: Bill Jewell (Zoning Administrator)

CALL TO ORDER: John Medeiros called this Planning Commission Special meeting to order at 6:44 PM. in the Westminster Town Hall. He noted that all members were present. Medeiros advised that meetings are tape recorded therefore asked anyone wishing to speak to identify themselves.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES FROM MARCH 10, 2014, MEETING: The members agreed to table the Minutes until the next regular meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

TOWN PLAN UPDATE; Start at Page 42 (Cultural, Recreational and Historical Resources):

Kingston distributed copies of information she found on Flood Resilience which needs to be a new Element in Town Plans that are approved after July 1st, 2014. Towns will not be eligible for Grants or other funding without it. Jewell explained that it is within the range of 25% to 75% reimbursement; for not doing anything towns could get 25%; with a Hazard Mitigation Plan for roads and culverts they would get 50%; but if they include the Flood Resilience Element the towns will get 75%. Kingston advised that since "Irene" the State adopted Act 16. There are a lot of losses with flooding and that will increase so they are trying to make the State more prepared for dealing with flooding issues. They are talking about two major aspects (types) of flooding. Inundation happens along flood plains and the fluvial erosion when moving rivers move away. The members reviewed Act 16 (H.401) and notes submitted by Kingston. She advised her notes are just the beginning of this Element therefore she will talk to Jewell and John Bennett at WRC. It appears that none of the towns have done this except Ducksbury. There are other sections in the Town Plan that need to be tied into this such as Public Health and Safety, Surface Water, Forest Lands and Wetlands. Kingston wrote one up for Forest Lands. They need to be sure that people are no longer building homes in flood plains. Jewell added that people should not re-build in the flood plain after they have been flooded out. He has been trying to get the Selectboard interested in thinking about if a road washes out where they will re-locate it. The road would need to be re-designed to get it out of the flood plain. Medeiros said they could take up what the Town would do in the Town Plan; if a road is washed out in the spring floods they could say the Highway Department will identify a safer location. Jewell pointed out that with a flood they do not know what will happen so they need to get the right-of-ways in place and have a road design in place so when the road is washed-out they move the road. With "Irene" all the stuff washed out but they put most of it back in the same place. Vincent feels the Hazard Mitigation Plan will help identify potential hazards in the future; maybe they could just get the conversation started. Kingston said a part of the planning process could be making sure that the vital wetlands / holding tanks, in places where the water is spreading out, be maintained. The rivers are not being given enough space. These components need to be addressed. Jewell felt they need goals and objectives that would encompass that energy. Kingston will do more research into this and talk to J. Bennett at WRC. Conklin volunteered to assist. Medeiros felt since this is such a major new project and because it is complicated they all need to participate.

Relative to the Town Plan, Kingston re-worked the predominant tree species because members did not like the order. It was agreed to change it to: "Predominant tree species include white pine, eastern hemlock, red and sugar maple, beech, white ash, birches, black cherry, red oak, hickory and black locust."

Members agreed to add the following paragraph: "A number of factors are affecting the health of Vermont forests. Pests such as Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, Asian Long horned beetle and the Emerald Ash borer have been detected in parts of the State. Competition by several invasive species, including Common Buckhorn, Japanese Knotweed, and Asian Bittersweet is on the rise. Climate change is bringing more frequent drought, flooding, ice storms, increased pest resistance and changes in the seed viability. The composition of our forests will be changing in favor of warmer climate species." There was a consensus to approve this paragraph.

The PC members began their review of the Town Plan, Draft #4, on Page 42:

Recreational Areas: First paragraph, add to the last sentence: "and the one public forest, the Bellows Falls Union High School Forest of 150 acres".

Second paragraph, change as follows: "The Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association (WHPA), in Westminster and neighboring towns, has opened its privately owned one thousand eight hundred (1,800) acres to hikers, birdwatchers, and people enjoying a picnic. A map of these and other public facilities and utilities within the town borders can be found on the Town community facilities map to help interested parties identify and use these recreational resources." Add a sentence: "Trail maps are also available at trail head information kiosks."

Barnett will check on the accurate number of acres of the WHPA that are in Westminster.

Recreational Areas Recommendations:

#1 – Change to: "The Town shall support the use of recreational resources in the Town including but not limited to snowmobile clubs (local and state), the Westminster Recreational Club, Connecticut River Scenic By-way Association, Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association and others."

#2 – Change first line to: "The Conservation Commission shall develop a list of recreational opportunities and make the list available to residents".

#3 – Delete this entire sentence.

Page 43:

#4 will be #3: Change to: "The Town shall support the orderly development of needed public and private recreational facilities."

#5 will be #4: Change to: "The Planning Commission will explore the feasibility of sidewalks and walking / biking trails."

#6 will be #5: Change to: "The Planning Commission will explore the feasibility of enhancement of public access to surface waters including the Saxtons River and Connecticut River."

It was agreed to add #4 to Transportation as #7 on page 28. "The Planning Commission will explore the feasibility of sidewalks and walking / biking trails".

Historic and Cultural Resources:

There was a consensus to change the format and delete the bullets in the list for: Town Halls, Libraries, Churches, and Cemeteries.

Next Paragraph: There should be a space between the second paragraph and Historic Sites.

Under Historic Sites: Second sentence should be changed from "Historical District" to "Historic District".

Change: "Water Trough" to "Water Trough at Town Hall".

Add: "Veterans Memorial in North Westminster".

Page 44:

First Line: Change to: “Other historic and cultural sites such as lime kilns, stone bridges, cellar holes and mill foundations can be found throughout the Town.”

Historic and Cultural Resources Policies:

#2 - Change to: “To ensure that major Town owned historical and cultural sites are maintained and restored appropriately.”

Add #3: “The Town will encourage maintenance and restoration of identified historic and cultural sites.”

Add #4: “The Town will support public access to historic sites and historic information.”

Historic and Cultural Resources Recommendations:

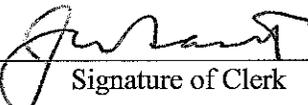
#1: Change to: “The Town will work to ensure that major historical structures and markers are maintained, restored, documented and marked appropriately.”

#5 – Delete this entire existing paragraph.

Add New #5: “The Town will encourage the Westminster Historical Society to identify critical historic resources in need of repair, develop a priority list and help find funding.”

Next Meeting: During the April 14, 2014, meeting the PC members will begin the Town Plan up-date on Page 45 – Energy.

ADJOURNMENT: Vincent / Conklin moved to adjourn this meeting. With all members in favor, the motion was approved at 8:42 PM.



Signature of Clerk

4/14/2014

Date

Prepared by: Regina Borden, Recording Secretary

(Note: These are unapproved Minutes. Corrections, if necessary, will be found in the Minutes of the April 14, 2014, Planning Commission meeting.)

FILED
TOWN CLERK
WESTMINSTER
ATTEST

FILED April 16, 2014
WESTMINSTER, VT
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
ATTEST: Patty Merkast
TOWN CLERK