

**TOWN OF WESTMINSTER
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
JUNE 9, 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)

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 – May 12, 2014: Kingston noted a spelling correction on page 1, under New Business – Act 250 Business – State of Vermont Public Safety Building, line #11, “ran” should be changed to “rain”. Barnett / Conklin moved to approve the Minutes of the June 9, 2014, meeting, with the above correction. With all members in favor, the Minutes were approved by a 6-0-0 vote (approved, abstained, opposed) vote.

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

NEW BUSINESS & Discussion / Action):

Act 250 Business:

Hearing Notice State of Vermont Public Safety Facility: The PC members had received a copy of the Notice of Act 250 Application from the State of Vermont, Dept. of Buildings & General Services, for the Public Safety Facility.

Response to Town Letter (Cross Engineering): The PC members acknowledged receipt of the response from Cross Consulting Engineers, PC to the District 2 Environmental Board, in response to the Town of Westminster letter, dated May 20, 2014. Cross Consulting is advising that the proposed stormwater drainage system should not be a problem and that includes the 100-year storm event. There was discussion regarding the proposed two acres of impervious paving for the parking areas. Hodgkins explained that this is a huge building; in the front there is a customer parking area with about 45 spaces and in the back near the maintenance area there are about 30 parking spaces for employees.

PSB Business, (if any): The PC members discussed the proposed solar array to be located on a portion of the 42 acres of the so-called Industrial Park owned by Susan Gay. It would be in the first section, on the left side, after the row of trees as you get to the gate; it is in the excavated area where gravel was removed so there is very little top soil on the lot. It is protected being 100% agriculture. Hodgkins explained that it is the only land that Westminster ever put into a Covenant to have industrial come in and yet they are going to let a semi-commercial endeavor move in there. Is it the Town's best interest to let that solar array go there or somewhere else where it would be less intrusive to the tax base. Medeiros asked if the PC members want to tell the PSB that they have concerns about using this land intended for industry for something that is not industry. A number of people have said it is unlikely there will be industry there until there is water and sewer. For that number of years it seems this solar array could remain there as it is not permanent. Hodgkins advised that the State has given the Town a guideline that anything after 10 kw (amount for the average house) is excess so now they are generating, putting it into the Grid and creating a business; that is where the Town can start taxing. The Selectboard will have to

vote to hold a Public Hearing to change the existing Ordinance regarding this tax issue. The Town was given the opportunity to participate in this solar array but then it was revoked. Kingston felt the PC members need to let the Selectboard know that they think it is okay to put this solar array in the Industrial area. Hodgkins will put that in his Manager's report.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS (Discussion / Action):

Town Plan Update Continues (Page 49); (Town Plan Needs to Include Economic Development and Flood Resilience Content): Following are the changes as agreed to by the members:

Page 50 - Housing: Barnett obtained the 2010 statistics; he will fill in the numbers. Change data year "2000" to "2010".

Page 51: Policies Nos. 2 & 3 – Hodgkins explained that the Town now has an Energy Policy that was State mandated three years ago but they just started using it. There will have to be a certain R value in the walls, roof, etc. that has to apply to each Zoning application for any additions or new houses. Alternatives to that are fine as long as they meet the State's values. The contractor has to fill out the permit and submit it to the State with a copy to the Town.

Page 51: No. 4 – The PC members discussed the term "permanent residents" and reducing lot sizes to make housing more affordable. Major proposed the following re-write to No. 4: "The Planning Commission will seek data and research on dwelling costs, lot sizes and the Town's environmental considerations." Five PC members were in favor of this change except for Barnett who was opposed as he felt No. 4 should be deleted.

Page 51 – Recommendations - Planning Unit Developments (PUDs): Medeiros proposed a No. 5 to explore the feasibility of a special form of PUDs. Hodgkins explained that a PUD has stringent regulations on the new interim By-laws that were just passed. One owner, one parcel – once it is declared a PUD it is always a PUD; there is no chance to further subdivide. A PUD stays with the lot. Hodgkins will bring that declaration into the next meeting for further discussion.

Page 52 – Economic Development: Under Economic Profile, line 8, change "greener pastures" to "other economic opportunities".

Page 52 – Business Activity, Line 6: Medeiros proposed adding after "Interstate 91 Access Road" - "Westminster Station and at a few businesses on the most northerly section of US Route 5".

Page 52 – Second line from the bottom - change "1,200" to "1,500".

Page 52 – Last line – change "\$12" million to "\$15" million.

Medeiros pointed out that for the Windham Regional Commission to approve the up-dated Town Plan they need to show them examples of what the Town has done since the last Town Plan. He mentioned that on page 3 of his 8 page handout it mentions the slaughterhouse on the Back Westminster Road, Harlow's and there are other places that he has not included. Since the last Town Plan, Westminster Cares made a great effort to identify suitable senior housing sites in North Westminster; there were complex land transactions that enabled the Public Safety Building; there was construction at the Park 'N Ride facility, construction of the Recycling Work Area on the Back Westminster Road. This could be put in the beginning of the Town Plan. Hodgkins noted that these should have dates.

Page 53 – Policies - Nos. 2, 3 and 6: Change "regulations" to "By-laws".

Page 53 – Recommendations – No. 2 – Line 1 – after "The Development Review Board will" delete "help to" and change "Ordinances" to "By-laws".

Page 53 – Recommendations – add No. 3: "The Planning Commission will treat each village as having individual village planning goals based upon the conditions and development concerns that apply to that particular village."

Page 53 – Add No. 4: “The Planning Commission will support practical strategies that enable both existing and new business enterprises to have the best available technology for recycling, storing or re-using environmentally harmful materials or chemicals.”

Page 53 – Add No. 5: “The Planning Commission will designate a “growth center” to include the Exit 5 access road, the Business Park between Westminster Heights Road and Route 5, Route 5 northerly, and the Westminster Station Village District. The “growth center” will need to be precisely identified on the Proposed Land Use map, along with commercial and industrial zones.”

Page 53 – Add No. 6: “The Selectboard will authorize the Planning Commission to gather information and apply for funding for a municipal water and sewer system that would be accessible for the Business Park (off Route 5) and the Town Garage. A feasibility study or engineer’s report would be required before any further planning action. Experience shows that economic growth in this area and in the Town as a whole is unlikely to occur without development of large or medium-scale municipal water and sewer services.”

Next Meeting: At the next meeting the PC members will begin their review on Page 54 – Land Use Plan. Hodgkins will forward the section on the By-laws for PUDs via email.

DATE OF NEXT REGULAR MEETING – July 14, 2014, at 7:00 PM.

OTHER BUSINESS: There was no Other Business at this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT: Kingston / Barnett moved to adjourn this meeting. With all members in favor, the motion was approved at 9:14 PM.

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 July 14, 2014, Planning Commission meeting.)