

**TOWN OF WESTMINSTER
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
July 11, 2016**

Members Present: Chris Vincent, Chairman; Kathy Kingston; and Matt Conklin
Absent Members: Randy Major; John Barnett; John Medeiros (Resigned effective 7.4.2016)
Others Present: Russell Hodgkins (Town Manager / Planning & Zoning Administrator),
Nancy Dalzell, Select Board member and Kevin Hughes

- 1. CALL TO ORDER:** Chris Vincent (Chair) called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.
- 2. ADJUSTMENTS TO AGENDA:** Kathy Kingston wanted to add to the agenda discussion of Historic People of Vermont. Russ Hodgkins stated we could place this item under other business as there was no action to be taken.
- 3. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:** Chris Vincent moved to accept the minutes as written. Kathy Kingston seconded the motion. Motion passed.
- 4. COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC COMMENT:** Russ Hodgkins reminded the Commission of the resignation of John Medeiros effective July 4, 2016 per John's email.

Kevin Hughes was present as he showed interest in the Planning Commission and would like to serve the town on this commission. Kevin introduced himself and spoke of his abilities and why he thought he would be a good candidate to serve with the Commission. The Commission gave Kevin an overview of their responsibilities relative to the Zoning Bylaws and the Town Plan.

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS (Discussion / Action):

a): Discussion of proposed Bylaw revisions, Article IX: Historic Preservation Overlay District

General comment: Change Administrative Officer to Zoning Administrator; this Bylaw change to these Bylaws. Also change "applicant" to "Applicant" throughout document.

Section 942 Review Process: Russ still waiting on a response from legal counsel regarding John Barnett's concern about "deemed approval". Russ will follow up with attorney.

Section 964 Criteria for Historic Structures: Clarify and add definition for "Historic Structure".

Section 973 Signs: Four items in this section. Item A; item B to read "the Design of the sign including...; Item C to read "Signs shall be illuminated.... Add Item D to read "All signs will need a separate sign permit and will conform to the Town of Westminster's Sign Ordinance.

Recommend the map of the Historic District be updated with current owner names.

Russ Hodgkins came back to the Planning Commission with Development Review Board comments regarding increasing the setbacks in the zoning districts. This is not recommended by the DRB as it will create nonconformance because some lots are already small.

Planning Commission agreed that this would create limitations for property owners. Setbacks will remain as written in the 2014 Interim Bylaws.

6. NEW BUSINESS (Discussion / Action):

a) Act 250 Business: Vermont National Guard solar array project moving forward at the Industrial Park. Construction will start sometime in July 2016 per Russ Hodgkins.

Kathy Kingston asked about new tax bills and whether or not the town will be taxing new solar array projects.

Russ Hodgkins explained the state has a formula. Solar arrays are being taxed by production (net metering) on sites that generate over 50 kilowatts.

b) PSB Business: None.

7. OTHER BUSINESS:

Kathy Kingston spoke about the Town Plan. She would like to add a section about history and who actually settled in Westminster. She suggested that this section be Historic People of Vermont as they influenced the character of the town and it is important that people know. Kathy mentioned the issue of decolonization, families/farming and the shad run (May/June). Kathy will research and talk to Jessie Haas to gather more information for the next meeting.

The Town Plan is slated to be revised in two years.

Matt Conklin gave a brief overview of the Planning/Zoning Forum that he attended. He stated that ordinances and environmental issues were the topic of discussion for the day.

Kathy Kingston asked about internet service for her area and how a resident would go about inquiring to getting broadband internet to their homes. She expressed this would be important for people moving into the area and the town should consider looking into this. Some providers such as VTel, Comcast, and Fairpoint are in town but appear to only provide limited services in and around town.

Russ Hodgkins asked whether the Planning Commission had considered doing anything for John Medeiros as he served the Planning Commission for many years and had some major impacts with the work that he has done.

Russ Hodgkins updated the Planning Commission with the State of Vermont Public Safety Building. The 4' fence is not in compliance as the permit states the fence to be 8'. The water issue is being addressed and changes are ongoing at the site. Landscaping is being put in place.

8. DATE OF NEXT REGULAR MEETING: August 8, 2016 at 7:00 P.M.

9. ADJOURNMENT: Kathy Kingston made a motion to adjourn at 8:38 PM and Matt Conklin seconded. The motion passed and the Chair declared the meeting adjourned.

Signature of Clerk

Date

Prepared by: Karen Astley, Recording Clerk

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