

**TOWN OF WESTMINSTER
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
July 13, 2015**

Members Present: John Medeiros (Chair), Chris Vincent (Vice Chair), Matt Conklin, Randy Major
VIA Teleconference: John Barnett (Clerk)

Absent: Kathy Kingston

Others Present: Russell Hodgkins (Town Manager / Planning & Zoning Administrator); Karen Astley, Recording Clerk

1. CALL TO ORDER: John Medeiros called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. ADJUSTMENTS TO AGENDA: NONE

3. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES: One revision to minutes from June 8, 2015.

Item 5 (a) – tenth line down “Kinston” should read “Kingston”.

Randy Major made a motion to accept the minutes as amended. Matt Conklin seconded the motion. VOTE 5-0-0.

4. COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC COMMENT: No one present from public.

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS (Discussion / Action):

5 (a): Discuss Comments from Windham Regional Commission (WRC) about Town Plan: John Medeiros had in the packet three documents (Town Plan Review, Town Self-Assessment Form; Town Plan Review Duties and Responsibilities 2007; and Plan and Bylaw Adoption Tools) from WRC that are good resources for preparing Town Plan and Zoning Bylaws. John stated that the committee met all of the assessment criteria relative to the Town Plan goals and objectives being in line with the state. John made mention that the entire text on flood resiliency should be in the Town Plan as Chris Campany stated in an email. Russ would add one sentence from the email that was given to him from John Medeiros. Comments from the committee were made in regards to the friendliness of the language in this element as it is written currently in the Town Plan. In the future they should revisit and reword this section so the language is not so legal oriented.

Randy Major made a motion to accept the entire text as recommended by WRC on Flood Resiliency. Matt Conklin seconded the motion. VOTE 5-0-0.

5 (b): Comments from Legal Counsel, Selectboard, Town Manager and the DRB: Russ Hodgkins spoke on behalf of legal counsel with regard to the Internal Memorandum from Larry Slason. Larry stated to Russ the Town Plan is well written but that it doesn't have the teeth to address non-compliance. The “What fors....”. As the committee proceeds forward with revising the Zoning Bylaws they will need to consider and be aggressive in addressing compliance and enforceability.

Language such as “should”, “encourage” or “promote” are imperative when revising the Zoning Bylaws.

Select Board has no comments in writing but through Russ Hodgkins the Select Board stated the Town Plan is comprehensive, complete and clearly readable.

Development Review Board is fine with the Town Plan per Russ Hodgkins. When it is time to revise the Zoning Bylaws the DRB would like to review each section as it is completed. They want full involvement with the process of revising the bylaws.

John Medeiros stated on “record” that he supports the fact that the DRB will be included in the process.

6. NEW BUSINESS (Discussion / Action):

6 (a): Act 250 Business, If Any: None

6 (b). PSB Business, If Any: Sovern Solar was discussed based on the correspondence handed out. Russ Hodgkins stated the project went from 5 acres to 19 acres, four lots to be purchased and the project went from 150kw to 1 megawatt. Sovern Solar wants an agreement with the town which is being viewed by legal counsel that this project will not be taxed. The Town has invested \$70,000.00 to create the industrial park which appears at this time will be utilized for solar array projects.

Jeff Ruggerio’s project is not happening according to Russ Hodgkins. As the property owner Ruggerio wasn’t aware there was a site meeting scheduled on 6/23/2015.

Kurn Hattin solar project is being built but is strictly used for the campus.

Comments were made that Green Mountain Power is limited to 18% of net meeting and can’t accept any more tax deductions through solar arrays. Per Russ Hodgkins we will see a decline in the community/commercial solar array projects due to this limit.

Question from John Medeiros about who owns the credits from solar as someone is benefitting from the credits but energy is not just solar. Energy is coming from other sources.

Chris Vincent asked whether any residents are complaining about the solar array projects cropping up in the agricultural fields? Russ stated there were a handful that were more concerned about the screening of these projects which are not being done and the humming noise that the sites are producing.

Planning Commission can write a letter to the Public Service Board but there is no guarantee they will take our concerns into consideration with regard to developing these projects in Westminster. PSB is appointed by the Governor and is a three member panel.

7. OTHER BUSINESS: Russ Hodgkins attended a Public meeting on July 9, 2015. NHDOT Route 123 project will commence Spring 2016 and last 16 weeks. Traffic light will be stopping traffic from Route 5 (VT) and Route 12 (NH), the major concern is traffic backing up onto Route 5 from Route 123. Burtco and Westminster Feed Store are concerned about businesses being impacted with this bridge project. Vermont is responsible for 8% of the project and NH is responsible for 92%.

Windham Regional Commission Planning Grant correspondence was mentioned and was part of the packet but no discussion was conducted.

What is the next step for the Town Plan? Draft will be finalized. Create draft 6.1; schedule public hearings for August once Draft 6.1 is reviewed and accepted in its entirety by the Planning Commission.

Randy Major will be on vacation the beginning of August through the 20th.

John Barnett requested that the PC packet and Draft 6.1 be mailed to him in Maine.

8. DATE OF NEXT REGULAR MEETING: August 10, 2015 at 7:00 P.M.

9. ADJOURNMENT: Randy Major moved to adjourn meeting at 8:00 pm. The motion was seconded by Matt Conklin and accepted by a 5-0-0 vote.

Signature of Clerk

Date