

**TOWN OF WESTMINSTER
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
September 14, 2015**

Members Present: John Medeiros (Chair), Chris Vincent (Vice Chair), Matt Conklin and Kathy Kingston,
John Barnett (Clerk) and Randy Major arrived at 7:08 p.m.

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

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chris Vincent called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

2. ADJUSTMENTS TO AGENDA: NONE

3. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES: There were no changes to the August 10, 2015 minutes.

Chris Vincent made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Kathy Kingston seconded the motion. VOTE 6-0-0.

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

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS (Discussion / Action):

A) : Town Plan Update 6.1 Draft : Page 19; Item 3; Law Enforcement Recommendations; Line Item 3 was revised to read “The Town will encourage location of a State Police Barracks in Westminster. Construction started July 2015. (Selectboard, Planning Commission and Development Review Board).

Page 20; Solid Waste and Recycling; first paragraph, second sentence to read “At present, Westminster’s solid waste and recyclables are collected by Ruggiero Trash Removal”.

Page 20; Solid Waste and Recycling; Second paragraph; fourth sentence to read “The Town encourages its residents to recycle at this facility (9 a.m. – 1 p.m., Wednesday and Saturday) or at the Town Garage 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., Monday – Friday; Saturday and Sunday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.)”.

Page 20; Solid Waste and Recycling; Fifth paragraph; Line item 1 to read “The Town Manager, in cooperation with the Selectboard, and with the aid of the Windham Solid Waste District representatives, will continue to update the current system for solid waste disposal so the Town meets the requirements of Act 148. (Selectboard and Town Manager)”.

Chris Vincent made the motion to accept the changes to the proposed Draft 6.1 Town Plan as noted and discussed. John Medeiros seconded the motion and passed 4-0-0.

Page 37; Recreational, Historical and Cultural Resources; first paragraph; sentence one and two to read “Westminster is the town with the most land in Windham County. Four hundred (400 +/-) acres are owned by the Town for outdoor recreation (parks, playgrounds, athletic fields)”.

Page 37; Recreational, Historical and Cultural Resources; first paragraph; second paragraph remove and replace with “With the financial assistance of the State, The Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association (WHPA) in Westminster has conserved and made available to the public 1,850 acres of hills and woods for non-motorized recreation, including hunting in many areas. The Bald Hill Reserve abutting the BFUHS High School forest is part of WHPA. A map of these and other recreational facilities within Town borders can be found on the Town community facilities map to help interested parties identify and use these recreational facilities. Trail maps are available at trailhead kiosks.

John Medeiros made a motion to accept the changes to the proposed Draft 6.1 Town Plan as noted and discussed. Kathy Kingston seconded the motion and passed 6-0-0.

B): Town Plan Public Hearing #1: Two issues/concerns were discussed from the Public Hearing that was held on September 10th. They are as follows:

1. Minimum Lot size for Rural Residential Zoning District: The Planning Commission agreed they will need to do further research to defend the five acre lots or perhaps at Town Meeting handout another survey to get a consensus on how people feel about changing the district back to a two acre lot. Consensus back in 1990 and 2007 was people wanted five acre lots so they didn't have to see their neighbors.

Chris Vincent stated the Planning Commission should write a letter to Tammy Kissell as a courtesy so she is aware that the Planning Commission is researching and following through with her concern. Russ Hodgkins stated in the Bylaws the criteria states what that district supports for uses and if the parcel is a pre-existing lot it is grandfathered. Planned Unit Development can be done on a five acre lot. Are five acre lots environmentally safe? What is the big picture for Westminster?

John Medeiros will contact ANR, VLCT and Windham Regional Commission to gather information on this issue.

2. Commercial/Industrial Districts: Chris Vincent's question is "do we need more commercial use in Westminster?" If we can't build in the floodplain where can we have commercial/industrial in town?

Questions thrown out were as follows: If so can we relocate the commercial to another part of town? Is Valley Brook Drive an option for Industrial? Route 121 for Commercial? Or Route 5 traveling towards Putney? If so which side of Route 5?

Where is there prime agricultural land that is not already in use in the commercial district? There is a parcel behind the Big Red Barn on Route 5. Franchises don't support the community as the money goes out of town.

The next scheduled second Public Hearing for the proposed Town Plan Draft 6.1 is October 6, 2015, 6:30 p.m. at the Westminster Institute.

6. NEW BUSINESS (Discussion / Action):

A): Act 250 Business, If Any: No new business.

B): PSB Business, If Any: The Sovern solar array project will be built. There is a decision by the Public Service Board. The letter written by John Medeiros to the Public Service Board is not too long and it is to the point. The letter will be sent to the State Legislators instead of PSB. Russ to address each letter and John Medeiros will sign them.

Randy Major made a motion to address correspondences to the State Legislators on PSB matters. Chris Vincent seconded and all approved 6-0-0.

C): Review Zoning Bylaws: The Planning Commission will begin reviewing and revising the 2014 Interim Bylaws with the assistance of the Development Review Board. Once a section is completed by the PC it will go to the DRB for review. Any changes or comments will come back to the PC for discussion or action. The first sections are Page 1-14 and this will be discussed at the October 13, 2015 meeting.

7. OTHER BUSINESS: Comments from the August 24, 2015 Special Meeting. John Medeiros requested two changes from the minutes. Item 5B; sixth sentence should read “Windham Regional Commission is supportive of cluster development and supports affordable housing goals”.

John Medeiros briefly spoke about the Flood Resiliency Seminar. He found it to be informative and how flood insurance has evolved. Since FEMA has taken over it has been consolidated and categorized. FEMA does pay 25% of flood insurance. FEMA does not want development in the floodway.

Russ Hodgkins spoke about a FEMA buyout and asked if anyone had experience about the distribution of funds pertaining to a buyout. No one has experience with this. Russ to make phone call to Newfane past Select Board Member Chris Druke for guidance.

8. DATE OF NEXT REGULAR MEETING: October 13, 2015 at 7:00 P.M. and the Public Hearing is on Sept. 10th.

9. ADJOURNMENT: Chris Vincent made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 pm. The motion was seconded by Kathy Kingston and accepted with a 6-0-0 vote.

Signature of Clerk

Date

Prepared by: Karen Astley, Recording Clerk

S:\Zoning\2015 PC\MINUTES\9.14.2015 PC Minutes.docx