

TOWN OF WESTMINSTER PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING (PC) January 24, 2023
Members Present: Bari Shamas (Chair), Richard Crocker, Michelle Chmelar, Seroya Crouch
Others Present: Janice Leary-Jones, Recording Secretary

1. Call to Order: Bari Shamas, 6:32pm
2. Communications and Public Comment: Notes to Reflect reschedule of this meeting to January 24, 2023
3. Adjustments to Agenda: Adjustments made.
4. Acceptance of Minutes: Dec 12, 2022: Seroya Moves to Accept Minutes, Richard Second
5. Unfinished Business (Discussion / Action):

A. Town Plan

i. review and decide on Request for Proposals from Bill Jewel and Windham Regional Commission

Seroya discussed the why of a need for proposals. Grant states two or more proposals must be submitted to the Committee, PC must then review proposals and subsequently vote on the contractor to hire.

Three different sections are addressed in proposals, including the Act 171 pieces and checking to be sure all the necessary information is in the plan to be in compliance with Act 171.

In the past, Windham Regional Commission used to do the formatting of the Town Plan.

MPG grant has a list of potential contractors Bill Jewel and Windham Regional Commission selected from this list.

Bill Jewel is an independent contractor, used to be the Zoning Commissioner for Westminster 8-10 years ago. His proposal includes all necessary elements other than the required maps.

There is a need to separately contract for map work if PC moves forward with contracting either Bill Jewel or Windham Regional Commission.

Bill Jewel and Windham Regional both presented proposals. Need to be read both and select a contractor. Proposals have been provided to and read by PC members.

Jeff Nugent mentioned as a possibility to hire for map work.

Windham Regional proposal reviewed. Comparisons between proposals discussed.

Michelle moves to hire Windham Regional, Richard seconds. Unanimously voted to contract Windham Regional. Seroya will contact Bill Jewel, Bari will contact Windham Regional.

Seroya met with Sarah Danly about the Agricultural Chapter. Resources available for Westminster farmers to be listed on the town website was recommended by Sarah. Many towns are developing Farm and Food Committees to bolster food security and food systems in their towns.

Seroya will duplicate the Ag section to review the newly written/updated chapter with the new goals included that are aligned with the state plan.

Housing and Economic Plan: Seroya recommends meeting with Sarah Danly for help with reviewing/developing these chapters, due to Sarah's experience and knowledge base from working with other towns.

The purpose of the town plan is for use as a guideline for commissions and zoning boards, and therefore needs to clearly state intentions in each area. The example of the Agricultural Chapter expressly stating land use vision for the town would potentially impact Zoning decisions was mentioned.

Recreation chapter: Bari got a map of trails from Grafton Trails.

Housing chapter: Discovery that some prime farmland in the town is currently zoned residential. Richard to meet with Sarah Danly. Old housing plan does not reflect what is now available as far as grant funds for various housing units; there is a need for including this information in the town plan.

iii. Other updates

6. New Business (Discussion / Action):

Windham Regional Commission Event

Bari attended a Planning Commission event, Climate Change and Land Use Presentation and Discussion, in early January.

Margo Ghia hosted this for the Windham Regional Commission.

Comment from the crowd at this meeting, some Zoning needs to change: example, Westminster West Village is built on wetlands, building on wetlands not favorable for environmental reasons.

WRC presented that housing should be concentrated in smaller areas to reduce overall emissions.

Discussion of, how does it work to concentrate housing while also preserving character of Vermont and historic Vermont Villages; Planning Commission decisions affect Zoning which then impacts the characteristics of the town.

Bari mentioned that Margo Ghia at Windham Regional Commission is a possible resource for the Planning Commission.

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A. Selectboard attendance: December Meeting mostly in Executive Session. Seroya will look at attending the January meeting.

7. Other Business: Seroya queried if a calendar of chapters to review to group edit at meetings is in order. Recreation Chapter will be reviewed/edited at the February 13th meeting.

Elizabeth Stone "Libby" Mills was remembered and celebrated for a moment.

8. Date of Next Meeting: Feb. 13, 2023

9. Adjournment: 7:39pm Adjournment, Richard moved, Bari Second

Signature of Clerk

Date:

Prepared by: Janice Leary-Jones