

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
MINUTES FOR FEBRUARY 17, 2020 MEETING**
Approved on March 2, 2020

Commission/Board Members Present: Koi Boynton Gordon Gebauer, Seth Jensen, George Lamphere and Mark Letorney.

Commission/Board Members Absent:

Also, Present Melissa Manka (Planning Coordinator), Darryl Montague, Robert Bancroft, John Doane and Vicki Ross.

The meeting began at: 6:31 p.m.

Amendments to Agenda

No amendments proposed.

Citizens to be Heard & Announcements

No citizens to be heard and/or announcements.

Rural Economic Development & Project-Based TIFs w/ Rep Robert Bancroft

The Planning Commission met with Representative Robert Bancroft to discuss the rural economic development initiatives being discussed at the State House as well as the draft project-based tax increment financing legislation found in H. 642.

R. Bancroft said the State is in serious financial trouble and access to affordable housing and childcare are key issues. He discussed the State Auditor's position on District TIFs and said he understands the Commission's project and agrees a Project Based TIF could benefit Westford. He also believes the "but for" argument is applicable in our case and for many small towns. He noted it may be too late to testify on the matter, but he will reach out to Janet Ancel and Governor Scott as well as his chair to see whether they foresee any issues popping up in Appropriations and Ways and Means. He will report back to M. Manka. He added he did not know how this legislation would be perceived in the Senate. However, he is optimistic it will pass the House since the proposal doesn't require funding. The Planning Commission thanked Representative Bancroft.

Town Center Community Wastewater & 1705 Rte128 Property w/ 1705 Rte. 128 Steering Committee

Steering Committee Commitment

M. Letorney stated the Committee was established to present the project to the Selectboard which they did on February 13th. He will reach out to Committee members to ask whether they're interested in continuing their work. Allison Hope will be invited to all economic development meetings.

February 13th Selectboard Meeting

The Planning Commission discussed the February 13th meeting and the Selectboard's support in moving forward with investigations.

Cathedral Square Meeting Follow Up

M. Letorney, M. Manka and S. Jensen explained that they met with individuals from Cathedral Square and senior housing does not appear to be the right fit for Westford at this time. The reasons discussed were 1) the number of units and square footage necessary in order for the project to be economically viable 2) lack of public transportation necessary to transport individuals to medical appointments, etc. 3) lack of three phase power necessary to power elevators and 4) questions as to whether there is a sufficient market for senior housing in Westford. The representatives from Cathedral Square suggested contacting Champlain Housing Trust as diverse, affordable housing is more in line with Westford's needs.

Timeline

The Planning Commission reviewed the timeline M. Manka created.

Immediate Tasks, Actions & Investigations

M. Manka explained that LE Environmental expects to begin the Phase 2 ESA the first full week of March.

The Planning Commission discussed the actions to be taken in March and/or prior to the Planning Commission's March 16th meeting.

- M. Manka will contact Champlain Housing Trust and Blackrock Construction as possible partners. She will also reach out to Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission to determine what type of assistance they can offer the Town.
- G. Lamphere contact Housing VT, Vermont River Conservancy, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and Senator Patrick Leahy's office regarding Northern Border Economic Development Grants.
- Koi Boynton contact Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity as a possible partner and research who did the Jericho Market development.
- M. Manka will also contact the wastewater consultants to determine whether they would like to meet on March 16th to review the CWSRF Step 1 Application and Engineering Service Agreement or whether the review can be completed inhouse.

Responsibilities, Interested Parties & Decision Makers

The Planning Commission will discuss this later.

Additional Resources – Human, Financial, etc.

The Planning Commission will discuss this later.

Additional Subcommittees

The Planning Commission will discuss this later.

TIF Advocacy Strategy

R. Bancroft will request a meeting with Governor Scott and contact M. Manka with a strategy moving forward.

Public Outreach Strategy

The Planning Commission will discuss this later.

Other

None.

2020 Work Plan

The Planning Commission reviewed and made minor revisions to the work plan.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 p.m.

Submitted by,

Melissa Manka, Westford Planning Coordinator