

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
MINUTES FOR DECEMBER 12, 2023 MEETING
Approved on January 8, 2024**

Commissioners Present: George Lamphere, Mark Letorney, Mo Reilly, Gordon Gebauer, Seth Jensen

Commissioners Absent:

Also Present: Harmony Cism (Planning Assistant), Maria Barden (Minute Clerk), Lori Johnson, Barb Peck, Ron Rodjenski (Westford Project Manager), Wendy Doane, Peter Lazorchak (Stone Environmental), Sheila Franz, Carol Winfield, Ira Allen, Dick Lavallee, Ross Hughes, Maureen Wilcox, Vicky Ross, Sue Roediger, Dave Lavallee, Andre Roy, Becky Roy, Katie Maurice

Meeting Began: 6:31pm

Before starting the agenda George Lamphere reviews the rules of procedure for the planning commission

Amendments to Agenda:

G. Lamphere would like to add a discussion regarding the Act 250 meeting coming up and expand on that in the S.100/Act 47 section of the meeting.

Minutes of the November 20, 2023 Meeting

***MOVED to approve the minutes

***SECONDED the motion.

Discusses coming back to minute approval later with two changes, one being changing, "not used." to, "not allocated." on pg. 3 and changing, "regular pump outs" to, "regular pump outs of catch basins around the commons."

Citizens to be heard – Items not on agenda

V. Ross is wondering when you have someone whose term is up, do you allow them to renew, or does it get advertised that the term is up and consider others who may want to be on the commission.

G. Lamphere says that is a Selectboard question because it is not something they decide but something the Selectboard decides. Says that the PC does the interviews and presents their recommendation to the Selectboard and then the Selectboard decides based on the interested applicants.

Town Plan Directive

R. Rodjenski summarizes what he has been doing regarding the Town Plan. He has been looking into all the grants and funding the town currently has, to know what the needs of each grant/funding are, (deadlines, conditions, requirements, etc...) He states the Town Plan clearly articulates a goal for the village center reinvestment. Ron Discusses what might occur if the money is reallocated, and the community moves forward with investment particularly WW; stating the money would generally come from taxpayers. Ron discusses the technicality of the bond vote and that it was regarding borrowing funds and not the project itself.

The Board and Ron discuss the importance of addressing the availability of funding now and what direction they should take regarding WW. The Board asks Ron if an existing system fails for a building the town is responsible for what would happen. Ron discusses if there is a disaster there is a possibility you could get funding but states it is a lot harder to get funding if it is not for the village as a whole.

The Board talks about wanting all residents in town to be able to utilize their property to the full potential and wanting to prevent sprawl. They discuss the town office and other town buildings not being within code currently, and the need to figure out what the best solution is regarding town buildings. Form based code is discussed, why certain buildings such as the historical building look the way it does for that reason, Westford zoning does not allow certain things such as the dollar general in Fairfax. They discussed addressing and adjusting some of the form-based code that may allow 2.5 story buildings which was a concern for a lot of people in town.

S. Jensen discusses tweaking form issues without impacting diversity and affordability. Thinks the PC still has an obligation to affordable housing, the 14th amendment/equal treatment under the law.

Community WW Project

- **CRRP Grant Allocation & Deadline**

G. Lamphere discusses we were given some grant money and are being asked by these funding groups what our plans are and if we will be using the money. There are a lot of other communities looking and waiting for the funds for their projects. If Westford is not using the funds, they would like to reallocate them. Recognizes that the town is under a fair amount of pressure including the PC, residents, staff and Selectboard to determine what the next steps are.

Ron and George will have follow up administrative calls later this week to discuss the funding allocation and deadlines.

The PC discusses this level of funding will not be available to the Town again.

R. Rodjenski One of the things we are hoping to have answered is the Selectboard's involvement in all this. It looked like the PC was spearheading all this, however the Selectboard must review, agree, and sign off on all of it, including commitments, paybacks, etc.

S. Jensen discloses that he is assisting with a CRRP grant in the town of Wolcott and their 20% looks a lot like Westford's and could be a potential conflict of interest. He thinks he can be objective but wants to disclose so the PC can discuss.

- **Aquatic Permitting Criteria Assessment**

G. Lamphere this is complete, and the project is in compliance, would like to shelf it.

P. Lazorchak provided a summary letter, so it is all in one place if needed.

S. Jensen thinks there's value to the town to have the data of some of that follow up work regardless of whether the ww project happens, believes we should pursue it regardless.

G Lamphere asks what action needs to be put in, so we do not lose track of that opportunity.

P. Lazorchak states nothing further is needed currently.

- **Public Comment**

(C. Winfield, V. Ross, A. Roy, B. Peck, W. Doane, L. Johnson, B. Roy were all acknowledged with their questions and concerns during public comment)

Residents discussed questions/concerns regarding the grants/funding, the Town Plan, bond language and wanting to find another option for the town.

- **Next Steps**

The Planning Commission discusses their next steps going forward and what some of their potential options might be. They talk about not wanting to ignore the voters and residents, states the need for wastewater being immediate and how much money that will cost the town if we do not have the grants/funding. How do we produce a plan that will satisfy everyone involved? The PC feels the three options are, 1) Stay the course with no changes, 2) Full stop, let the funding go and be reallocated. 3) Acknowledge the concerns of the voters and bring the project back with changes. Potentially reducing the size of the project disposal area. The PC discusses revisiting the cost to connect where it is free at the time of construction and discusses not wanting to lose the engineering that has been done. They do not think number 1 should stay on the list because they feel that is going completely against what residents are asking.

G. Lamphere-next steps are to type up, circulate and get to the next meeting to discuss.

Petition

Discusses the language used in the petition brought to the Selectboard and PC by residents.

G. Lamphere says we are not here to debate the Town Plan, states that is another process. Thinks the PC will hear from the Selectboard once they review it.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

- **Brownfields Advisory Committee CAP**

G. Lamphere Received an email on next steps. Thinks there is still some funding available to address some contaminated soils. Thinks there is some hesitancy while awaiting next steps on WW.

R. Rodjenski thinks George is right, not sure if it is contingent on WW as much as the collective issue on moving forward on the project.

George and Mark think the corrective action is contingent on the site plan and not necessarily WW.

R. Rodjenski thinks it will not go further until the site plan is communicated to them. Does not believe there is any follow up currently until the community is done debating the path forward.

- **Hoyle & Tanner Stormwater Scoping Study**

The PC thinks Hoyle & Tanner have a strong assessment of our conditions and our situation. Doesn't know if we have edits to the report but thinks they should go through the process to best serve the PC and community as a whole to provide to the Selectboard for their review. They discuss how this involves the property owners and so the property owners need to be included in the process. Discusses the culvert under 128 potentially being the highest priority because of the shape it is in and untreated water going directly into the Browns River. Next steps being further dialogue with the property owner if this moves further depending on the Selectboard's decision.

Mark will write this up as the next steps by the next meeting, they will then review and discuss and get to the Selectboard sometime in January.

R. Rodjenski would like to know regarding UPWP what the relationship is that now and what needs to continue for reallocation of priority from Westford and what if any new projects you want to request support from. He received an email about what the project was and them needing to know.

Ron and the PC discuss pulling it all together within the time discussed, they talk about what should be kept on the list and what can be shelved regarding the projects.

Mark is going to reach out about stormwater and try and figure it out and then it can be finished on January 8th.

- **Future Projects**

Town Planner, WW, Stormwater, UPWP

- **Public Comment-*No public comment***

S.100/Act 47 Municipal Delegation Report

The PC discusses bill S.100, ACT 250, draft municipal delegation framework, public meeting coming up on Thursday 12/14. Act 250 can be complicated and expensive, changes are being made to try and make it easier for applicants. The only action is to consider asking the delegate to come back to the table and rely on Seth to raise the issue.

Correspondence

- L. Johnson & Maureen Wilcox had questions that Ron had answered and followed up with them. George feels they are good questions they will consider in the next steps and thanks everyone involved.
- Selectboard shared a letter they received from seven residents and will be on the Selectboard agenda.
- Communication the PC received relating to client attorney privilege so they cannot discuss at this time.
- Colchester Planning Commission emailed regarding Colchester updating their development regulations, they are required by statute to let adjoining towns know, the PC will discuss in their work plan.

2024 Work Plan

- **The Planning Commission** discusses who can attend the upcoming Selectboard meeting, when the next PC meetings will be held and what days they should go forward with in the new year.
- Hoping to have their next financial report by the end of January.

Adjourn: Meeting Adjourned at 9:50pm