

Windham Economic Development Committee
Minutes-Draft
Windham Community Development Department Conference Room
December 9, 2011

Present: Chairman Bob Young, Members SallyD'Angelo, Paul Gosselin, Derrick McManus, Al Letizio Jr., Diane Connolly, Ralph Valentine, Sy Wrenn, Laura Scott

Excused: Jay Yennaco

Meeting called to order at 7:32AM

Late Arrivals: Bev Donovan at 7:41AM

Welcome & Attendance – Chairman Young welcomed our two new members Diane Connolly and Derrick McManus.

Review of November 11th Minutes. Motion by Al Letizio to approve the minutes as amended, seconded by Diane Connolly. Motion passed 8-0-1

Late Arrival Phil Lochiatto 7:52AM

Design Review Sub Committee Report – Ralph Valentine stated that the sub-committee will schedule a meeting once the latest revised draft of the design review guide is published by the planning board. He also discussed the cost of trying to get a comparison study done, and that it may be cost prohibitive to have an engineering or construction firm provide the details. Laura Scott indicated that the revised copy should be available by December 18th. Al Letizio suggested that the WEDC or the Community Development department find an intern who could provide the service as part of their educational requirements. One of the goals of the WEDC is to increase the commercial tax base to offset tax increases in town. Phil Lochiatto stated that he is concerned with doing a cost comparison today based upon what exists as it might not meet the new guidelines. He also said that it is difficult to do the comparison without knowing what the planning board would approve as a variance. Al Letizio stated that he would like to do the comparison to test the theory that the new guidelines will increase construction costs. Ralph Valentine agreed and would also want to test the theory about tax value impact created by the potential loss of square footage on a project. Sy Wrenn commented that the design guide is to ensure an attractive building, and if a project already looks good, then what changes are needed. Paul Gosselin stated that we should consider waiting until the new design guide is released to see what changes occur before we take action on cost review that might change. Phil Lociatto said that we should look at 3 different building projects to get a baseline comparison of what the design guide will do. The committee agreed to table the discussion and await further input from the sub-committee once the revised design guide is released.

Zoning Ordinance Sub-Committee Report – Bev Donovan stated that they are having hearings at this time on a number of different ordinance changes. Laura Scott advised the WEDC that the planning board has all of the items listed on their schedule on the website and that we should use that as a reference. She highlighted the commercial kennel zoning, and the Canobie Lake watershed district expansion as two items that might be of particular interest. The hearing on the watershed district is set for December 28th. There are more citizens petitions expected to be presented. Phil Lociatto commented that they are also working on changing many multi-zoned parcels. This is an area of concern as the changes may not meet the zoning expectations as set out currently by the town. Laura Scott stated that the watershed district change would add regulations and make development in this area (gateway district) more difficult. Paul Gosselin asked if information about the change was being sent out to those impacted and if Salem also had a similar protection district. Chairman Young indicated that Salem does not currently have a protection district. He said that it was his understanding that the biggest threats to the watershed at this time were the residential developments already in place, along with the highway. He was told it is easier to put in a watershed protection district instead of trying to educate the residents of the area. Phil Lociatto commented that someone should file a protest petition that would require a 2/3 majority vote to pass this new protection district instead of a simple majority. Al Letizio stated that his business is currently in this type of district for Cobbetts pond, and that it has cost him in the range of \$25,000 or more in engineering costs simply to evaluate if expansion of his business is possible. Diane Connolly asked if this would be considered a negative for new or business expansion, to which Al replied many businesses would look at moving to Salem vs. taking the chance on spending money for engineering that might not work out. Chairman Young asked for additional volunteers for the Zoning Ordinance sub committee, and Diane Connolly volunteered to join.

Ralph Valentine made a motion that the WEDC issue a press release letting the people in the proposed Canobie Lake watershed protection area know that these changes are coming, and what the new restrictions will be. The intent is to refer them to the town website. Al Letizio seconded the motion, the motion passed 10-0-0

2012 Goal Setting – Chairman Young asked the WEDC to consider establishing goals for the coming year. He said that he feels it is important for the committee to have stated objectives to reach and will help him to structure the meetings. Al Letizio said he supports goal setting to have a meaningful impact for the committee. Ralph Valentine stated that we are already achieving our goals in our work with the planning board on design guide review and zoning ordinances. Paul Gosselin agreed with Ralph, adding why should we set goals when we are already working on them.

8:42 AM Phil Lochiatto departs the meeting

Sally D'Angelo made a motion to postpone the goal setting discussion until after the town meeting. The next WEDC meeting after the town meeting is scheduled for April

13, 2011. Ralph Valentine seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 6-3-0.

Public Inquiry PSNH – Paul Gosselin told the committee he had been asked by several citizens to bring forward the concept of a co-op electrical company to service the town of Windham. The issue was brought up due to the recurring extended time periods of power loss. He spoke about the pros and cons of this type of arrangement, including the lack of current power generation capability in town. Al Letizio suggested this conversation should be held as part of a joint board meeting with the board of selectman as it would have a significant impact on the town. Sally D’Angelo is not sure how a small co-op could provide better service or cost vs. what we have today. Bev Donovan suggested that we create a sub-committee to work on town infrastructure as not only power but other utilities can be difficult to obtain in certain areas of town, and this hinders commercial development. Diane Connolly asked if we could get more information on the options available. Ralph Valentine stated that National Grid has a subsidiary company who might be interested in expanding into Windham. The committee agreed to table this discussion until it could be scheduled in the spring, probably May.

Community Development Department review – Laura Scott provided a copy of her department’s work in the past month. As the committee was already over our scheduled time, she highlighted a couple of key points as referred the committee to the document for more details. She stated that her department is working the board of selectman to finalize her budget for 2012. She is also seeking suggestions for projects, business education seminar topics, and advised the WEDC that there is a business after hours event scheduled for Feb 16th.

GSCC Discussion items – Bev Donovan mentioned that the GSCC is looking for greater community involvement and has open meetings the 1st Tuesday of every month in Salem at 7:30AM. Bev also mentioned that the GSCC has been reviewing substantial tax increases on their members as the towns in the GSCC undergo revaluation as residential home prices have dropped far more than commercial values.

Chairman Young thanked all the volunteers who baked cookies for the Dec 3rd event. He also reminded us that we need to elect a secretary during our January meeting.

Al Letizio made a motion to adjourn
Ralph Valentine seconded the motion
The motion passed 9-0-0