

## WEST WINDSOR PLANNING COMMISSION

Draft Minutes  
November 21, 2013

Present: Barbara Truex, Arthur Steinberg, Al Keiller, Martha Harrison, Glenn Seward, Todd Enright

1. Call to Order – Planning Commission Chair Barbara Truex called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM.
2. Changes or Additions – None
3. Discuss wind turbine with resort representative – Todd Enright was present on behalf of Snowdance LLC to discuss the town's position on one or two possible wind turbines at the resort. Todd said a preliminary review suggests that the site has good wind volume and velocity. Todd said the location would be in the area where the quad lift terminated. Todd said it would be a large, visible turbine capable of producing a megawatt of energy but he did not have specific information on height, blade length, etc. Al asked about the impact of the wind turbine on the resumption of ski operations. Todd said it would be related in that it would reduce the cost of operations. Barbara said the Planning Commission would be concerned about a fall zone. Todd said it's likely that "skiable terrain" would be reduced if the ski area reopens due to labor and power costs and limitations on water withdrawal from Mill Brook. Barbara asked if a wind turbine would be considered if the ski area didn't reopen. Todd said that would be possible if there were a place where the power could be sold commercially; it would certainly help with ski area operations, but it could also stand alone. Al asked how expensive it is to build a wind turbine. Todd said the turbines would be \$3 to \$5 million each. Todd said some of the environmental issues associated with wind turbines, relative to bats and birds for instance, are not as much of an issue in this location. Todd said Jiminy Peak and Berkshire East both have wind turbines. Barbara noted that wind facilities don't always produce at the expected rate. Todd said they would put up a test tower and meter the wind for 9 to 12 months before proceeding. Barbara asked for more detail on location, height, blade length, capacity, etc. Todd agreed to provide more information. Todd noted that ski area infrastructure and radio towers already exist in the area. Al said the proposal is not troubling to him personally but he doesn't know how the town as a whole would feel about it. Glenn said he thinks, in the context of an operating ski resort, people would be okay with it. Barbara agreed that people would be more likely to embrace it if it helped open the mountain, and less likely if it were simply a commercial venture. Glenn said hopefully there would be some consideration of the impact on the Grand List. Barbara said the Planning Commission has discussed the need for developers to establish a fund for the dismantling of wind turbines at the end of their useful lives. Al said the approval could not be conditioned on reopening the ski area. Todd agreed and said people have to be comfortable with the potential wind farm on its own; a quid pro quo scenario would doom the project. Barbara asked about the potential for eventually having more than two turbines. Todd said he thinks it would stop at one or two turbines. Todd said the financial modeling is based on selling wholesale power, regardless of whether the ski area is operating or not. Glenn suggested providing a graphic representation to scale. Barbara asked to have the fall zone included. Al asked if solar power is not an option due to the resort's location on the north side of the mountain. Todd agreed that it's not an option.
4. Town Plan Chapter 9 (Energy) - The PC discussed the commercial nature of the Snowdance proposal, the impact on scenic resources, potential tax revenue, and noise issues. Al

suggested modifying the language prohibiting commercial wind facilities to make an exception for one or two turbines at the ski area given that it's already developed and it has viable wind power potential. There was discussion about the Public Service Board and the fact that the town has no say in the matter unless there is specific language in our Town Plan. Barbara was uncomfortable about making an exception if it's not tied to the operation of the ski area. Martha suggested checking with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) to see if ski areas are already exempt from regulation, if there would be an issue with "spot zoning," and if renewable energy facilities are treated differently in terms of taxes. The PC agreed. Martha noted that the town passed an article a few years ago exempting alternative energy structures from municipal taxes but that may just apply to residential-scale structures. Martha noted that most of the ski area is in the "Conservation" district. The PC agreed that they need to research the taxation, spot zoning, and ski area exemption issues. Barbara noted the information on wind turbines from the "Rural by Design" workshop done by Sharon Murray a few years ago. Martha asked whether noise is covered in the review standards listed in the draft town plan. Barbara said no and suggested including it. Arthur noted that the percentage of power coming from nuclear energy is going to decrease when Vermont Yankee closes. Arthur also questioned the use of the word "repowered" and suggested rewording that section and making several other minor changes. The PC agreed. The PC also agreed to require that wood-burning appliances meet minimum EPA standards. The PC agreed to revisit Policy #1 and Recommendation #1. Barbara noted the elements of wind energy ordinances as suggested by the U.S. Department of Energy, which include lighting, clearance, shadow flicker, and signal interference.

5. Minutes - October 29<sup>th</sup>: **AI moved the approval of the minutes of October 29<sup>th</sup>. Arthur seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**
6. Other Business - Next meeting: Thursday, December 19<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM
7. Adjourn – **Arthur moved to adjourn at 11:35 AM. AI seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison