

**Windham Planning & Zoning Commission**  
**Minutes of Jan. 23, 2014**

The Windham Planning & Zoning Commission held its meeting on January 23, 2014 in the Meeting Room, Town Hall. Chair Paula Stahl called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. Members present were Ed Pelletier, Jean Chaine, Michael Graff, Dan Lein, Claire Lary and Paula Stahl. Scott Lambeck was excused. Also present were Town Planner James Finger and ZEO Matthew Vertefeuille.

**I) Approval of Minutes**

**a) The minutes of December 12, 2013** were approved. Motion to approve made by Ed Pelletier and seconded by Dan Lein. The motion carried unanimously.

**b) The minutes of December 19, 2013** were approved. Motion to approve made by Claire Lary and seconded by Michael Graff. Voting in favor of the motion were Claire Lary, Michael Graff, Ed Pelletier, Jean Chaine and Paula Stahl. Dan Lein abstained. The motion carried.

**c) The minutes of January 9, 2014** were approved. The motion to approve made by Dan Lein and seconded by Claire Lary. Voting in favor of the motion were Dan Lein, Jean Chaine, Claire Lary and Paula Stahl. Ed Pelletier and Michael Graff abstained. The motion carried.

**II) New Business**

**A) Access Agency, 1315 Main Street, Willimantic** – Preliminary plan review of proposed Senior Housing Project.

Peter DeBiasi, President of the Access Agency, presented the proposed plan to establish affordable senior housing at 1315 Main Street, and also to renovate the space formerly occupied by Generations for a senior center. He said the housing units will be located on the second floor in the left side portion of the building. He said a community center will be located on the first floor. He said they are proposing sixteen 1-bedroom units (approximately 550 square feet) for up to two people. There will be no housing on the first floor of the building, he added.

A question about the status of the Senior Center was raised, and Mr. DeBiasi said the State Bond Commission has approved \$1.343 million dollars for the project. He added that they hope to have the project funded with assistance from the State Department of Economic Development.

Mr. DeBiasi said the senior center would be located in the middle portion of the building, while The Access Agency would re-locate to the left side of the building. The Salvation Army Store is currently located in the right hand portion of the building.

Mr. DeBiasi then went on to review the site plan. He explained they plan to add some windows on the second floor; otherwise the building will look pretty much the same as it looks now. The parking lot will be designed for senior citizens.

He said we have applied for funding through the Competitive Housing Assistance for Multi-family Properties (CHAMP). They provide funding to existing and new developments to add

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safe and affordable housing in Connecticut. If the funding is not forthcoming, we will not be able to go forward with the project, and the space will be taken over by The Access Agency.

Mr. DeBiasi then went on to review elevations in the front portion of the building. He said a second entrance will be added for the senior center. He said they are also considering eliminating the isolated parking lot on the west side of the building. He said they plan to add some landscaping along the rear corner to make it more home-like, but this depends on the funding. A general discussion ensued.

Commissioner Ed Pelletier suggested eliminating the second driveway from Valley Street.

Chair Stahl suggested adding some green space in the front of the building to make it look more residential. Mr. DeBiasi said that they might be able to turn some of the parking area into green space depending on funding. If we don't have the funds, the green space would probably be the first thing to go.

Chair Stahl referred to the topography in the back portion of the site. She questioned if there was a way to add a second access connecting to the sidewalk on Valley Street. She also referred to the need of adding a fire lane.

Commissioner Jean Chaine said when this property was last discussed, there was some talk about splitting off some of the land in front and adding some retail space up closer to Main Street. He said there is more parking there than what is actually needed.

Mr. DeBiasi said we would certainly be open to that idea. He said they hope to have the funding application for the senior housing finalized in May, 2014.

The Commission thanked Mr. DeBiasi for presenting the plan, and acknowledged that the plan appeared to comply with the regulations, and the Zoning Officer has the authority to approve it when it is finalized.

**III) Report from Zoning Officer**

ZEO Vertefeuille said he met with the new owners of the Golf Course. The name of the Willimantic Country Club will be changed to the Windham Country Club. He said the new owners plan to make some improvements to the property, and were talking about moving or expanding one of the greens across from Gates at the corner of Club Road.

Commissioner Lien said that this may help them in getting members as the golf course doesn't comply with national golf course requirements, and that's why U-CONN couldn't use it.

**IV) Routine**

Commissioner Jean Chaine asked a hypothetical question posing the question: if we approve a subdivision, is that subdivision there forever. ZEO Vertefeuille said it usually is good for 5 years.

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Commissioner Pelletier said it could be good for ever - unless there are public improvements, then it would have to be completed within five years; although the law was changed to seven years because of the economy.

Commissioner Jean Chaine said we recently approved a site plan for a parking garage for which there is no funding at the present time. It appears that the parking garage might not be developed in a reasonable amount of time. Commissioner Ed Pelletier said it could be held up for all kinds of reasons. A general discussion ensued, but no conclusion was reached.

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Lillian Murray, Clerk  
*Revised James Finger*