

WINDHAM PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
WINDHAM, CT

MINUTES

March 25, 2010

The Windham Planning & Zoning Commission held its meeting on March 25, 2010 in the Meeting Room, Town Hall. Chair Paula Stahl called the meeting to order at 7:03 P.M. Members present were Victor Rayhall, Jean Chaine, Dawn Niles, Claire Lary, Paula Stahl and Juan Montalvo. Also present was Zoning Officer Matthew Vertefeuille.

1) The minutes of January 28, 2010 were approved. Motion by Jean Chaine and seconded by Victor Rayhall. Motion carried unanimously.

The minutes of February 25, 2010 were amended as follows: Page 6, Para 2, line 18: "It is going to turn back ***around*** and our regulations..." Dawn Niles made a motion to approve the minutes of February 25, 2010 as amended and Victor Rayhall seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2) **Public Hearing – Autotote Enterprises Inc.** –application for a Special Permit on proposed new Off Track Betting Facility within an M-3 Industrial District.

Planner Finger's staff report of March 18, 2010 explained that the Town Council recently approved the use for Autotote Enterprises and now it is up to the PZC to consider the applicable compliance with the zoning regulations. Although the property is in an M-3 Industrial District, it also allows for other commercial uses. He added that the former Zoning Commission approved the establishment of a restaurant with live entertainment at this property last summer.

Planner Finger referred to Section 43. He said in review of the proposal as outlined by their attorney, it appears that the application addresses many of the concerns that would normally arise with a Special Permit, and site plan approval.

Chair Paula Stahl outlined the commission's format for conducting a public hearing, as this is the first PZC's public hearing. Jean Chaine said when we conduct a public hearing we need to establish what types of comments are appropriate for a particular application. Sometime an application will bridge both land use issues, he said. In order to make public comments during an open hearing **dramane**, we should establish up front if we are dealing with an application that bridges both land use regulations.

Chair Stahl referred to the Autotote Enterprises, Inc. application. She said this is a unique situation in that per State Statutes, the OTB first needed to get approval from the Town Council. The Town Council approved the Autotote OTB application at their March 16, 2010 meeting. Our issue is to decide whether this property meets the criteria found in Section 62 in terms of health and safety for an assembly meeting of people. Is the size and intensity appropriate for that location? Is the public health and safety assured? Is there a sufficient emergency access, as well

as traffic access, off-site frontage improvements? Is there sufficient parking? These are the issues that we will be looking at, she said.

She then opened the public hearing for Autotote Enterprises, Inc. seeking a Special Permit and Site Plan Review for a proposed OTB facility within an M-3 Industrial District.

Attorney William Sweeney, representing the applicant, said Autotote is the sole authorized operator of OTB's in Connecticut. He said the Windham Town Council ruled to approve the location for the OTB in the Willimantic Downtown on March 16, 2010. He said the next step in the process is to obtain PZC approval, for which we are before the commission tonight. Once that approval is obtained, the next step will be to return to the State for Legislative and Division of Special Revenue approval for the facility in Willimantic.

He said, as you are aware we have submitted a Special Permit and Site Plan application to establish the OTB within a building located at 600 Main Street. The facility will be an 1800 square foot off track betting facility inside the building that currently houses the Thirsty Frog Restaurant. He said the proposed facility will be established on the first and second floors of the existing building adjacent to the Thirsty Frog Restaurant and will be connected by a stairwell. He said the proposal fits in with the town's regulations and qualifies as a special use. It also complies with the Plan of Conservation and Development, which calls for the reuse of existing spaces or buildings. He said although the proposed OTB does not fall within any of the enumerated permitted uses within this zoning district, it could qualify as a special use under Section 42.3.2. He said this section of the regulations provides that other compatible commercial or industrial uses, not otherwise listed in the zoning regulations for the M-3 District, but keep with the spirit and intent of the district can be permitted by Special Permit, and that is what we are requesting tonight.

In terms of the building layout, access to the OTB would be provided through a dedicated outdoor first-floor entrance, as well as a hallway leading from the existing restaurant. At the last meeting, commission members asked about a separation between the OTB area and the Thirsty Frog Restaurant area. We fully expect that the State Liquor Division and the State Division of Special Revenue will require us to put some kind of door in the hallway area, and we have shown that on the plan, he said. The OTB will span two floors with about 600 feet of patron space on the first floor, and approximately 1,241 square feet on the second floor connected by a stairwell. While the OTB and the restaurant will be operating separately, the Thirsty Frog will partner with Autotote to provide waitress service to the OTB.

He said the OTB would include a variety of seating. On the first floor level we will have high-top tables and chairs. The second floor will host an atmosphere with comfortable seating. The walls will be covered with flat screen monitors, which will display odds and races from various tracks and facilities throughout the country during operation hours. As stated at the last meeting, pursuant to state law wagering within the OTB would be limited to thoroughbred, harness, greyhound and jai alai events only. The OTB will have counters for tellers and self-service automated machines where patrons can place bets electronically. Additional areas within the leased space will be used for a video rack, vault, computer and other office equipment storage.

He said initially Autotote anticipates employing one to two full time employees and three to four part-time employees to operate the facility. That number may increase over time depending on the success of the facility and how much traffic it generates.

Hours of operation at the facility will be 11:00 AM – 6:00 PM Sunday through Tuesday, 11:30 AM - 11:00 PM Wednesday and Thursday, and 11:30 AM to midnight on Friday and Saturday. He said patrons to the OTB area will be restricted to age 21 and older. No minors will be allowed in the OTB areas on the first floor or the second floor.

He described the diversified mix of patrons that will frequent the OTB at different times of the day and night. Based on survey data from other small branch locations, Autotote expects that 10-15 patrons will frequent the facility at any given hour during weekdays. On weekends the number will increase to 20-25 customers per hour. On big race days, like the Kentucky Derby and the Preakness, we may attract larger groups as they are special event days, and we believe this will be a draw that might be helpful for downtown businesses.

At the last meeting the issue of parking came up. Parking on site is currently provided by a large parking lot adjacent to the building and we believe strongly that the parking on site is more than sufficient to serve the additional use. We have provided parking calculations with our application that shows that the restaurant, the nightclub, the check cashing business and the OTB will be served by a 71-space parking lot. We would note that your regulations allow the commission tremendous flexibility to determine the adequacy of the parking plan and suitability of any parking plan. It is critical to recognize that there are four uses on site that have very different parking demands. During the day, the check cashing and the OTB will be the primary users of the lot on site. During the evening it will shift to the restaurant and the OTB and then later on the use will shift to the nightclub use. As we space the peaks out over time the whole demand for parking is also spread out over the course of the day. There are also a large number of parking spaces off site that could accommodate any overflow.

From a site development prospective, we are not planning any exterior modifications of this building with the exception of a sign. The sign will be designed in accordance with the regulations, and a separate permit for its installation will be obtained from the Zoning Enforcement Officer. Mr. Sweeney said Mr. Vertefeuille had some suggestions for some very minor aesthetics site improvements (landscaping and other minor site improvements) and added that these suggestions will make the site look better, and we have no objection to implementing these suggestions.

Mr. Sweeney said the benefit of allowing the OTB is that the proposed facility would generate approximately \$64,000 in handle revenue, and this revenue would be paid directly to the town. The better the business does, the more revenues would go to the town, he said. Mr. Sweeney said the proposed OTB use is appropriate for this location and the surrounding neighborhood, presents no public health or safety issues, and its establishment in an existing commercial building offers no concerns regarding access to the site or a need for offsite improvements. He said the proposed use is consistent with economic development goals and objectives for the City center as described in the Windham Plan of Conservation and Development.

The Chair asked for staff comments, and Zoning Officer Matt Vertefeuille responded. He explained that the site plan may have lost a few parking spaces than what was shown; but he field verified with Damian that there are 71 parking spaces on the site. He outlined his concerns and recommendations and his reasoning. The site plan submitted reflects a few of the changes that he wanted to suggest. First was to repair and patch some areas in the parking lot that are pot holed, and de-laminating; and then pave the area closest to Riverside Dr. where the parking is – its not actually paved there right now. They need to re-seal the entire parking lot and to re-stripe it with lines to show where the parking spaces are to make it clear and that they are laid out in accordance with the specs as required by the zoning regulations. They need to do a clean up behind the building – they need to remove a storage trailer that they are using for construction and a large shipping container. Then in that area install concrete car stops to delineate parking spots that are shown on the site plan as employee parking. That area is gravel, and he didn't want to ask them to pave it, but they've done a really good job of putting down some crushed stone back there – plus it would create more impervious surfaces back there close to the River. Also, on number four of his list, he said that along adjacent property for Frog Bridge...there is a fence that's got some trees growing up in it. The ownership of the fence is unclear at this time, but he said that he asked both parties to take the fence down – create a landscaped strip there with some nice shade trees between the two parking lots. He clarified that he spoke with the people from Frog Bridge and they are going to review it, and they sounded amenable to it; so he said he would work that out in the future. He added that Damian is very enthusiastic about getting that done as well as it will make the area look a lot nicer and create some shade trees. They should add some landscaping in the area in front of the handicapped spot in front of the deck as shown on site plan. The island will probably end up being four to five feet wide, but it will still leave about six or seven foot wide isle for people to walk. This will stop people from driving over too far with their cars, and too close to the deck. Additionally, the landscaping will enhance the area, and will help pedestrians by creating a pedestrian pathway. Also, he said that he asked them to create a paved pedestrian pathway from the parking area toward Riverside Dr. That area is currently landscaped, and some busy nights, they have busses of people coming down from U-CONN to the events there; and pulling a bus through the parking lot, and turning it around – it's a little bit tight; so what they've been doing is bring busses down and parking them on Riverside Dr. and letting people off, but there is no clear path for people to get across there. Additionally, this will create a path for people walking down Main St. – or walking across the street from the parking lot in front of the Movie Theater to walk in a more direct line to reach the site. They lack a little bit of lighting on the rear of building, and they've agreed to do that. There are some propane tanks in the front of the building, and so they are going to either install a fence or create a landscaped buffer to hide those. If business goes as well as they expect, they are planning to create an addition on the front where you can see a platform on the front of the building – they're planning on bumping out the kitchen – that will cover that area, but they'll be creating a fence or something temporary for now – just to screen the area around the patio. That patio will be provide the restaurant with some outdoor seating to provide for smoking. The fencing will be low, and something people can see through from the street. Then, on the back side of the parking lot, where it's labeled as fence to be replaced. There's a fence that has been bumped by snowplows, and is starting to come down. So, they're going to repair that fence and continue it a little bit further and also place some big boulders on top of hill. It's a pretty steep drop off down to the River, and he's asked the owner to create some kind of barrier there, and they have some big boulders on site that they can use so a car couldn't accidentally go off. The

embankment. He said he had reviewed all of these items with Damian Fox and Bill Sweeney, and they are amenable to doing it all as a condition to their permit. He concluded by stating that although the site plan didn't show all of the detail that we would like to see, it's better than the previous site plan that was approved before; and that he had been out to the site, and verified all of the information and details. Another item is signage, and Damian is looking into various ideas for signage that he liked in another Town, and something closer to the street; and it will probably have the 'Winners'. He also stated that he agreed with the parking calculations; and that it is very reflective of our zoning regulations. He added that he was not concerned about the overflow of parking going over to Riverside Dr., as there are peak times, when Riverside Dr. is empty; so it works out pretty well. Further, he explained that he had been to the area at all times of the day and night to observe the conditions. Lastly, he said relating to the noise complaints have come up at other meetings, and that people are concerned about that – it is a separate issue from this. On the Autotote application, Damian bought some panels but they haven't been installed yet – but he had seen some of the samples, and they are suppose to be installed during the next couple of weeks; and so Matt said he felt comfortable that this will be addressed. He then submitted a summary list of improvements as follows: 1) Pave parking spaces strip closest to Riverside Dr., patch all areas where delaminating has occurred. Seal and line parking area to specs as required by the zoning regulations and as shown on the site plan. 2) Remove storage trailer at rear of building. 3) Install concrete car stops at rear of the building to show head in parking along the length of the building. 4) Remove fence along adjacent property and install curbing and landscaping. This is to be done as a joint project with neighboring property owner. 5) Add landscaping area in front of deck as shown on site plan. Add landscaping screen in front of propane tanks. 6) Install lights at rear of building to light the parking area. 7) Finish the fencing in of the patio area on Riverside Drive side of the building. 8) Construct a paved walkway connection toward Riverside parking area as shown on site plan. 9) Repair/replace fence on top of hill on the riverside of the building and install stone along top of hill. 10) Install panels to help curb noise to address complaints of excessive noise.

Chair Paula Stahl asked about the location of the sign, as it wasn't shown on the Site Plan.

Damien Fox said that he was going to talk with Matt about that, as they have some pictures of examples of what they would like, and they wanted to place the sign close to the street as possible – on their property - for good visibility. The property has an odd configuration, so it has to be quite a bit off the road because of the Railroad ROW but near the entrance drive somewhere in the middle of the large landscaped area now.

Jean Chaine asked if it would be going through the Sign Review process, and Matt answered – Yes; but its not in the B-1 District. Chair Stahl clarified that it would be staff approval, not through the Commission.

Chair Paula Stahl then referred to the proposed entranceway off Riverside Drive. She said this is not on their property; it is on railroad property. This will be shared with the parking lot serving Loch View (Frog Bridge Apartments). She said she wants to make sure that as the applicant is working with staff on the sign to also make sure that there is a convenient way for both parking lots to empty out. Damian Fox offered details of the property ownership including the Railroad property, which is owned by the State of Connecticut and his obligation to provide access to 560

Main St. Chair Stahl said she just wanted to make sure that they won't be blocking the access to the neighbor's property. Damian said that by getting rid of the fence, it will make it much better.

The Chair then asked if any of the Commission members had any questions.

Jean Chaine asked Matt Vertefeuille about the rear of the building that shows employee parking and asked: does that butt up against the loading dock? Is that loading dock going to be used to off load materials to the restaurant?

Zoning Officer Matt Vertefeuille responded that there is a deck there - which is an egress deck that comes off the back of the building. They also use that as a loading dock but, although technically it's not a loading dock. There will be parking in front of that, and it does not need to be clear... There is a sidewalk in between that deck and the back of the building.

Mr. Chaine asked to confirm that it's not a dual use area then - that its for employee parking, and where they may have a truck coming in, and they would ask them to move them for a truck to unload. Mr. Vertefeuille responded that - No- generally, when they get their shipments, its usually during the day - usually in the mornings; and they prefer to unload in the front because it's easier to come in right in the front door from his observations. So they are not using the deck for deliveries. Additionally, although this is indicated as employee parking, it seems that most employees have been parking across the street and walking over; so they are leaving those spots for customers.

Mr. Chaine said that this is another issue that he wanted to talk about - specifically the use of the municipal parking lot across the street. He alluded to the T&M property that came before the Town when they wanted to convert the building to residences; they weren't coming up with enough parking to meet the regulations, and they said responded that you have the municipal parking across the street. But staff, said no that couldn't be used to satisfy the parking on their site. So, he said the parking calculations really need to be looked at to see if it is going to satisfy the activity there; he said he thought we could work around it, but he wanted to bring it up for discussion.

Matt Vertefeuille responded and asked if he was talking about the building at 560 Main (yes), and he said the (municipal) parking lot across the street is a non-permitted parking lot; so, you don't need a permit to park there - its free to park there. Minor discussion ensued, and Mr. Chaine agreed that this would need to be discussed later (as part of the changes to the regulations).

Chair Stahl asked for clarification, that they need the parking because it is in an M-3 District, instead of a B-1?

Matt Vertefeuille responded that B-1 surrounds the property except for the Railroad, and if this were classified as being in a B-1 District there would be no requirements for parking.

Chair Stahl filled in that if it were in the B-1, then it would be municipal parking, and added that there is some parking across the street at Jillson, and there is also parking on Riverside Drive. She then asked if there were any other questions.

Dawn Niles asked for clarification on state process, as she had heard that there might be a delay. Mr. Sweeney responded that they are working with the legislature on this and had worked with them on the Putnam, and the *new* -Milford facility. The Legislature approved the New London site recently. He added that - unfortunately, the statutes are set up to look at each site in a piece meal way, and actually to have simulcast – live feed, we do need the Legislature’s approval; but that’s why we have successful facilities. So when you have new facilities that you want to open, we need to go to the State Legislature and say that these are new facilities, and they have to give their approval for the video feed. But this is happened before and this is the process that they go through, and they have been successful in the past when they want to open a facility in a new Town, they have to get the approval of the community, and then go to the Legislature for their approval as well. So we have no doubt that this will happen, the issue is if they can get an amendment to get Windham added to the bill. Dawn Niles then emphasized that in reality – we need to let people understand that they don’t have much time left, because the Legislature is done the first week of May.

Chair Stahl asked if there were any other questions or comments from the Board.

Jean Chaine asked about the statement of use on the application talking about dedicating a first floor entrance to be constructed; and yet the bottom of the second page says: no external buildings or site modifications are proposed. Matt Vertefeuille responded that they will be adding a door – just to the right of the Check cashing store front. There is an old concrete ramp that will be removed and there will be a doorway added there. Chair Stahl said she didn’t see any conflict, as they are not adding to the footprint. She then opened up comments to the public.

Audience comments: 1) Matt Piolunek spoke in favor of the proposal, noting that it is the start of the future development of Downtown. We have been waiting a very long time to see some development on Main Street. He said the project would provide jobs and revenue to the town. It is a win-win situation for the town and I am very much in favor of the proposal, he said. 2) Charles Kratt spoke in favor of the application. He said he believes there is adequate parking to service the site and agreed that the project would bring jobs and revenue to the town, 3) Jesse Collins, 760 Main Street, Willimantic, CT. said he is at that parking lot at least three times a week up until mid-night and not once has he seen any over-spill from that parking lot and not once have I ever heard any noise from that building.

Chair Stahl said we are charged with following our zoning regulations, and our zoning regulations dictate how many parking spaces are required and it is our responsibility to ensure there are. She said as a board we do recognize that in many cases our regulations ask for too much parking, but according to the regulations that are in place at the present time they need 71 spaces.

Matt Vertefeuille said this board has a lot of leeway in terms of parking. We can vary the parking regulations. I would rather see a thriving business with a parking problem than a business that can’t survive.

William Sweeney was invited to speak again, and he merely commented on the long process for the project, and commented that there is a mural in the main lobby of the Town Hall from the

1970's showing what Main St. used to look like – and it includes ‘Sweeney’s store which was his grandfather’s, and that’s why this has been a personal project for him.

Chair Stahl asked the Board members if they had enough information before the hearing was closed. As there were no other comments regarding the application, the public hearing was closed.

Under New Business - **Autotote Enterprises Inc.** – application for a Special Permit and Site Plan on proposed new Off Track Betting Facility within an M-3 Industrial District. Vic Rayhall made a motion to approve the application submitted by Autotote, Inc. with the conditions provided by the Zoning Officer dealing with parking and site improvements. Dawn Niles seconded the motion.

Discussion on the motion: Chair Stahl read from the agenda - Vic Rayhall said this facility will be state regulated. Chair Stahl agreed as to the OTB use, and said she felt this is an appropriate use for this building. There is sufficient space in the building and the health and safety is protected. Jean Chaine referred to the parking requirements. He asked how this qualifies as a nightclub classification as opposes to the restaurant requirements. Matt Vertefeulle explained the different classifications, and reviewed the material presented in the application and as required under the Zoning Regulations. Concluding, he said he felt that the assembly use - is the right use for what their use is going to be, because it is similar to a night club in that you have a bunch of people standing around next to a high topped table for most of the evening. In contrast, the restaurant has a greater need for parking, but the regulations probably need to be looked at again. Jean Chaine agreed that the regulations need to be revised. Chair Stahl pointed out that in working on the Town Plan of Development is that this property probably should be in the B-1 (Downtown) District; and if it were in the B-1, we wouldn't be mentioning the parking requirements. The Chair then called for the vote, which was unanimously in favor, except for Juan Montalvo who abstained, as he was not present for the public hearing. Voting in favor of the motion were Vic Rayhall, Paula Stahl, Dawn Niles, Jean Chaine and Claire Lary.

3) Application for Open Space Grant to improve and restore parcel of land acquired from Windham Mills abutting Rec Park.

Planner Finger’s staff report explained that the property is a little over 5 acres, but most of the land is riverbed and it seems that there are quite a few hazards that would need to be addressed before the public is allowed access to the property. There are numerous areas where the riverbank is too steep or rocky for safe passage to the river. Fencing to limit public access would be required around the remnants of the old hydroelectric equipment scattered about the area. Providing public access to the river is of concern because the water flows at a high rate of speed for most of the year and has created some dangerous areas. In consideration of these safety issues, the Public Works Dept. feels that the best use of the area would be to replace the existing fence that separates Rec Park with the new property. They would then thin out the underbrush and invasive plants in the area to make the river and the hydroelectric equipment visible from the park, and they would continue to maintain parcel 2B as an urban forest. The estimated cost of this work is just under \$60,000 for which we hope to get 65% grant funding, and the Town’s share would be in-kind, or donations of material.

Matt Vertefeuille said we received this piece of property on the backside of Rec Park. He said Planner Finger is applying for a grant to do some improvements there, which may include some fencing, but the majority of it will be to cleaning up the brush to make it visible, accessible and safer. There may or may not be enough money for trails in that grant, but we would like to see some trails in there as it would be a connection to Heritage Park

Chair Paula Stahl said the grant is due May 3, 2010 (we will need to make a motion on it) and she presumed that Planner Finger will have it for our April meeting.

4) Possible application for technical assistance for promoting agricultural uses through an AGvocate program.

Planner Finger's staff report stated that the town is considering submitting a request for technical assistance for promoting agricultural uses through a program sponsored by the Department of Agriculture. The Town of Windham has 3294.38 acres classified as forestry, and 1236.17 acres in active farmland, which accounts for nearly 28% of the land in Windham. Given the general decline in the economy local officials recognize that we need to provide assistance to local business people including rural home based businesses and farmers. He said in order to promote agriculture we need to provide provisions in the Town Plan of Conservation and Development.

Chair Paula Stahl said the program is funded by the Dept. of Agriculture. Jennifer Koffman is currently working with 6 towns to make towns aware that there are changes in the zoning regulations to make things a little more business friendly for agriculture. She would work with the Conservation Commission and talk to us about different things that we can consider. There is no money involved, but they do require that the Chair of the Planning & Zoning Commission to sign that we support it. That is due April 1, 2010 so we need to make a decision tonight.

Claire Lary asked for clarification on what we might look at, and Chair Stahl explained some of the things that have been examined in other Towns – such as allowing farm stands, and associated directional signs to find them. Six Towns have participated, and they have been pleased with the work that has been done. Matt Vertefeuille said it's consistent with our Town Plan of Conservation and Development. Claire Lary then made a motion to pursue the AGvocate Program (requesting technical assistance for promoting agriculture uses through a program sponsored by the Dept. of Agriculture) and Vic Rayhall seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5) Other Business

a) Martie Krohn, 10 Jerusalem Road, Windham Center – request for extension to file maps in Town Land Records for a 4-lot subdivision. Chair Stahl explained that this was the first subdivision under our new regulations, and they have a statutory time limit to file the plans in the Town Hall. But, due to long delays in completing the paperwork, they have exceeded the 90-day limit to file the subdivision map, and therefore are requesting an extension to file maps in the Town Land Records. Claire Lary made a motion to grant a 30-day extension and Jean Chaine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

b) PZC By-Laws

A draft of proposed by-laws to guide the Commission has been distributed to PZC members for review. Chair Stahl said she has reviewed the new by-laws, but is not ready to take action on them. Vic Rayhall suggested scheduling a special meeting to talk about the proposed changes. The Commission agreed to defer this discussion to a future meeting.

c) Update on Magnet School

Chair Paula Stahl said they came to the Planning Commission twice. The first time was to talk about site selection and why they sought that particular site. We talked about water, sewer and different concerns that we had with that particular site. They then came back in October or November regarding the water and sewer. They had gotten some misinformation about what they needed to do to get public water and sewer to get to that property. The Planning Commission had a motion to approve that site for the Magnet School contingent on water and sewer being extended for the exclusive use of that property, and not for the purpose of expanding residential use. She said she was asked to write a letter to state that, which she did. She stated that we had no intention of increasing the residential density there, and that is not why we were extending the sewer. She explained in her letter that we were not increasing density in that area of town.

d) Process to revise Zoning Regulations & Maps

Chair Paula Stahl asked members how they would like to proceed to review the zoning regulations and maps. She asked commission members if they would like to schedule special meetings, as it would not be feasible to try to do this at the regular meetings. She said a series of special meeting could be set up, or sub-committees could be set up. Vic Rayhall suggested scheduling special meetings to get the work started. He said this is something that we need to do and we should start looking at it. Paula Stahl said instead of starting the process by looking at the regulations, we should start by looking at our town. What kind of businesses should be in the different districts? We should review each area. She said we have too many commercial zones and business zones, that when they were created probably were unique, but now they are all virtually the same. We do need to look at parking, she said. Commissioner Jean Chaine said there is already a sense that something isn't quite right. I'm sure that those who work with the regulations everyday have some ideas as to how to deal with it.

Chair Paula Stahl suggested holding two meeting a month and setting up a calendar to do this work. Zoning Officer Matt Vertefeuille said he would check to see what town rooms would be available. Paula Stahl suggested adding this item on the agenda for the next meeting.

e) Update on Incentive Housing Zone Study

Jana Butts said this is a project, which was funded with a \$50,000 grant through WINCOG. This is part of a program intended to create incentives to build housing, or to renovate housing, in the more urbanized areas of the state. This is part of the state's overall Plan of Conservation &

Development, she said. It is really intended for communities like Willimantic that have existing density, public water and transit service.

She said the first phase of this project is a housing assessment. She said she is here tonight to give the commission an update on the progress we have made and what is coming next. She said as part of the housing assessment we have, using census data, prepared many comparative tables showing general population demographics and age distribution. She referred to the age distribution chart. The geography we use is called the Willimantic Urban Cluster which is one of the geographies that is probably the closest to most city boundaries, but it also includes portions of southern Mansfield around East brook Mall and on Route 32. If you see on the top chart which says: **Willimantic Urban cluster** - that was the geography we chose because the 2000 census data was available; but we also had some other census data the source which is called the American Community Survey. Rather than data being collected every 10 years, it is data collected at 2-year intervals. It is much more up to date. She said some of the data in the housing assessment is beyond the general demographics information that you see here. We also have information on the total housing units and the percentage that are occupied and those that are vacant, the percentage that are owned versus rented, the age of the housing structure and the number of units and bedrooms and also the types of utilities that each housing unit has. Windham has a lot of subsidized housing and perhaps could use a broader density; such as for those who are 55 and over – often called ‘Active Adults’, and possibly work-force housing. She encouraged the Commission to review the materials and determine the things they would like to see.

6) Routine Business

- a) The Town of Scotland has notified the Town of Windham regarding Zoning modifications they plan to make.
- b) The Connecticut Environmental Review Team is available to do an environmental study free of charge.
- c) Update from Murtha Cullina regarding Supreme Court rulings.

As there was no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 P.M. Motion by Jean Chainé and seconded by Vic Rayhall. So voted.

Lillian Murray, Clerk

-And as revised by James Finger, Town Planner