

WINDHAM TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL STUDY SESSION MEETING MINUTES



**Windham Town Hall Bellingham Auditorium, 2nd Floor
Tuesday, January 13, 2015 - 7:00 P.M.**

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Eldridge called the Town of Windham Town Council Special Work Session Meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Town Council members present: Mayor Ernest S. Eldridge, Charles Krich, Tony Fantoli, Mark Doyle (arrived at 7:05 PM), Tom DeVivo, Joseph Underwood, Michael Lessard (arrived at 7:03 PM), James Flores, Christel Donahue and Charlotte Patros
Lorraine McDevitt was excused

Town Manager Neal Beets was also in attendance.

2. Citizens and Delegations: Public Comment.

Doug Lary, 183 Summit Street, Willimantic, noted his preference regarding the parking issue is to use Main Street for businesses and the south side for parking.

3. Town Council Comment.

Tom Devivo provided the Council with the Keys to Development which include; Access, Turmoil, Clear Zoning, One Property Tax Rate and City or Town Manager. He noted this is what developers look at when determining whether or not to develop in a certain community.

4. Briefings, Presentations, Discussions, Interaction, and Possible Direction to Staff about Specified Policy Issues:

a. Economic Development.

i. Bill Hettinger, Chair of the Town of Windham Economic Development Commission.

Bill Hettinger, Chair of the Town of Windham Economic Development Commission, gave an update on the progress and focuses of the Economic Development Commission. He stated some of the projects and focuses include the:

- Business Signage Program
- Creation of an Arts and Eats District
- Matching Grants through the NEA (National Endowment for the Arts)



Commissioner Hettinger also noted the recommendation made by the Economic Development Commission regarding the Tin Tsin Lot is to keep it as a parking lot.

In addition, Commissioner Hettinger noted the Town is generally perceived as a business friendly Town however he noted a major drawback was the high tax rate. Commissioner Hettinger stated his hope is to have the Economic Development Director work effectively to get grants and to find ways to create new businesses in Town.

ii. Paula Stahl, Chair of the Town of Windham Planning and Zoning Commission.

Paula Stahl, Chair of the Town of Windham Planning and Zoning Commission gave an overview of the Planning & Zoning Commission and how the Commission works. Commissioner Stahl noted the Commission is driven by the Connecticut General Statutes. She explained the Planning side looks at the future development of the Town and the Zoning side looks at the regulations of the Town.

Commissioner Stahl noted one of the major goals of the Commission was to rewrite the Zoning Regulations which hadn't been updated since 1983. She explained the Commission has been working on this for the past five years and noted they are 95% complete with the Commercial and Manufacturing portion of the regulations. She also explained some of the changes and focuses that are being made to the regulations which include:

- Reduced parking requirements for businesses
- Changing the required acreage for businesses
- Quick approval process through staff
- Focusing on assets: Two Universities, River and Railroad
- Limit of one Café License per block
- Changes to the B1 District

Commissioner Stahl also spoke about the pros and cons of having Water and Sewer.

In addition, Commissioner Stahl stated the primary thing Developers look for when coming to a Town is quick approval and clarity.

Commissioner Stahl encouraged the Council to be very supportive of the Economic Development Director. She explained the number one goal of an Economic Development Director is to retain businesses and the next is the expansion of businesses.

b. Distribution of Agenda Packets.

- i. Scan and email? Instead of copying and delivering? In addition to copying and delivering?**
- ii. Purchase tablets or laptops for Councilmembers? Wifi only, or cellular too? Council policies regarding tablet or laptop use?**

A discussion took place regarding how the Council would like to receive their packets and whether they would like tablets or laptops. The Council shared their individual preferences on the subject. The question will be put on next week's Town Council agenda and a representative from the Board of Education will be asked to give a demonstration on the use of tablets.

5. Discussion about Items on the Agenda for action at a future, regular Council Meeting.

a. Tin Tsin Lot.

i. Joe Gardner, Town Engineer. (Materials in your packet.) (Briefing and answering questions only; for Council action at your January 20 regular meeting.)

Joe Gardner, Town Engineer, gave a short presentation on the Tin Tsin Lot and provided a preliminary design plan for a municipal parking lot at that location. He explained the cost estimate of the project, the number of spaces it will provide and the challenges of it being made into a parking lot in that location. Mr. Gardner also answered questions from the Council.

6. Citizens and Delegations: Public Comment.

Paula Stahl, Chair of the Town of Windham Planning and Zoning Commission, noted she is unable to attend the Town Council meeting on January 20th. She did note however that the Planning & Zoning Commission voted unanimously on January 8th to recommend to the Town Council to issue an RFP for the development of 804 Main Street. The Council could require the inclusion of a public park and parking in the rear, either to be owned by the developer or by the Town. She also explained the basis of the recommendation.

Bill Hettinger, Chair of the Town of Windham Economic Development Commission, noted a memo had been sent to the Town Council from the Economic Development Commission recommending the Tin Tsin Lot be a parking lot. He stated that was the desire of the local business owners. In addition, Commissioner Hettinger asked the Council to consider the loss of parking spaces during the building of the parking garage as well as comparing the cost per space. Commissioner Hettinger also asked that if the lot was sold to be sure a process was in place for the development of the parcel and that it fits with the downtown strategies.

Doug Lary, 183 Summit Street, Willimantic, stated he is mostly interested in Riverside Drive and its connection to the railroad. He also stated he preferred scanning and storing documents online as does the Board of Education and the advantages of being digital.

7. Adjournment

DeVivo MOVED, Underwood seconded, to adjourn the Windham Town Council Special Work Session Meeting at 8:43 P.M. All were in favor. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Submitted By:

Barbara J. McKinney
Clerk of the Town Council