

**WOODSTOCK PLANNING COMMISSION  
WOODSTOCK TOWN HALL  
31 THE GREEN  
February 5, 2020  
DRAFT MINUTES**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Sally Miller, Sam Segal, Ben Jervey, Susan Boston, Michael Pacht, Eric Goldberg, Sara Stadler  
**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None  
**OTHERS PRESENT:** Susan Ford, Michael Brands

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of January 15, 2020 were approved with a minor amendment.  
The minutes of September 18, 2019 were approved with a minor amendment.

**III. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Nightingale Property Route 4W**

Ms. Ford, attorney for the property owner, asked if a potential zoning change could be considered by the PC. The Nightingales own a 0.9 acre parcel just east of the Lincoln Covered Inn in West Woodstock. The land is currently zoned Business Service/Light Industrial (BS/LI) which allows office and industrial type uses. The owners prefer to be rezoned Commercial/Light Industrial (C/LI) which would allow retail, restaurants and many other commercial uses in addition to the industrial uses.

The Town Planner showed a zoning map noting location of Nightingale property.

The owners have had the property for sale for a while with no interested persons for over 9 months. A new potential buyer would like to live on site and set up a food truck service on site.

The C/LI designation would allow the restaurant use, with Conditional Use approval, the food truck needs. The C/LI district does not about the property but is located 500' east along Route 4 where the former True Value store was. The property in between the BS/LI and C/LI districts is zoned Residential Five Acre and is a corn field.

The Town Planner advised that locating a food truck business on the property may be difficult. The property has no road frontage. It is located a distance off of Route 4 making it nearly invisible from Route 4. Any potential sign for the business would have to be located on the property and would not be allowed on Route 4.

It was also noted that previous requests for zoning changes in this area have been difficult due to strong neighborhood opposition to change.

Ms. Ford will discuss the issue with the owners before further action.

#### **IV. OLD BUSINESS**

##### **A. Town Plan-Education Chapter**

Mr. Goldberg wrote a first draft of the Education Chapter for discussion purposes. This was sent via to members via email for comment.

Chair Miller resent the document after making a number of minor edits and placing it in a Google Docs format for easy editing and discussion purposes.

The PC discussed the document. Mr. Segal volunteered to make immediate edits to the draft as the discussion progressed, allowing members to read edits instantly.

After discussion, the PC agreed a generic introduction statement is needed and accepted the statement as the second paragraph.

Wording should remove the mention of “gold” towns to be replaced with the original legislative language, “sending and receiving” towns.

After lengthy discussion, the reference to the “summer SOAK” program was removed. It was noted the SOAK program is run by the supervisory union and is academically oriented.

Chair Miller suggested the document needs to be reworded to avoid the appearance of negativism.

Ms. Stadler felt the language needs to be somewhat strong, so the message doesn’t get lost.

The second section starts with the full title of the merged school district and continues with a description.

The text then turns to the Woodstock Elementary School, issues and discussions.

The PC agreed a table or other reference to the student populations needs to be added. The Town Planner will search the data. It would be good to get multiple year data.

The overall capacity of WES was mentioned. The current total is 281. This includes students from Pomfret, Bridgewater, Plymouth and grades 4-6 of Reading. The district would like to reuse the current inactive Prosper Valley School building at some point. In the fall of 2018, the school was closed due to mold issues.

A paragraph was added about the WES Pre-K program which serves preschoolers aged 3-5. The program is apparently at full capacity as children from a non-district town, Hartland attend.

The deferred maintenance issues of WES were mentioned and included. Most recently a lead issue with the drinking water was discovered, forcing students to bring water from home.

The document transitions to the Middle School/High School issues.

There are two different plans. The Strategic Plan was adopted in 2019. A second plan, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Master Plan mainly for building issues was started in December 2017. There was a lot of

confusion between the two plans. The Town Plan needs to be clear as to which plan is which and where is it most applicable.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Master Plan Project was completed by Lavalee/Brensinger with private funding to study either a major renovation or complete rebuild of facilities.

The building was built in 1957 and is well past its prime. It has major ventilation issues. There is no fire suppression/water sprinklers system. It does not meet ADA standards. Current layout does not allow for modern teaching techniques such as more open classrooms.

The Strategic Plan is more academically oriented. The overall ranking provided by the 2019 U.S. News and World Report's ranking of public schools, places Woodstock well below similar schools in Vermont. More information was requested regarding the methodology used.

As with the WES statement more demographic data is needed regarding student populations over the years at Woodstock. The Town Planner will search the desired information.

The Social Concerns section was retitled "Youth Risk Behavior Study". A 2017 report was mentioned as the basis for the paragraph.

A discussion of Act 60 (the State law creating the sending/receiving towns scenario) followed. The Town Planner was asked to find how much actual money is sent to other towns in relation to the education budget. Is there a standard ratio?

Mr. Segal asked the PC to tread lightly in its discussion of tax burden. Each tax situation is determined by the individual circumstances and can vary tremendously. Stating a flat 16-22% tax increase could be a cause for residents to oppose a project just on tax impact alone.

Mr. Pacht agreed the tax results would impact citizens in different ways.

Ms. Boston added the funding would be shared by the other district communities.

The action plan was addressed.

Chair Miller, in her edits, placed the recommendations at the end of the document for conversion to an action plan format.

After discussion, it was agreed that the Town Plan's current format could be condensed to make it more readable.

The recommendations were reduced to 4 main goals: 1) Support construction of new middle school high school per recommendations outlined in the 21<sup>st</sup> CMP, 2) Address Academic Performance, 3) Reduce substance abuse issues in the school, and 4) Support 2020 Strategic Plan.

There was a lengthy discussion of implementation strategies for each of the stated goals. Mr. Segal will work on goal #1. Mr. Jervis will work on goals #2 & 3. Mr. Goldberg will tackle goal #4.

A draft of the recommendations will be sent around for comment.

The intent is to have a public hearing ready draft available for the March meeting.

**B. Town Planner/Administrative Officer Search**

The Town Planner reminded the PC he is leaving May 1, 2020. The Planning Commission per State Statute is the responsible party for appointing the municipality's Administrative Officer. A search committee is being formed. Currently Chair Miller, Town Planner and Municipal Manager Frank Heald are members. The PC was asked if other members would like to participate. Ms. Boston and Mr. Segal both volunteered. The Municipal Manager will email the digital submittals thus received.

**V. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for March 4, 2020.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Brands, AICP  
Town Planner