

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO: Westford Planning Commission Members**

**FROM: Regina Mahony, Senior Planner**

**DATE: January 21, 2015**

**RE: Town Plan Comments**

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CCRPC's Staff and Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) reviewed the draft 2015 Town Plan in preparation for your public hearing, and CCRPC's review and approval process.

Overall this is an excellent Plan – very thorough and comprehensive. I believe Melissa has already shared the Staff notes with you, but I will repeat them here for your convenience (#'s 1 to 10). I've also added comments that the PAC provided (Note in #1, and #'s 11 to 15).

**While, Staff does not find that any of the amendments below are necessary for approval and confirmation of the process by the CCRPC, we do have the following comments and questions – some of which are recommendations for edits at this time:**

1. In the past, CCRPC expressed concern over one of the Plan's objectives in the Agricultural, Forestry, Residential II district which focused commercial development along paved roads especially in light of the following State Planning Goal: §4302(c)(1): "To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside." This has been amended in this draft Town Plan as follows - Section 10.10, Objective 1 is explicit in ensuring that small scale commercial development is allowed so long as it is in keeping with the historic rural character of Westford and does not create strip development. This text is much clearer on the Town's intent and purpose of this district. In addition, this statement in the Economic Chapter provides clarity: "Furthermore, customer centric/consumer retail must be located in the Town Center Area in order to avoid strip development and encourage revitalization of the Town Center Area as the social and service hub of the community." Also, the Town Plan designates 80% of the Town in the Agricultural, Forestry, Residential I Area - a more development restrictive and conservation oriented district. Therefore, CCRPC finds that the Plan is consistent with §4302(c)(1). *NOTE: there was a follow-up question on this from the PAC regarding how small scale commercial is defined and how it will be implemented. Upon explanation of the existing definition, potential future definition, and potential implementation steps the PAC was comfortable with the approach.*
2. The section on compatibility with Georgia refers to a low density development (20 acres per lot) in Westford. I may have missed this, but I thought the Agricultural, Forestry & Residential II district is described as 10 acres per lot?
3. The CCRPC Housing targets described on pages 17 & 18 are out of date. We understand that some municipalities prefer to keep reference to the targets in their Plans, however the targets are not necessarily regional policy at this point. We suggest something along these lines: "While these targets are out of date, the 2013 ECOS Plan (Chittenden County's Regional Plan) still calls for the need for additional housing throughout the County."
4. The Town's clearly stated intention regarding agricultural soil mitigation in Chapter 8 is excellent and I hope Act 250 and the Agency of Agriculture follow the recommendations.

5. Connection to the State Village Center Designation as required by Act 59 appears comprehensive and very well described throughout the Plan (housing, economic development, land use, etc). While the State Village Center Designation is shown on Map 8, the State has preferred to see the boundaries more clearly on a separate map. Westford should review the map with ACCD to determine if a more specific map will be needed prior to renewal of the designation (it will expire in September, 2015).
6. The organization of the Plan - with objectives in the main body, and more specific tasks in the Implementation Plan – is very readable and clearly identifies the Town’s intent. It is great to see how the tasks help implement various sections in the Town Plan. However, it would be helpful to have a brief description or introduction to the Implementation Plan that describes to the reader how the tasks relate to the objectives, and/or how the tasks were derived.
7. The second paragraph under 10.17 states “...and does not permit land development in water resource areas...” It isn’t clear whether this is referring to the WRO areas or the FHO areas, and you may want to consider clarifying the intent.
8. Because the FEH areas are already protected by the WRO and FHO, why is the Town considering adoption of an FEH overlay?
9. Are the Form Based Zoning standards described in the fourth task on Page 82 in the Implementation spreadsheet already developed for the Town Center Area? Should this task begin with “implement” instead of “develop”? On this same note, is Westford still intending to look at Form Based Zoning for the Agricultural, Forestry & Residential II zoning district?
10. Minor Edits/Typos:
  - a. Page 7, first paragraph, second line: withe
  - b. Page 13, Table 4, the last row includes a median household income figure that isn’t associated with a location
  - c. Page 16, paragraph 2, second to last line: residents
  - d. Page 16, paragraph 3, second to last line: districts
  - e. Page 17, paragraph 3, first line: pf should be of
  - f. Page 27, paragraph 4, fifth line: incorporation should be in cooperation
  - g. Page 35, paragraph 4, fourth line: residents and baseds
  - h. Page 40, paragraph 5, eighth line, reimbursed
  - i. Page 42, paragraph 1, fourth line, full evaluation of purchasing practices
  - j. Page 72, paragraph 2, fifth line, suited
  - k. Page 73, objective 2, they are conserved
  - l. Page 73, objective 3, fauna are to promote
  - m. Page 74, objective 4, trap soils particles
  - n. Page 75, paragraph 2, tenth line, educatesion
  - o. Page 76, paragraph 2, third sentence, potentially something missing in the sentence?
  - p. Page 77, paragraph 2, fifth line, provided a valuable insight
  - q. Page 77, paragraph 2, second to last line, “...refer to Section 10...” – should this be Section 8?
11. The steep slopes table (pg. 60) seem out of line with the steep slopes on Map 3.
12. There appears to be a typo in a column heading on the implementation table.
13. The CCRPC housing targets are out of date (*see #3 above*).
14. The implementation list is good, however it is too long and needs a top ten list.
15. The objectives in each chapter are good but seem very broad.

Thank you for consideration of these comments. Please let me know if you have any questions.