

TOWN OF WINDHAM

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

979 MAIN STREET, WILLIMANTIC, CT. 06226



February 28, 2013

State of Connecticut General Assembly
Continuing Legislative Committee on State Planning & Development
Room 2100, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: Testimony to Public Hearing on OPM Conservation and Development
Policies Plan Update: 2013-2018

Dear Committee Members:

Please include this as testimony in your Public Hearing opened on 2/22/13 and continued to 3/1/13 on the OPM Conservation and Development Policies Plan Update.

For the past 3 years Windham's Planning and Zoning Commission has been actively re-writing the town's zoning regulations and zone districts to focus on smart growth. Windham's Plan of Conservation and Development, adopted in 2007, states "*our vision is to promote economic development through smart growth*". Our zoning revisions have all focused on smart growth, and we will continue to promote smart growth through future zoning districts and regulations.

I applaud the State for working towards smart growth. I am concerned however by the narrow definition of existing physical infrastructure as applied to create the Priority Funding Locational Guide Map.

Windham, once a major Connecticut railroad hub, still has the benefit of active freight rail lines. In fact, the two railroad companies, Providence & Worcester RR and Vermont Central, are both seeing increased use of their lines and are in the process of upgrading their tracks. We plan to capitalize on this infrastructure by zoning an area along the railroad lines as a business park, including a railroad stub; and, market to businesses who would use the railroad lines to ship freight to and from their businesses. That particular area has been a gravel operation for decades, development would be a conversion of a gray field.

The draft Conservation & Development Policies: The Plan for Connecticut 2013-2018 includes the following principles and policies:

- Growth Management Principle #1: Redevelop and Revitalize Regional Centers and Areas with Existing or Currently Planned Physical Infrastructure.

With a policy to Proactively Identify and Market available properties that are currently served by infrastructure and that could meet the needs of new or expanding businesses, especially those within close proximity to existing industry clusters;

- Growth Management Principle #3: Concentrate Development Around Transportation Nodes and Along Major Transportation Corridors to Support the Viability of Transportation Options

With a policy to Coordinate with host municipalities on supportive land use regulations, such as transit-oriented development zones and freight villages where practical, to make the most effective use of transportation facilities for the movement of people and/or goods

It is clear that the proposed Windham business park would meet the State Principles and Policies – yet it is not designated as a Priority Funding Area on the Locational Guide Map. In September of 2012 we requested that OPM include this area on the Map. When no action was taken, I contacted OPM and learned that railroad freight lines had not been included in the GIS modeling criteria for the Map, and no revision could be made.

I request that the Continuing Legislative Committee on State Planning and Development revise the Locational Guide Map criteria to include proximity to an active freight railroad line, and Windham's requested Priority Growth Area be incorporated into the Map.

Sincerely,



Paula Stahl, Chair
Windham Planning and Zoning Commission

cc: Rep. Susan Johnson
Neal Beets, Windham Town Manager