

“COUNTRY INN BOUTIQUE”: Proposed By-Law Reality

Mike Deep’s proposed by-law changes are very different from a “Country Inn Boutique” plan, and would profoundly and permanently alter both the character and natural beauty of our town as well as the process by which we protect them. Here’s how:

1. Project Size: By-Law Reality

- 40 acres of potential development, not the 3-5 acres Mr. Deep showed residents he needed on a site visit in December
- Must be within 500 feet of Route 7, creating a strip of development running the entire length of golf course frontage on Route 7, i.e., 2,193 feet, or approximately 7 football fields end-to-end

2. Hotel Size: By-Law Reality

- No limit on total number of rooms or square footage of buildings; other towns limit number of rooms (Great Barrington limits size to 45 rooms)

3. Accessory Uses: By-Law Reality

- By-law permits any ‘accessory uses’ customary to New England resort hotels (see Sec F (3) (b) i), such as Jiminy Peak, water slides, whatever might be found in any resort throughout New England; vague and undefined.

4. Hotel Definition: By-Law Reality

- **Hotel definition: Unlimited Timeshare units included.** Petition redefines “Hotel” to include timeshares (called 183B) through entire Town; No limit on Time Share units for Waubeeka.
- No Planning Board due diligence on impacts to town, good or bad; Time Share units do tend to be bigger (often including kitchen or living area), and if 100% timeshare, owner can sellout leaving only out-of-town owners without effective recourse by town

5. Open Space: By-Law Reality

- Enforced by zoning officer but no permanent protection by a conservation restriction; example: see number 6 below.
- Proposes that a solar farm on 67 acres should be considered “open space”

6. Open Space Expiration: By-Law Reality

- If Deep’s permit lapses, is revoked or if he surrenders (returns) it – even after he builds buildings – the open space protection expires. (See Petition Sec. F(2) last sentence, added by this Petition, not in Planning Board drafts)

7. Zoning/Planning Process: By-Law Reality

- Highly unusual to rezone for just one person, one developer: akin to “spot zoning”
- Normally, the Planning Board drafts zoning by-law changes and performs due diligence. But Deep ended the Planning Board process when he was asked to provide additional information because this was one-owner, one-developer zoning. Instead he filed a petition to bypass the Planning Board, thus circumventing our Planning Board process.
- Complex Zoning by-laws should not be written by and for a developer and then presented at town meeting

8. Golf Course Open to public: By-Law Realty

- No commitment in by-law that course will remain a *public* golf course, and up to 40 acres of development could mean a much smaller course.

9. Values and Economic Development: By-law Reality

- By-Law undermines Town’s recent economic report’s goal of protecting open space and smart growth
- Huge development stretching along route 7 would destroy the beauty of our southern gateway, “everyone’s backyard”, harming tourism and our attractiveness to anyone wanting to move here with a business, or live here.

Excerpts From "Strategies for Economic Growth in Williamstown, Massachusetts (2015) -

Town Values: *"Several values dominated the discussion of the plan. Among these were a strong sense of environmental values, particularly as it pertains to preserving the beauty of the local environment...Any future economic development should be accomplished without detracting from the character of the town". Pg. 17-18*

Recommendation: *"Identify and protect the scenic and rural landscape and open spaces especially along the entrances to Williamstown. The EDC approved this recommendation 11-0-0". Pg. 52*

10. Tax Revenues:

Any gain in tax revenue would be offset by the damage to the landscape of the southern gateway with the magnitude of this project. Our natural beauty is our identity: "The village beautiful". People move here because of it. Ruin it and they won't come. Tax revenues go down. We need smart growth, not growth that destroys the environment—just as the Economic Development Committee report recently urged.

Sherwood and Carol Guernsey

March 28, 2016