

How Does Commercial Development Get Approved?

It seems that commercial buildings pop up overnight. First the “coming soon” real estate sign goes up, then the construction equipment moves in, then a building appears after a few weeks and then there are ribbon cuttings and grand opening specials. That’s the process, right?

What is described above is the last 25% of the process for a new commercial development. Most of the work happens 1-2 years prior to the construction that you and I see as we drive by. The process takes place in meetings at the State, usually with the NH Department of Environmental Services and NH Department of Transportation, for approvals/permits for septic systems and wells, wetlands and shoreland impacts, earth moving, and curb cuts or new lanes on state roads. The local meetings, which you and I may see hearing notices for in the paper or receive an abutter notice for a meeting, are with the Planning Board and sometimes the Zoning Board of Adjustment. These local elected officials are responsible for insuring that all development in Town meetings the local rules and regulations.

So although the general public usually only sees the end result of the commercial projects process when the construction starts, it is up to all of us to be involved, engaged and educated.

The mission of the Windham Economic Development Committee (WEDC) is to enhance the vitality of the local economy by supporting existing business and attracting new businesses to Windham, encouraging economic development consistent with the Windham Master Plan, and promoting the spirit of the Town Motto: Old Values, New Horizons. For more information on the WEDC, visit

www.windhamnewhampshire.com/committees/economic-development-committee

Written by Laura Scott, Community Development Director, on behalf of the Communications Committee of WEDC.