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MINORITY AND WOMEN-OWNED
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October 15, 2026

Windham Planning and Town Board Members
371 NY-296
Hensonville, NY 12439

Dear Board Members,

I write today with a deep love of Windham, and that love is driving a genuine concern for its long term stability and overall future if the Windham Mountain Club is allowed to continue its march towards full mountain control.

First and foremost, I've had the privilege of spending a great deal of time in this community. When my now-husband and I decided to get married, we did so with the goal of showing our friends and family this incredibly special place we get to call home. We chose Windham as the backdrop and got married at a local hotel in 2025. Our friends were able to come and stay and experience the beauty of the Catskills. They ate in your restaurants, walked the Windham Path, hired local babysitters, stayed extra days to explore, and many have made plans to come back and spend more time on the Mountain; some even attended last week's Autumn Affair. The moment you allow someone to make the Mountain, and your town by extension, an exclusive playground for the mega-wealthy with members-only access, everyone loses, and that economic ripple effect from regular visitors that residents and businesses rely on will be impossible to get back.

The Catskills have always been a place for everyone, not simply a playground for the 1%. That's what's so beautiful about our region. What the Windham Mountain Club is attempting to do by prioritizing the Mountain for the most elite among us is an affront, not just to those of us who live here today, but to generations of people who fought to make this place what it is.

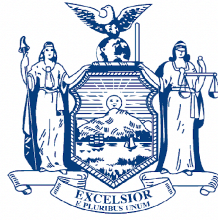
I have strong concerns about the proposed change to the Windham Mountain Club's redevelopment plan and the process surrounding its consideration. The purchase of Windham Mountain by Windham Mountain Club is the largest and most impactful economic change to happen in this town in a generation, and it may still be the most impactful event a generation from now. The fact that only two members of the five-member Planning Board, along with an alternate, are making such a consequential decision about the town's future is deeply concerning and raises serious questions



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about the legitimacy of the process and fair consideration. These concerns are further heightened by the fact that one of the participating members also chairs the Chamber of Commerce, whose organization is financially tied to the applicant.

I join the calls of local businesses and residents asking to see the feasibility study for this project. The public has a right to see this document, and the longer it is shrouded in secrecy, the larger the appearance of impropriety.

This proposal for a new 26-room luxury hotel is the latest in a series of decisions by the Windham Mountain Club to consolidate control over the town's tourism industry, harming the established businesses and residents who rely on a robust and accessible tourism economy.

Restricted skiing access, the elimination of the bike park, members-only access to the Adventure Center, and other previously publicly accessible amenities have already reshaped how people see Windham and the town at large. Once known as a highly accessible, affordable vacation destination, the town is increasingly viewed – because of Windham Mountain Club's decisions and the Planning Board's acceptance – as a getaway for the ultra-wealthy. If approved, this hotel will contribute to the perception of exclusivity.

As several local hotel businesses described in a recent letter to the town planning board and in statements at board meetings, Windham's lodging market is not undersupplied. Windham's existing hotels report total occupancy rates of around 30%, and Windham Mountain Club itself has said that its Outpost Hotel on State Route 23 is experiencing a similar low occupancy rate. Adding 26 more rooms will not create new demand for Windham – it will draw existing visitors away from the independent, locally owned hotels that have invested in this town, at the exact moment those businesses are already struggling to fill their rooms.

A strong, resilient local economy depends on a vibrant web of local, independent restaurants, hotels, and businesses that disperse the economic benefits of tourism – not concentrating those benefits in one business. Windham had benefited from that exact model of a tourism-centered economy for decades. But with the 2023 rebrand of Windham Mountain to the Windham Mountain Club and shifting the mountain to a semi-private, membership driven model, Windham's economy is now linked to the fortunes of a single large investor with no ties to the community. If that investor sees



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the challenges of a shrinking ski season and oversupplied luxury accommodations as too risky and decides to divest from the mountain, the town and its residents will be left to pick up the pieces. Or worse, if this consolidation continues, the town could cease to exist outside of the Windham Mountain Club's membership, a goal the proprietor has previously alluded to.

On top of the economic concerns of adding luxury development to the town is the seeming lack of due process for residents and existing local businesses that stand to be hurt by this proposal. As this process has played out in Town Hall and in the press, it has become clear to me that the planning board would simply acquiesce to the requests of Windham Mountain Club.

Responsible economic development requires local government and elected officials to balance the wishes of incoming businesses with the needs and future economic resilience of the current community. Two voting members of the board are quoted in a local news publication wherein they effectively signaled their support for the proposed change¹, despite the fact that public comment remained open for at least two more weeks. The public must have confidence that their elected officials and town leaders are listening to them and have their best interests in mind when making decisions on their behalf, not just those of wealthy financiers. Even if no explicit conflicts of interest exist on the planning board, the mere appearance of such conflicts erodes public trust and that alone is cause for pause.

If the Town Board and Planning Board care for the future of Windham - local businesses and residents alike, I would urge both entities to step in now, stop this proposal from moving forward, and provide residents with the transparency they deserve. That should start with sharing the feasibility study. Anything short of that sacrifices the town's well-being and long-term success.

Sincerely,

Senator Michelle Hinchey
New York State Senate, District 41

¹ <https://theoverlooknews.com/windham-planning-board-signals-support-for-mountain-club-hotel-plan/>

