

December 5, 2012

5:00 p.m. Land Use Mtg. Room

Members Present: Susan Payne, Phil Markert, Linda Frank, Diane Dupuis, Phil Dutton, Betsy Corrigan, Alt, Ann Quackenbos, Alt., Randy Bernard, Alt.

Staff Present: Shelley White

Others: Mr. Looney, Planner, Ms. Roberts, Ms. Hill, Mr. Fitzherbert, Mr. Talbot, Mr. Charles, Ms. Gager, Press

Chairman Susan Payne called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Seated:

Susan Payne, Diane Dupuis, Phil Dutton, Linda Frank, Randy Bernard, Alt. (for Phil Markert)

Consideration of the Minutes

The Minutes of the October 3, 2012 Conservation Commission Meeting were considered.

Motion:

to accept the October 3, 2012 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Conservation Commission as submitted,

by Mr. Bernard, seconded by Ms. Dupuis, passed by 5-0 vote.

Projects and Referrals

Ms. Payne stated that the property owners of 110 Calhoun Street are proposing to install a generator behind the renovated barn. She stated that the proposed generator is not within or near the conservation easement and she would be making a site visit to see the exact placement.

Conservation Commission Meeting Calendar for 2013

Ms. Payne stated the first meeting of 2013 would be on the 2nd Wednesday, January 9. The Commission agreed to schedule the July meeting for the second Wednesday (July 10, 2013) due to Independence Day.

Cell Tower Update

Ms. Payne stated that she talked to the First Selectman and he told her that Town Counsel is reviewing the cell tower lease with Homeland Towers for 10 Blackville Road and that the Town is close to agreement. Mr. Lyon asked for input from the Conservation Commission as to whether the vote should take place immediately after the public informational meeting in January. It was the consensus of the Conservation Commission that the vote should take place at a separate meeting at a separate date from the informational meeting so people have time for questions.

Bryan Memorial Plaza

Ms. Payne updated the Commissioners about the kind of work that is being proposed for Bryan Memorial Plaza. She stated that the Town is eligible to receive a Transportation Enhancement

Grant through C.O.G., which would be used to install drainage, lighting and curbs in the plaza, however the Town has not received official notification of the funding as of this date. There are no plans for this project but they would start working on the plans once notification is received.

5:20 – Mr. Markert arrives and is seated.

Other Business

Town Garage Property 10 Blackville Road:

Ms. Payne stated that questions have been raised regarding the Town Garage property whether, for planning purposes, the Town should consider replacing the burned down garage or relocate the Town Garage operation to another site. The cost of relocating the Town Garage would be around 2.5-3.5 million dollars and an 8-10 acre parcel in a commercial zone would be needed. The cost of replacing the burned down garage at the current site would cost around \$800,000.00.

Mr. Fitzherbert stated that the time frame with the cell tower and making the decision on the replacement of the burned down garage would most likely coincide. He said that they are both pending.

Letter from Resident:

A resident from Wheaton Road wrote Ms. Payne a letter advocating a stone wall ordinance and a noise ordinance. Ms. Payne stated that these are additions or revision to the Zoning Regulations that the Conservation Commission could propose to the Zoning Commission.

The Commission briefly discussed recommendations for stone walls and what towns have stone wall ordinances in place.

Possible Recommendations to Zoning:

Ms. Payne discussed a project that Mr. Sabin, Landscape Architect, has been working on in Roxbury. She said that Mr. Sabin designed the landscape plan for this property, which involve clearing for a view. She stated that he has engineered the plan so that there would not be a big gap in the woods, the understory and larger trees would remain but the property owners would have a view. Ms. Payne stated that this type of plan requires ongoing maintenance.

Full Signal:

Ms. Payne stated that there was a great turnout for the showing of the Full Signal documentary followed by a question and answer session. She thanked Me. Friedman for organizing the event.

Town Plan of Conservation and Development

Ms. Payne stated that the Planning Commission has asked that the Conservation Commission to work on the Sustainability part of the revised Plan of Conservation and Development. She introduced Mr. Looney, Sr. Planner from Milone & MacBroom who was invited to speak to the Commission and provide some direction regarding addressing Sustainability in the revised POCD.

Mr. Looney distributed copies of the November 7, 2012 meeting agenda and a copy of Mr.

Bernard's Thought's on Sustainability (on file in the Land Use Office).

Mr. Looney noted that in the current POCD, page 3-20, Preserve Rural Character, includes goals, objectives, and recommendations that were geared towards the Conservation Commission. He stated that, as planners, they are looking at sustainability, as impacting every aspect of the POCD and those elements of sustainability would be throughout every section of the plan. He feels that this would interlock the focus areas of the revised POCD and noted that there would be a separate section addressing sustainability as well.

Mr. Looney stated that tonight he would like to discuss what sustainability is, sustainable development/sustainable communities, the Town of Washington's goals and objectives in trying to achieve sustainability, what the Town has already done in terms of sustainability and what other steps it could take.

He referred to 2 quotes from "Supporting Sustainable Rural Communities," page 3 & 4, by the Partnership for Sustainable Communities: [http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/pdf/Supporting Sustainable Rural Communities FINAL.PDF](http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/pdf/Supporting_Sustainable_Rural_Communities_FINAL.PDF).

Ms. Frank feels that the Town of Washington is a visual experience and what we would like to sustain is that visual character.

Ms. Payne stated that Rural Character was heavily emphasized in the current POCD as well as in earlier plans, but was defined differently but has to do with the visual character of the Town.

Mr. Markert asked if sustainability as it relates to population balance is going to be addressed and how there is a continual increase in weekenders and second homes. He stated that addressing affordable housing, jobs and education as they relate to sustainability is important.

Mr. Bernard stated that he found the statistics in the Demographics and Housing report by Milone & MacBroom to be very frightening. Mr. Markert stated that these trends are occurring throughout New England towns.

The Commission discussed how the POCD should address the issues of Housing, Economic Development, Vitality of the Village Centers and Sustainability in order to direct regulation changes. Some of the suggestions for possible regulation changes were: 1. More specific regulations in specific areas of the Town such as Lake Waramaug and the Village Centers 2. Development and building on ridgelines and protection of these areas 3. Pervious and impervious surfaces and how they relate to lot coverage and storm water management. Mr. Markert suggested that regulations revisions do not have to be stricter but smarter.

Mr. Looney stated that Milone & MacBroom are looking at how the T.O.W. gets their energy, waste production programs, physical design-focusing on the Village Centers and the natural environment. He asked if the C.C. had any thoughts regarding what natural resources should be focused on. Ms. Payne stated that the Conservation Commission feels water resource protection is very important. Mr. Bernard asked how the C.C. could move forward in a structured way to implement some of the goals that are to be included in the revised POCD to assure progress.

Mr. Looney stated that Milone & MacBroom usually include an action agenda in the plans that they have done and this assigns timeframes to goals - short term & long term and it would be specific to

certain organizations of the Town. He said this would be similar to what they would provide with this revision. Mr. Bernard asked if there would be something such as a timeline that would be adopted through a town meeting.

Mr. Markert agreed with Mr. Bernard regarding a timeline and stated that it would need to be communicated to the Town but that it is often difficult to get feedback from residents as to what they want. He feels we should reach out to the various demographics in the Town and “pull out” of them what they want. Mr. Bernard stated that if we adopt this timeline by a town vote then it is what will be done.

Mr. Fitzherbert stated that the 2003 POCD had an implementation plan but it needed to be prioritized. He advocates taking more of a strategic planning approach after the POCD is written and that the commissions should work together on prioritizing actions.

Ms. Roberts feels that smaller group meetings are important in order to get things done and that a meeting with all of the Commissions is too large.

Mr. Talbot stated that there would be a Selectmen’s Meeting tomorrow and would be attending to discuss the Town Garage property at 10 Blackville Road. He stated that they are asking the Town to consider delaying the rebuilding of the garage that was burned down and consider other uses for the property. He said that this property is within walking distance to the town center. Mr. Talbot stated that there is a very limited time frame in terms of commitments to rebuild the building and what worries him is that the people need to have a say and the decision ultimately comes down to the Selectmen. He said that the Town has been discussing the need to create some space that is developable for mixed use and possibly mixed income. He stated that it is important to research whether this property could work, looking to the future, supporting the concept of sustainability and asked how this could be presented to the B.O.S. Mr. Talbot stated that the Town should consider what is being discussed for the goals of the revised POCD and possibly do a little more research and planning for the 10 Blackville Road property.

Mr. Dutton asked if housing would be considered at this site if there was a cell tower and that he thinks that that is not a good idea. He feels that it would be very difficult to find another property for the Town Garage.

Most of the Commission agreed that maybe rebuilding the garage and erecting a cell tower could be delayed in favor of coming up with a cohesive strategic plan for the Town.

Mr. Charles agreed that a comprehensive analysis should be done on the Town Garage property before any rebuilding is done. He stated that sustainability is the next step in good land use planning.

Mr. Fitzherbert stated that there are a lot of factors to considered regarding the Town Garage Property.

There was a brief discussion regarding Transfer of Development Rights.

Mr. Bernard asked Mr. Looney if Milone & MacBroom intend to identify specific development projects, which are looming in the Town.

Mr. Looney responded that when they get into their next phase, which is the village centers analysis, they would be looking parcel by parcel how the village functions and considering possible uses of specific parcels.

Seated:

Susan Payne, Linda Frank, Diane Dupuis, Phil Markert, Phil Dutton

Motion:

to request that the Board of Selectmen defer the decision to rebuild the current Town Garage facility to allow time to study alternate uses of the Town Garage property at 10 Blackville Road, by Mr. Bernard, seconded by Ms. Frank, passed by 5-0 vote.

7:30 Ms. Frank Leaves, Ms. Gager arrives.

Mr. Talbot asked Mr. Looney if the Town Garage situation is an example of an opportunity to consider such things as Transfer of Development Rights.

Mr. Looney responded that TDRs is a concept where a town takes the allowed density and the amount of development allowed in one area that the town does not want to see developed and transfer it legally to another site called a receiving site, which is usually in a closer and denser urbanized area to allow the site that is in the core of the area that you are looking at to have more density while at the same time protecting the outlying site to potentially being developed. He stated that this is worked well in many states but there are not a lot of examples in Connecticut and that they would look at how or if it could work in the T.O.W.

Mr. Charles stated that he thinks the Selectmen will be successful in receiving funding to rework parking, sidewalks, etc. in the Depot but he is not sure whether they have reviewed the plans with the Planning Commission.

Ms. Payne responded that the Town has not received the funding yet and would not create a plan for these improvements until they are approved and do receive the funds and then they would be seeking input from the various commissions.

Ms. Payne stated that she thought the Conservation Commission was looking to the Planning Consultants to provide them with some guidance and something that they could respond to regarding sustainability.

Mr. Fitzherbert stated that the Draft Economic Development report shows the importance of the Education Industry in Town and he hopes that this is a priority for the Town.

Mr. Looney responded that they have plans to meet with the schools in the next month or two. He stated, at this point, he is going to take everything that he has collected from the last 1 ½ hrs. and put it into document form and request feedback from the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Markert asked if a meeting with the Commission Chairmen and the Selectmen would be a vehicle for developing a strategic plan and/or a catalyst for getting one started. He feels that this would be a good start point for something that the Town has never done before.

Mr. Bernard asked what Ms. Gager's opinion is on treatments plants in village centers.

Ms. Gager stated that some communities do use them but it would be risky to use around rivers and in floodplains and they are very costly because of the ongoing operational expenses.

There was a brief discussion regarding sizing treatment plants

Mr. Looney stated that a long-term goal for the Town would be to increase the density of Village Centers and the first strategic move would be to do a feasibility study.

There was a brief discussion regarding cost of feasibility studies.

Adjournment

Motion:

to adjourn at 6:55 pm

by Ms. Dupuis, seconded by Mr. Dutton.

Ms. Payne adjourned the meeting at 6:55 pm.

Submitted subject to approval,
Shelley White, Land Use Clerk