

February 13, 2006

Present: Liddy Adams, Don Brigham, Wayne Hileman, Jean Suddaby, Sue Werkhoven

Guests: Addie Roberts & Paul Frank, Planning Commission

Visitors: Dick Sears, First Selectman

Don Brigham called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

Wayne Hileman made a motion to accept the January 9, 2006, minutes. Liddy Adams seconded the motion. The minutes were accepted unanimously.

Dick Sears informed the members that Don Brigham was resigning as Chairperson due to too many other commitments. Therefore, the members needed to elect a replacement.

Liddy Adams nominated Wayne Hileman and Sue Werkhoven seconded the nomination. Wayne Hileman was elected unanimously as Chairperson.

Don Brigham felt that high on the list of this commission's priorities should be a calculation of the points Washington needs in order to reach a moratorium. He also felt that another high priority item would be a discussion on how to get to the long term goal of 10 percent. He felt that affordable housing is going to be a factor in land use and other commissions' decisions. He speculated that perhaps 18 to 20 percent might be sufficient for permanently preserved open space.

Wayne Hileman told the members that he had read the entire state report describing the affordable housing point system. He found it rather convoluted and that it seemed skewed toward urban areas. He cited the example of how rentals get a point and a half whereas an owner house received one point. Senior housing is given only one-half point. It seems that not all affordable housing is treated equally. The report could be looked at as an example of one size fits all legislation.

Dick Sears said that, at his meetings with other officials from the Northwest towns, there were many concerns expressed on how this is affecting small towns.

Don Brigham felt that being short of the 10 percent goal could mean developers might be able to take advantage of the situation.

Wayne Hileman suggested they double check to see what has been counted so far.

Dick Sears circulated a handout "Housing In Washington:2005" whose headings were: What Is Affordable; What Washington Offers Now; Connecticut's Affordable Housing Appeals Act; and Moratorium from the 1989 Act.

Discussion continued in response to sections of the handout including what role, if any, accessory and detached apartments could have in relation to affordable housing, as well as apartments connected to the town's private schools.

Wayne Hileman asked the guest speakers, Addie Roberts and Paul Frank, to give members an overview of the Depot Study. Addie Roberts circulated a copy of the Depot Study found on Washington's web site. She explained that one of the Depot Study's premises is that it is easier to preserve open space when a certain amount of housing density is geared toward village centers versus having subdivisions dividing up most of the land.

Paul Frank reviewed the history leading up to the Depot Study, which included a community survey and public forums. Now the process will continue with getting input from the various commissions.

Addie Roberts stated that the Planning Commission's job is to look into the years ahead and have ideas ready in response to whatever pressures become profound. But all proposals are incremental and subject to change. Those who prefer Roxbury as a model overlook the fact that Washington has always had small businesses and these are an integral part of the Depot. The Housing Commission could be a repository for data as well as for ongoing community input through surveys and public forums. This information would be helpful when the town has to respond to future changes and development

pressures.

Jean Suddaby said that senior housing seemed to be a high priority need. Wayne Hileman asked her to gather some data on this issue, such as the number of people on a waiting list for River Woods. Also, she could research different kinds of senior housing which are available in other small towns.

Liddy Adams told the members that information on waiting lists could be obtained from the Community Housing Management Office in New Preston. Another source of information on what seniors are saying about housing needs would be Pam Collins, who runs the Senior Center. Liddy cautioned that waiting lists for Ellsworth might not reflect the degree of senior interest because Ellsworth's units all have stairs and this is not a feature many seniors want.

Further discussion occurred regarding various news articles about towns where developers are exerting a lot of pressure by using the Affordable Housing Appeals Act to over ride zoning laws. The protection of a moratorium may not hold for smaller housing projects.

Dick Sears mentioned that a good source for information on affordable housing is Mr. Santoro at the DCED. He also circulated a copy of Mark Picton's article responding to Kelly Bolling's previous article.

The following changes were made to the meeting dates: October 9 to October 16 and March 13 to March 6. These changes have been given to the Town Clerk.

Sue Werkhoven made a motion to adjourn and Jean Suddaby seconded it.

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 pm.

The next scheduled meeting is March 6, 2006, at 5 pm in the Land Use Room, Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Patte Doran