

January 21, 2003

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Bender, Mr. Buck, Mr. Charles

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mrs. Averill, Mr. Byerly

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Mr. Rimsky, Mrs. Roberts, Mr. Sabin

STAFF PRESENT: Mr. Chalder, Mrs. Hill, Mrs. Luckey, Mr. Wood

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs. Friedman

Mr. Bender called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. and seated Members Bender, Buck, and Charles and Alternates Roberts and Sabin for Mrs. Averill and Mr. Byerly.

Update/Plan of Conservation and Development/Infrastructure

Mr. Chalder gave a brief introduction and noted Town infrastructure consists of 1) community facilities, 2) transportation network, and 3) utilities. Mr. Wood stated in general the Town's infrastructure was in good shape. He said one concern relating to Town Hall office space was Police Department requirements for office and storage space. Currently the Board of Selectmen is investigating the possible use of the old Depot firehouse by the police. Mr. Bender said the Plan would support a study of whether the police should be moved from the Town Hall to the old firehouse. Mr. Sabin cautioned the Commission should review the final proposal before endorsing it to make sure there isn't room in the Town Hall to keep the police there. He noted there is currently a tenant in the old firehouse and the Town should fully investigate all the possibilities prior to eliminating this income. Mr. Chalder said the Plan could encourage a comprehensive study of Town Hall office space be completed within the firehouse's current two year lease period. Mr. Wood pointed out that room for storage of equipment and vehicles in addition to office space should be studied. Mr. Bender asked if police and ambulance space could be combined. Mr. Wood did not think so as the volunteer fire department and ambulance crews already share a facility. Mr. Charles thought the old firehouse should be used by the land use commissions and Steep Rock as a central office for open space and conservation efforts.

The Infrastructure discussion booklet was reviewed page by page.

Page 1: Mr. Bender asked what the term, "unlisted" meant when referring to roads. Mr. Wood said it referred to the state aid road list.

Page 2: Mrs. Roberts thought the Plan should include a recommendation that an elevator be installed in the Town Hall. Mrs. Luckey said a committee is already working on this. Mr. Charles thought improvements should be made to Bryan Memorial Hall's inefficient heating and cooling system. He also thought the Town should consider bringing back the movie theatre that used to be located in the Town Hall. Mr. Rimsky asked if the Town had any rights to the Primary School property. Mrs. Luckey said it did not as it is currently leased to the regional school district. Several commissioners noted the second and third floors of the old school building were empty and could be utilized by the Town.

The new Town Garage site was discussed. Mr. Wood pointed out that adequate equipment and material storage areas are not available there yet. Mrs. Luckey stated it would be very expensive to make the required site improvements for storage there, but that Mr. Cannavaro thought they would be possible. Mr. Wood recommended a quick study be made on how to best utilize the new Town Garage site to free up the old one for other purposes. Mr. Rimsky asked if land adjacent to the new firehouse on the west side of Bee Brook Road could be used for storage of Town equipment. Mr. Sabin noted this land was now Steep Rock's and was within 200 feet of the Shepaug River. Mr. Chalder said the new Town Garage site is constrained by its physical characteristics and the old site could not be freed up until a comprehensive

assessment of the new site was completed. Once that was accomplished, he thought the old Town Garage site would become the key site in the Depot. Mr. Bender questioned whether the Building and Facilities Committee had the expertise to do all the studies needed. It was the consensus to leave this decision up to the Board of Selectmen.

Page 3: Mr. Bender asked for more specific information on funding sources. Mrs. Roberts recommended better facilities for storing subdivision maps and making them available for public use. Mr. Charles thought the Town should have the capability to print mylar maps as some of the surrounding towns already have.

Page 4: Mr. Bender asked if the Town's emergency communications system could be considered during deliberations for all telecommunications towers. Mr. Wood noted most companies routinely offer free space for town use on their towers, but said this request should be made for the record at Siting Council hearings. There was concern frequencies on the towers might interfere with emergency services communications, but Mr. Wood explained these can share the same tower, but not the same antenna. At the bottom of the page under Potential Strategies for Discussion, Mr. Bender asked the future drafts indicate who should be responsible for each point. Mr. Wood asked for suggestions. Mr. Chalder explained he would make an implementation chart for the Plan. Regarding public safety, Mr. Sabin asked if anyone had considered the distribution of dry hydrants. Mr. Wood will check with the Fire Chief regarding fire safety issues and if appropriate, the Plan will recommend a study. Mr. Charles thought there should be fines for false alarms because they pull volunteers away from their jobs. Mrs. Luckey said a fine system was already in place.

Page 6: Mr. Bender asked if any STEAP funds would be spent at the old Town Garage site. Mrs. Luckey said she did not know yet whether the Town would be awarded funds, but if so, it was possible some could be used to take down the existing building and move it.

Page 7: Discussing the third paragraph, Mr. Bender noted that while uses such as athletic fields and the greenway might be appropriate for the old Town Garage property, it must be stressed that such uses would not have a vested interest should the Commission eventually decide the site should be used for other purposes. He noted an in depth study about the most appropriate use for this property would be recommended in the Plan. The physical and regulatory constraints on this site were noted. Mrs. Roberts suggested the Commission should keep in mind that technology is always improving, and so additional possibilities for this parcel could open up in the future. Mr. Rimsky noted this land is invaluable to the center of Town. Mr. Bender suggested a recommendation to the Zoning Commission that planned unit development regulations be implemented. Mr. Wood noted, however, the 200 ft. setback from the Shepaug River decreases the useable portion of the property. Mr. Chalder noted elevation oriented construction can be creative and thought Planning should begin a dialogue with the Zoning Commission about such development, the setback requirements, and other dimensional requirements in the Depot. Mr. Sabin asked whether there were sufficient recreational facilities for New Preston and Marbledale. Mrs. Roberts thought the Town should decide whether it would spend the funds necessary to construct athletic fields on the Town property by the state garage on Rt. 202. Mr. Chalder noted towns generally have one of two recreational philosophies; 1) use of a centralized multi purpose complex or 2) a neighborhood approach to provide lesser facilities in each section of town. He asked which would work best for Washington. Mr. Bender thought the Primary School property was the prime candidate for the centralized approach. Mr. Chalder noted a third approach could be use of the Primary School property as the central facility with additional small neighborhood parklets, which would be green areas without any structures. Mr. Charles made several points including 1) all of the schools currently need athletic fields so the Town should consult with them to help determine the full extent of this need and how it can best be addressed, 2) the Town should build a Town pool, which could be used by the summer recreation program, at the Primary School, 3) the Town beach has too much traffic and could be better used for boat

storage and rental, 4) the golf course should eventually become a municipal course, and 5) the Washington Club and Town should work together to construct additional tennis courts. Mr. Chalder agreed to investigate the need for water based recreation and cooperation with the schools. Mr. Rimsky noted there are already scattered recreational areas throughout Town such as Steep Rock and the Aspetuck Park and thought this should continue. Mr. Sabin thought New Preston and Marbledale could be better served. Mr. Charles suggested that recreational facilities should be included when considering the Commission's support for more intensive development of the village centers. Mrs. Roberts thought cooperation with the schools could help keep expenses down as she did not foresee a great increase in the number of children in Town. She agreed satellite athletic fields were needed.

Page 8: Mr. Sabin noted Town needs vs school needs is currently a serious issue in town.

Page 9: The maintenance of dirt roads was discussed. Mr. Chalder noted that despite their scenic attributes, many towns have decided they are too expensive to maintain and have instead adopted narrow paved road specifications. Mr. Charles thought this could be a problem because like Wykeham Road, when wider, smoother surfaces are installed, speed and volume of traffic increase. Mrs. Luckey suggested some of the traffic calming techniques recommended by COG be implemented. Mr. Rimsky thought it important when making improvements and repairs to retain the scenic value of the road. Mrs. Friedman noted people drive slowly on dirt roads and said they are an important part of the Town's character. Mr. Chalder asked whether the Commission's policy would be to retain dirt roads or to implement a new paved road standard. The accuracy of the dirt road map on page 11 was questioned. Mr. Charles asked if the map includes "abandoned" and non maintained roads. Mr. Wood will inspect these roads with Mr. Cannavaro after the snow melts and the committee researching what roads should be formally abandoned by the Town will be notified so a member may attend.

Page 12: Mr. Bender thought the first paragraph should be expanded to provide a better understanding of road usage and road status. The difference between formally abandoned and discontinued roads was discussed. Mr. Charles thought it was very important for the Town to continue to maintain the use of abandoned roads as greenways. Mr. Chalder will discuss formally abandoned roads and right of ways with Atty. Byrne. Directive #34 was reviewed and Mr. Chalder noted the Town will have to phase in record keeping concerning the quality of maintenance of Town roads. Mr. Sabin thought the green infrastructure, that is, the net worth of the Town's open space, should be included when considering the net worth of the Town.

Page 13: Mr. Bender asked that Dodge Farm be added to the list of community wells in Town. Mr. Charles pointed out that Meeker Swamp has been identified as an important aquifer and it should be noted in the Plan as a potential water supply for the Town in the future. He thought in the future the Town could start its own water company. Mr. Charles reminded the Commissioners of storms that occurred over the past few years and the resulting power outages that lasted up to five days. He felt the Commission should address sustainable development, energy conservation, and local energy generation, which could be sold back to the utility company. Mrs. Roberts thought the Commission should continue to encourage underground utility lines. Mr. Bender suggested this provision should be included in the upcoming scenic road ordinance and said installation could be accomplished with an appropriate assessment to all abutting property owners. Mr. Wood noted this would be extremely expensive.

Page 14: Mr. Chalder noted that one of the points raised when the village centers had been discussed was that some of the smaller properties within the centers have little or no capability to accommodate septic systems. Therefore, he did some research on community septic systems. For the Depot, he did not know if a community system would be possible due to the soil types and depth of the water table. He also noted it would be economically prohibitive without including a large facility like The Gunnery. He also noted there was no evidence of major septic system failures in the Depot. Mr. Sabin recommended that as part

of the study of the village centers higher capacity soils that could be used for septic renovations be identified and the Town then secure them for possible future community systems before they are privately developed.

Page 15: It was noted telecommunications is now a very sensitive and contentious issue in Town. Mr. Bender thought the Plan should support the efforts of the Conservation Commission subcommittee to select appropriate tower sites. Mr. Wood noted as soon as a tower receives 36 calls per minute, another is required. Mr. Chalder said the decisions of the Ct. Siting Council could be influenced by community plans. He noted towns have to balance number of towers vs. height of towers. A discussion, which included health concerns, ridge line protection, and stealth technology followed.

Mr. Chalder advised the Commission February's discussion would include a more in depth review of the village centers. Mr. Bender asked when the first draft of the Conservation section would be ready. Mr. Chalder said it was almost done, but thought the next public informational meeting could cover the entire first draft rather than just the Conservation section.

Referral from the Zoning Commission/AT&T Wireless PCS/Petition to Amend the Zoning Regulations/Sections 13.19.8.o and 13.19.8.q

The draft letter that was written based on the discussion of this matter at the January 7th meeting was reviewed. It was the consensus that it adequately addressed the Planning Commission's concerns and should be sent to the Zoning Commission.

MOTION: To authorize Mr. Bender to sign the draft letter concerning AT&T's petition to amend Sections 13.19.8.o and 13.19.8.q of the Washington Zoning Regulations and to send it to the Zoning Commission. By Mrs. Roberts, seconded by Mr. Sabin, and passed 4-0-1. Mr. Bender abstained because he had not been present for the 1/7 discussion.

Referral from the Zoning Commission/AT&T Wireless PCS/Proposed Tower Facility/911 Rabbit Hill Road, Warren

Mr. Sabin noted Rabbit Hill residents had attended a Conservation Commission meeting to voice their concerns about the impacts the proposed tower would have. These included impacts to the scenic vista and to wildlife. They had also stressed tower sites should be in less densely populated areas, the review procedure should allow discussion of health concerns and the applicant had not provided adequate scenic cross sections for views from Washington properties so that the scenic impact could be fully analyzed. He said the Conservation Commission would send a response to Zoning that would address these concerns. In general the Commissioners thought although they were very concerned about the application, they were not qualified to comment. Mr. Sabin noted the proximity to the new Montessori School was an issue although health concerns were not supposed to be raised. After a brief discussion it was agreed the Commission would not respond to the referral at this time.

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting. By Mrs. Roberts.

Mr. Bender adjourned the meeting at 6:25 p.m.

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully submitted,

Janet M. Hill
Land Use Coordinator