

• April 15, 2003

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mrs. Averill, Mr. Bender, Mr. Charles

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Buck, Mr. Byerly

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

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

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs. Payne

Mr. Bender called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m. and seated Mrs. Averill, Mr. Bender, and Mr. Charles and Alternate Roberts. He noted the purpose of the meeting was to begin discussion of the first draft of the updated Plan of Conservation and Development. He said the draft was the result of the collection of ideas and comments from a variety of sources over the past year. In general, he thought it could be improved by making it more concise.

Mr. Rimsky arrived at 4:10 p.m. and was seated.

Mr. Wood gave a brief summary of how the draft was organized. He said the focus of today's discussion would be on sections #3, #4, and #5, issues, objectives, priorities, and implementation, and noted the preliminary outline, which included strategies, was shown on the blue pages. He asked the Commissioners to carefully review this outline before the next meeting and to rank the issues listed in order of their importance. At the next meeting these rankings will be discussed and the Commission will reach an agreement regarding which issues are the most important. Also at the next meeting details, additions, and deletions will be addressed.

Mr. Sabin arrived at 4:20 p.m.

There was a lengthy discussion and the following suggestions and comments were made:

- Mr. Sabin thought a statement explaining why the Commission thinks the zoning for village centers should be changed should be added. Regarding future boundary lines for Marbledale, he said he had hoped there would be a more aggregate area proposed so the district would be less of a linear corridor.
- Mrs. Hill pointed out on the Marbledale map on p. 7-9, the boundary between the village district zone and the gateway zone should be revised to include in the village district the four small properties to the north of the Wheaton Road-Rt. 202 intersection because their location and characteristics link them with the village, not the gateway area.
- Mr. Sabin thought the issue of coverage should be addressed for higher density areas such as The Green and New Preston. Although he understood the reason for maximum coverage limitations was to protect water quality, he thought the need for a variance to construct a walkway was illogical for these areas. Mr. Wood noted Woodbury provides flexibility by use of Special Permits.
- Mr. Bender asked that a key be included to explain all the abbreviations used throughout the document.
- Mrs. Hill asked how recommendations that had not been implemented from the 1993 Plan would be addressed. Would they remain recommendations if they were not specifically referred to in the new Plan or would they be dropped? Mr. Wood suggested a list of recommendations not yet implemented be submitted to Mr. Chalder for his review.
- Mr. Bender noted his suggestion that subdivisions be taken out of the R-1 District and there be new residential regulations written to govern them was not included in the draft. The main issue he hoped to

address was farming in residential districts. Mrs. Hill thought the R-1 District was uniquely Washington and should be preserved as is, that such a change was suburban and so would undermine the preservation of rural character, and that there were so many subdivisions in Town it would be difficult to oversee. Mrs. Roberts agreed. Mr. Bender noted residents cherish the ambience of their communities and commercial farming did not belong in residential areas. Mr. Rimsky thought separate subdivision district regulations might impact residents operating other types of businesses from their homes. He was concerned the social character of Town could change if the Zoning Regulations made it difficult for persons to make a living. Mr. Charles noted such a change in the R-1 District would be dramatic for Washington and said he thought organic farm operations, for example, should be permitted throughout Town. He thought farms could be effectively run on smaller parcels and cautioned against any actions that would limit the promotion of farming in Washington. Mr. Rimsky noted it would be difficult to draft residential regulations as it was not only businesses that could disrupt residential neighborhoods, but also inconsiderate individuals who make too much noise, clear cut, etc. Mrs. Payne noted there was a recommendation to support local agriculture in the **NaturalResource Inventory**. Mr. Wood noted in general towns that retain land for agricultural purposes will be better off in the future.

- Mrs. Roberts noted 1993 recommendations regarding outdoor lighting in residential areas had not been addressed.
- Mr. Bender thought the sections were awkwardly arranged. He said as the reader progresses through the document he would expect the recommendations to be at the end of each section.
- Mr. Bender thought the blue page recommendations were overwhelming because they included too much and duplicated material already in gray boxes throughout the text. Mrs. Roberts, on the other hand, thought these pages were very helpful because they spelled out who would be responsible for implementing each recommendation and the gray boxes were a good way to highlight pertinent points for those who would not read the entire text. Mr. Bender suggested that if the gray boxes were used at all, they should be placed at the end of each section.
- Mrs. Roberts complained a recommendation for a footbridge over the Shepaug River in the Depot had not been included.
- Mr. Sabin hoped the draft would include support for trails and a greenway network throughout Town as was recommended in the draft open space plan.

The layout, design, and language of the draft were considered. Mr. Rimsky complained the overview in Section #11 needed more emphatic language and should have a more engaging quality and inspirational edge. He thought the language in the introductions was important and could be improved to draw the reader's attention and motivate him to read further. Regarding the layout and design, he thought the use of images was good, the use of sidebars, screening, and highlighting helped to keep the reader's interest, and the pages were not too crowded. He said the design should be dynamic, should resonate that the Plan makes sense, and should catch the public's attention. He thought the draft did a good job in accomplishing these ends. Mr. Bender agreed active, not passive, language should be used throughout the text and planning jargon should be avoided whenever possible. Mr. Sabin recommended the conclusions be relevant to Washington and not general in nature. There was a brief discussion about whether the use of sidebars was distracting or contributed to the understanding of the text. It was the consensus to keep them.

The following specific comments were made.

- Mr. Bender asked that unified terminology be used for indicating actions and strategies - example: p. 5-

4.

- Mrs. Hill noted the term "planning period" is confusing because it is used in different ways throughout the text.
- The term "natural resources" was discussed. While it was agreed water, air, soils, forests, etc. are natural resources, some were not comfortable including aesthetics such as scenic resources in this category. Mr. Charles thought it was important to include aesthetics to give a value to intangible qualities. Mr. Rimsky agreed, saying that the quality of life was what was being "mined," and that scenery could be consumed as though it was being strip mined.
- The Historic District Commission, Park and Rec Commission, and Washington Environmental Council will be added to the list of acknowledgements.
- Mr. Bender noted throughout the text it states various boards "will" do various tasks and asked this be changed to "should be considered" as the Plan is advisory and makes recommendations. Mr. Wood thought some issues were so firm that "will" should be used, but Mr. Sabin agreed with Mr. Bender, noting the Planning Commission has no enforcement abilities.
- Mr. Bender pointed out the term "ambience" must have a qualifier. It was generally thought a different word should be used whenever possible.

The recommendations on the blue pages were discussed.

Page 5-5:

- Mr. Bender noted #1 and #3 had already been done and Mrs. Hill noted the 12/4/01 Minutes confirm this. Therefore, he thought it might not be necessary to include #1 through #5 in this list if they were noted in the appendix.
- Mr. Bender suggested the Plan include sources of grant money.
- It was noted #8 and #15 should be combined.

Page 5-6:

- Mr. Bender thought "sensitive" natural resources should be defined. Mr. Wood agreed to either substitute another descriptive word or to better define "sensitive."
- Mrs. Payne and Mrs. Hill noted the Conservation Commission has no enforcement authority for protecting natural resources.
- Mrs. Payne noted the **Natural Resource Inventory** recommended the upland review area be increased for Inland Wetlands Comm. applications.
- Mrs. Payne thought the use of the word "improvements" was misleading in #26. Development or project will be substituted.
- Mr. Bender asked if #26 meant an additional permit would be required, and Mr. Wood said it did.
- Mrs. Payne recommended #29 be eliminated. Mrs. Hill noted the Zoning Commission was on record against the state signs associated with scenic roads. Mr. Sabin and Mrs. Roberts pointed out the state

scenic road ordinance could be used to preserve rural character by preventing state roads from being widened and straightened, although the accompanying signs are the downside.

Mrs. Roberts left at 6:45 p.m. and Mr. Sabin was seated.

Page 5-7:

- Mr. Bender objected to the term "use assessment" in #31 and requested this be called the PA 490 program. He noted the Town currently has farm and forest land tax reductions and thought the Plan should include a recommendation for an open space tax reduction. Mr. Sabin was concerned that if open space were allowed to satisfy the PA 490 requirement, there would be no incentive to maintain agricultural areas or to submit management plans for forests. He said all open space would grow into forest. Mr. Wood noted page 6-14 covered the details of the assessment program.
- Mrs. Hill asked why #36 was under the Board of Selectmen rather than the Building Department or Zoning Commission. Mr. Wood said this is because it would be require a Town ordinance.
- Mr. Sabin explained #40 was state legislation that enables towns to enact ordinances to protect farmers against nuisance complaints. Some Commissioners thought Washington should consider enacting such an ordinance.

As the end of the meeting was near, Mr. Wood again asked the Commissioners to review the blue pages and to rank the recommendations in order of priority. He said the top three or four priorities from each section when all the "votes" were tallied would definitely be included in the Plan and would be described in detail in the text.

It was thought at least two more meetings would be needed to discuss the first draft. These will be the Regular Meeting on Tuesday, May 6 and the next Special Meeting on Tuesday, May 20 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. The first draft is still not available to the public.

There was also a brief discussion about the best time to hold the next public informational meeting. This will be scheduled for June or September.

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting. By Mr. Charles.

Mr. Bender adjourned the meeting at 6:03 p.m.

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully submitted,

Janet M. Hill, L.U. Coordinator