

• May 20, 2003

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

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Mr. Rimsky, Mrs. Roberts

ALTERNATE ABSENT: Mr. Sabin

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

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Field, Mrs. Luckey, Mrs. Payne

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

Mr. Bender noted the 2nd draft of the Plan of Conservation and Development was the result of a meeting he and Mr. Rimsky had with Mr. Wood. He thought this draft was an improvement, but was still cumbersome and was not reader friendly. An undated memo with his recommendations for improving the order of presentation was circulated and discussed. A copy is attached.

Mr. Bender asked if there was an official final open space report from the Conservation Commission, noting the Interim Report by Mr. Field was referenced in the Plan. Mrs. Payne stated the Interim Report was Conservation's official report subject to future public discussion. She said the Open Space Steering Committee's report had not been integrated with the Interim Report. Mr. Bender was concerned the Open Space Steering Committee's report, which had been officially incorporated into the Plan, and the Interim Report, which had not yet been incorporated, might have conflicting parts. Mr. Field did not think this was a problem because he said the Interim Report had been derived from the strategic direction of the Open Space Steering Committee's report and used the same cost criteria. Mr. Bender said the Planning Commission preferred to incorporate by reference one open space report in the Plan. Mr. Field said the Open Space Steering Committee's report could be incorporated as part of the Open Space Interim Report.

Mr. Charles arrived and was seated at 4:16 p.m.

Mr. Bender said he did not like the term, "desirable" open space used in draft #2. Mr. Chalder noted the Conservation Commission is working on prioritizing parcels to be preserved as open space and these would be included on the Conservation map in the Plan. Mrs. Payne said Conservation would identify only broad corridors, not specific parcels. In general, she said the Conservation Commission thought there was no parcel that was not worth preserving. Mrs. Roberts pointed out the general public incorrectly perceives 70% to 80% protected open space presently exists in Washington. She thought the challenge for the Commission would be to actually protect as much of this perceived open space as possible.

Mr. Bender expressed concern about mixing terminology in Section 7 of the Plan, particularly, zoning "use" vs. zoning "district." Mr. Chalder offered to insert an explanatory paragraph and suggested the matter could be referred to the Zoning Commission to find out whether it thought the use of these terms would be a problem. Mr. Wood noted the chart in Section 7, "Descriptions of Future Land Use Categories," was meant to accompany the land use map. He also noted Mr. Sabin had recommended the Plan be summarized in one map and said this was the intent of this section. Mr. Bender asked how the chart integrated with the recommendations in the blue pages. Mr. Wood said it did not because the chart was future categories on the land use map and the blue pages summarized recommendations and strategies. Mr. Charles voiced support for including Section 7 because he thought it clearly showed what Planning's job was and would generate communication between the Planning and Zoning commissions. Mr. Bender was concerned about the flow of the document and thought the Commission should consider a) not including the land use map, b) providing an improved description of the map, c) using the map to

summarize specific recommendations so that it would become more action oriented and not an end in itself, and/or d) having two maps; one for existing land use and a second for recommended future land use.

Mr. Buck arrived at 4:32 p.m. and was seated.

A broad conversation followed, which included the following points:

- Mr. Rimsky thought it was important the Plan show both the results the Planning Commission hopes to achieve and the process to be used to achieve them. Building on Mrs. Roberts' comments that what the public perceives as open space is not correct, he said the Plan should point this out and then show what action needs to be taken to ensure the perceived open space becomes protected open space. He thought the Plan should educate the public about how to protect and manage open space.
- Mr. Charles expressed concern that newcomers were bringing to Town different values, which could change its character if left unchecked. Clearing the understory was an example. Mr. Chalder said the land ethic, what we value and how we want the land to be treated, would be explained in the Plan. Mr. Rimsky agreed the Town should take a more active role in education about the community's value system.
- Mr. Chalder did not recommend doing a townwide build out, but thought an exercise that took one section of town and compared what could happen under the current regulations vs. what would be possible if the updated Plan were implemented would help the public understand what was being proposed.

Mr. Bender asked Mr. Wood to use the suggestions in his memo to write draft #3 and asked if it could be ready for the June 3rd meeting. Mr. Wood said he would try to have it ready prior to the meeting. Mr. Charles thought this would be an appropriate time for the Commissioners to comment on substantive matters in the Plan so these comments could be reflected in draft #3.

Mr. Rimsky thought the Plan's priority was preservation of open space, which did not reflect the priority of the townspeople, which was affordable housing. He said the affordable housing section should be strengthened so their treatment would be equal with the open space sections.

Mr. Charles asked if recommendations for a light industrial zone or for the establishment of an economic development commission would be included. Mr. Bender noted light manufacturing/campus type industry had been considered as part of the Marbledale transition zone.

Mrs. Roberts thought the Plan should include possible uses for the present elementary school should a new regional elementary school be built in the future. She also thought the school property should be included in the Depot Business District. Mr. Charles agreed that a larger area than the current Depot Business District should be included when the in depth study of this district is done. He thought the Shepaug Flower Farm and school, for example, were integral parts of the district. Mr. Rimsky agreed, and also thought properties adjacent to the school property should be included.

Mr. Charles submitted a letter dated 5/20/03 with additional issues he thought should be addressed. This is attached to these minutes.

Mr. Wood said he would work on a power point presentation for a public informational meeting and would set it up to generate thought and feedback from the public. He thought a possible date would be the Commission's next Special Meeting date, June 17.

Organization of the Plan was again discussed. Mr. Bender did not think the summary should be inserted at the beginning of the document. Mr. Wood noted the summary had been narrowed to four definite categories so it would be easier to understand and said these were covered in detail in separate sections. Mr. Chalder thought perhaps the summaries could be inserted in the implementation section and be followed by the future land use plan. It was noted planning jargon should be avoided as much as possible throughout the text.

The state enabling legislation for land acquisition funds was discussed. This statute clearly states such a fund may be used to purchase land for open space or for affordable housing. Mr. Chalder advised the Commission it would be up to the Town to establish how the fund would be used and to set it up accordingly. Mr. Charles thought further studies were needed to determine how much land should be set aside for affordable housing (the Open Space Steering Committee report had addressed only land for open space), how much money should be on hand in the fund so that it could be used most effectively, what other sources of funding there might be, etc. Some on the Commission thought the Washington Community Housing Trust should take the lead for acquiring land for affordable housing, but Mr. Charles stressed this is the Town's responsibility. Mr. Bender asked if the Conservation Commission could accept land for affordable housing as well as for open space. This matter will be investigated as the current state statutes seem to be conflicting.

Regarding the Bee Brook Gateway District concept, Mr. Wood asked whether this district should extend along Bee Brook Road to the Shepaug River. It was the consensus this area was appropriate for a mixed use district.

Mrs. Luckey noted plans were well underway for the installation of an elevator in the Town Hall and so the language in the text should be changed to reflect this.

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

Mr. Bender adjourned the meeting at 5:59 p.m.

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully submitted,

Janet M. Hill
Land Use Coordinator