

• July 15, 2003

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

MEMBER ABSENT: Mr. Buck

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

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

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Sears, Mr. Field, Mr. Canal, Press

Board of Finance: Ms. Adams

Conservation Commission: Mrs. Frank, Mr. Gitterman, Mr. Markert, Mrs. Payne

Inland Wetlands Commission: Mrs. Gray, Mrs. Hill, Mr. LaMuniere, Ms. Purnell, Mrs. Korzenko

Historic District Commission: Mrs. Boyer, Mr. Chute, Mrs. Rives, Mr. Talbot

Park and Recreation Commission: Ms. Gauthey, Mr. Reich

Zoning Board of Appeals: Mrs. Leab, Mr. Owens, Mrs. Roberts, Mr. White

Zoning Commission: Mr. Brinton, Mrs. Friedman, Mr. Martin

Mr. Bender called the Special Meeting to order at 4:06 and seated Members Averill, Bender, Byerly, and Charles and Alterate Roberts. He welcomed all in attendance, introduced Mr. Wood, planning consultant from Planimetrics, and noted the purpose of the meeting was to present on overview of the draft Plan of Conservation and Development and to receive input from those present.

Mr. Wood reviewed the main points of the draft Plan. The summary of his presentation is attached.

The following questions, comments, and concerns were raised during and after the presentation.

- Mr. Owens asked if it was the Commission's intent to intensify commercial development in the business districts and if Planning had considered whether this was desirable. Mr. Wood said there had been no discussion that this was the Commission's intent, but by implication if a recommendation is made for a district, support for development at an appropriate scale there is implied. Mr. Bender reminded those present the Plan of Conservation and Development is not regulations and is not enforceable. It is, he said, recommendations to the Commissions who do have the enforcement powers.
- Mr. White asked if the Plan was promoting the conversion of residential properties to commercial uses. Mr. Wood noted most of the proposed Bee Brook Gateway District is already commercially zoned, that New Preston was proposed to be enlarged only by expanding it to existing property lines, and in Marbledale a new transition zone was proposed. Mr. White said he was concerned about intensifying uses in these areas as they have already experienced septic failures and are along rivers.
- Mrs. Leab noted the presentation was a general one and asked when copies of the complete draft would be available. After a lengthy discussion the Commission decided it would post the latest draft on the Town web site and would have several copies available in the Land Use Office for residents to borrow and read before the July 25th Special Meeting.
- Mrs. Frank noted the Town has a substantial number of acres in PA 490, that this was a tax loss, and asked if Mr. Wood viewed 490 as a "good thing to do." Mr. Wood commented it was a valuable tool for management because it slowed down development and gave the Town time to come up with a permanent protection plan if the parcel met previously agreed upon criteria. He said it was not a permanent solution and that is why an aggressive open space plan was needed.
- Mr. White asked if large properties that would never be developed were discounted when the build out figures had been calculated. Mr. Bender said the build out addressed this in passing by stating

Washington tends to have large estate type development.

- Mr. Talbot asked if there was the potential for village centers with higher density. Mr. Wood said the total build out was of the residential districts with limited development potential in the village core areas. Mr. Charles pointed out development in the village centers would take pressure off the outlying open space areas and these centers would be the logical location for senior and affordable housing. Mr. Talbot was concerned about water pollution and septic failures in the villages if higher density was permitted. Mr. Wood said mixed use development would be encouraged rather than strictly residential development. He added, in this way the intent of the village centers would continue and with residential units located there, there would be an incentive for maintenance.
- Mr. Field said the Open Space Steering Committee had asked the Conservation Commission to study whether open space should be accepted under PA 490. This has not been done in Washington, although in other towns it has. He said the Conservation Commission concluded tax incentives for temporary preservation were counter productive, but were a powerful incentive for permanent preservation. Mr. Charles noted there is a one time IRS deduction for permanently preserved open space and asked Mr. Field why he did not think this was enough incentive. Mr. Field said that once a property has restrictions placed on it, it is not as valuable, but currently the value stays high for the Assessor's purposes. Mr. Charles noted the Open Space Steering Committee had recommended a half mil set aside for open space purchases, but the Conservation Commission chose not to recommend this in its Open Space Plan. Mr. Field said purchases could be made with a combination of state and federal funds and private donations. Mr. Charles said that would take too long and what was needed was a fund on hand so that properties could be purchased quickly if necessary. Mr. Canal agreed and said there should be a million dollars on hand. Mr. Bender noted that was why the Planning Commission had recommended in the draft Plan that both a land acquisition fund and an open space committee be established.
- Mr. Martin asked if Planning had recommended a mil rate be set aside to fund this fund. Mr. Wood said the recommendation was half a mil.
- Ms. Purnell asked if there were any plans to incorporate regional goals. She cited Roxbury's recently updated Plan as an example and said when trying to preserve natural resources artificial boundaries were not effective. Mr. Bender responded within the Plan are mechanisms to try to establish contiguous open space and wildlife corridors.
- Mr. Martin asked what other documents were incorporated in the Plan. Mr. Bender said the Housing Steering Committee Report and the Natural Resources Inventory Report had been incorporated. Mr. Martin asked if the Open Space Steering Committee Report would be incorporated. Mr. Bender said no. Mr. Martin complained a lot of time and effort had been put into the Open Space Steering Committee Report by a broad cross section of Town commissions and said it differed from the Conservation Commission's Open Space Plan. Mr. Field said Conservation's Open Space Plan incorporated the Open Space Steering Committee's Report.
- Mr. White asked when the Plan would be completed. Mr. Bender said Planning would hold a public meeting on July 25th , would make revisions according to the comments received tonight and on the 25th, and then would conduct a public hearing and make the required referrals before adopting the Plan, and so it was not yet known exactly what the end date would be.

There was a second brief discussion regarding getting the draft document on the Town web site and getting copies made for distribution. Mr. Wood said he would try to get the draft Plan posted on the web site and provide Mrs. Hill with a single sided copy by Friday, July 18th.

There were no other questions or comments.

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

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully submitted,

Janet M. Hill
Land Use Coordinator