

October 29, 2003

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

MEMBER ABSENT: Mr. Buck

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Mr. Rimsky, Mr. Sabin

ALTERNATE ABSENT: Mrs. Roberts

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

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. R. Wyant, Mrs. Payne, Mr. Tagley, Mr./Mrs. Boyer, Mr. Wyshinski, Mr. Bedini, Mr. Fitzherbert, Mr./Mrs. Weydig, Mr. Field, Mr. Millington, Mr. Sears, Mr./Mrs. Carey, Mr. Owen, Mr. Kleinberg, Mr./Mrs. LaMuniere, Mrs. Friedman, Mr. Adams, Mr. Shapiro, Ms. Stevens, Mr./Mrs. Frank, Mr. Treadway, Mr./Mrs. Williams, Mr. DePecol, Mr. Carew, Mr. Lyon, Mr. M. Picton, Mr./Mrs. Markert, Mrs. Peckerman, Mrs. Materne, Mrs. Dyer, Mr. Gitterman, Mr. Cornett, Mr. Mustich, Mr. Canal, Mrs. Middlebrook, Mr./Mrs. Farmer, Mr. Bent, Residents, Press

PUBLIC HEARING ON ADOPTION OF THE 2003 PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Bender called the public hearing to order at 7:35 p.m. and seated Members Averill, Bender, Byerly, and Charles and Alternate Rimsky. He noted the purpose of the hearing was to receive comments from the community on the final draft of the Plan of Conservation and Development. He read the legal notice published in **Voices** on 10/15 and 10/22/03 and the 9/4/03 review from Mr. McGuinness, Director of the NW Ct. Council of Governments, which included comments on scenic roads, Washington's economy, preservation of historic resources and rural character, the Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals legislation, and Village District regulations. He then gave a brief review of the two year process to update the Plan.

Mr. Wood and Mr. Chalder, consulting planners from Planimetrics, were introduced.

Mr. Wood presented an overview of the Plan. He explained the four community objectives in the proposed Plan were 1) to preserve Washington's rural character, 2) to enhance the community village centers, 3) to guide and manage housing development, and 4) to address other community issues. He noted the Town has soil based zoning, which permits development according to the capabilities of the land. Based on soil based zoning, he said the Town has the potential for 4400 additional homes, which could result in an eventual population increase to 9000 - 1100 residents. He also noted the difference between perceived and protected open space. Mr. Wood reviewed the strategies for achieving each of the above listed objectives and highlighted the major recommendations. These included a goal of 30% open space, establishment of an open space action plan, funding mechanisms and an permanent open space committee, division of the Washington Depot and Marbledale Business Districts into gateway and core districts, expansion of The Green Residential District, promotion of housing diversity, and road maintenance compatible with the preservation of scenic roads.

Questions and comments were taken from the public.

- Ms. Moriority-Wesson voiced her concern about the recommendation that the Zoning Commission consider a transition zone in the Mygatt Road - Wheaton Road section of Marbledale.
- Mr. Finker, Wheaton Road, objected to the transition zone because he wanted to maintain the rural residential and agricultural nature of the area. He thought no consideration had been given to the impact such a zone would have on the pristine river running through it. He also thought traffic should be restricted in the area. He did not want the area to become a "dumping ground" for institutional uses.

Mr. Bender, Mr. Rimsky, Mr. Charles, and Mr. Sabin all explained the Commission's reasons for recommending the Zoning Commission consider establishing the transition zone. These included that it was an attempt to avoid strip development along Rt. 202, it was a plan to address developmental pressures that would be moving up Rt. 202 from New Milford, it was an attempt to slow down traffic through Marbledale to make it a more viable commercial district, and it was an area for expansion to provide room for a possible green or community area so Marbledale would have more of a village quality.

Mr. Bender explained the hearing was not a forum for debate. He noted the recommendations in the Plan were for studies by other governing bodies who would decide what, if anything, would be done to address the issues raised.

- Mr. Farmer said the Plan omitted references to recreational facilities. He thought the two non conforming country clubs and the need for athletic fields should have been addressed.
- Mr. Boyer noted the Housing Study Committee had voiced its opposition to architectural review boards outside the current historic districts and asked why the Commission had recommended this be considered. Mr. Bender noted the review boards would be advisory only and would try to persuade developers to design structures in keeping with the existing architectural appearance of Washington.
- Mrs. Friedman raised several specific questions:
 - 1) On page 1-11 she pointed out the per capita expenditures did not match the total funds coming in. She noted the Town was not operating a deficit and asked that the figures be corrected.
 - 2) On page 5-6 she noted state law requires flexibility for affordable housing projects and asked that the wording be changed to reflect this.
 - 3) On page 6-2 she noted should a consolidated school be needed, it would not be due to Washington's enrollment, which has declined by 40% over the last several years, but would be because of district wide population increases. Mr. Chalder pointed out this section had been so worded because Washington's school enrollment ratio is very low and is unique in the state and so is a factor that is expected to change. Also, Mr. Wood pointed out this section was based on discussions with the superintendent of schools, who perhaps had a conservative approach to planning.
 - 4) She was concerned about the language on page 6-3, which she did not think voiced strong enough support for the preservation of dirt roads. She said the Plan should reflect the fact that Washington citizens understand dirt roads are more costly to maintain, but consider this an acceptable price for preserving rural character. (After the hearing, Mr. and Mrs. Weydig came up to the table to agree that dirt roads should be preserved as a part of Washington's rural character.)
- Mr. Canal said he was concerned about 1) the Marbledale transition zone, 2) the proposed gateway business districts, 3) allowing multistory mixed use buildings because multistory buildings could destroy the Town's rural character, 4) the omission of open space tax abatement programs on page 7-5 and 5) the inaccuracy of the section on education in light of recent newspaper articles about the great expenditures that are needed to repair and maintain the existing school structures.
- Mr. Schoon referred to page 2-5 and said he thought the Town had more of an interest in recreational facilities than was evidenced in the Plan.
- Mr. Finker asked again about the Marbledale transition zone and wanted to know what institutional uses would be permitted. Mr. Bender again explained this was a recommendation to other governing

bodies who would make this decision. Mr. Wood noted "institutional uses" is a routine planning category that would include such uses as schools, churches, police stations, municipal facilities, etc.

- Ms. Morriarity-Wesson expressed her concern that sewers were recommended. Mr. Wood said that was not correct; that the Plan recommended septic treatment options be considered.
- Mr. Chute agreed with Mr. Farmer's remarks that the Plan should address the recreational needs of the community. He also thought it was a serious omission that the Plan did not recognize the importance of the schools to Washington's economy as the 1993 Plan did.

There being no further questions or comments, Mr. Bender thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the hearing at 9:00 p.m.

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully submitted,

Janet M. Hill, Land Use Coordinator