

TOWN OF WASHINGTON
Bryan Memorial Town Hall
Post Office Box 383
Washington Depot, Connecticut 06794
Planning Commission Regular Meeting
MINUTES
December 6, 2023

7:30 P.M. – Virtual Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Hileman, D. Rimsky, J. Averill

MEMBERS ABSENT: S. Gager, C. Matteo

ALTERNATES PRESENT: D. Varnish

ALTERNATES ABSENT: S. Mongar,

STAFF PRESENT: S. White,

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Chair Hileman called the meeting to order at 7:40pm.

Seated for this meeting is Chair Hileman, D. Rimsky, and J. Averill.

Consideration of the Minutes – November 1, 2023:

MOTION: To approve the November 1, 2023 Washington Planning Commission Meeting Minutes a submitted, Chair Hileman made the Motion and D. Rimsky seconded, approved 3-0 vote.

New Applications:

No new applications.

Pending Applications:

No pending applications

Committee Reports/Updates:

Sustainability:

No update

Economic Development Committee:

No update

Report on Broadband

Chair Hileman noted that he now has fiber in front of his house.

Referral from Washington Zoning Commission – Revision to Zoning Regulations

Chair Hileman discussed that they are reviewing section 13.12.2 of the Zoning Regulations based on the actual language in the regulation, not what the Zoning Commission thinks is implied with the language. S. White noted that she received no written comments on the regulation from the previous meeting. Chair Hileman stated that he sees a problem in that neither the housing plan, the PCOD or PA 21-29 note that multifamily is required all around town but instead in specific areas. This in turn makes the last sentence of this section untrue. D. Rimsky questioned how to break up the R-1 district when it makes up about 95% town and how to define what particular areas of the R-1 district could or could not have multifamily. Chair Hileman says the short answer is that we cannot which is the conundrum because it first needs to be determined where said multifamily housing can be allowed. Without district overlays that specifically allow multifamily housing, Chair Hileman believes that allowing it everywhere will cause uproar during public hearings.

Chair Hileman agrees that we really need multifamily housing in town but believes the affordability component can be viewed as discriminatory. In the same breath he notes that there are some great components to the proposed revision of this regulation. Chair Hileman states that the Planning Commission's task is to determine whether or not these regulations are consistent with the PCOD. He noted the Planning Commission can state what portions are consistent with the plan and what parts are not. The Commission ultimately agrees that allowing it everywhere is too ambiguous and can lead to greater issues for example allowing further development around Lake Waramaug when the increased development in that area has caused additional environmental concerns.

Chair Hileman noted that if this regulation was about industrial or commercial properties there wouldn't be a skip of the first step which is defining the areas in which those would be allowed. J. Averill brings up soil maps and using that as a starting point to see what areas might be a better fit. S. White notes we have a soil map from HVA that correspond with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services website. The Town of Washington does not plan to change soil-based zoning and zoning projects cannot be approved without health approval and for the site to have the soils to install appropriate septic systems. The Planning Commission discussed how they can provide viable alternatives with clarity so that Zoning Commission just doesn't go to do what they want to do as they want to do it. It is the general consensus of the Planning Commission that trying to handle the multifamily issue with one "swipe" per se can pose issues especially allowing it everywhere in town would be a major policy change.

The Commission discussed Section 13.11.1 and notes that we already have very generous regulations for ADU's surpassing state requirements. The proposed regulation makes this more generous when it doesn't achieve the goal we wanted it to achieve which is more affordable housing for those who do not have the means to purchase. Chair Hileman loves the idea of accessory apartments but notes that it might not be most beneficial for Washington because the need is clearly for larger scale multifamily housing.

The Commission agrees they need to offer remedies. D. Rimsky believes it would be beneficial to sit down with those handling the revision of these regulations.

Continued Discussion – 2023 Plan of Conservation and Development:

No Discussions for this meeting as we learned this does not need to be completed until 2024 not 2023.

Communications:

No Communications for this meeting.

Administrative Business:

Approve the calendar for 2024. The only note is to move July meeting to Tuesday July 2nd.

Motion: To approve 2024 calendar with exception of July meeting being moved to Tuesday July 2nd instead of Wednesday July 3rd. Motion approved unanimously 3-0 vote.

Adjourn:

MOTION: To adjourn the December 6, 2023 Washington Planning Commission Regular Meeting at 8:50pm pm by Chair Hileman, seconded by D. Rimsky, approved unanimously 3-0 vote.

Recording can be found here:

https://townofwashingtoncc-my.sharepoint.com/:u:/g/personal/jrebillard_washingtonct_org/EUhqyeD5L3RKlpWOXKM5pLwBSxywBCrULy6XyamqCOHgTg?e=CC2y4y

Respectfully Submitted,

Justine Rebillard

Land Use Clerk

December 11, 2023

***Minutes filed, subject to approval**