

November 10, 2008

Present: Wayne Hileman, Andy O'Hazo, Jean Suddaby, Sue Werkhoven, Liddy Adams

Guests: none

Visitors: Chris Charles

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Housing Commission was called to order at 5:00pm by Chairman Wayne Hileman.

Minutes of October 6 , 2008

Corrections: Page one- 3rd line up from bottom of page, changed Oct.21st to Nov.1st. Page two- line 6 under heading, inserted how after talking about ; line 9, deleted to after commission's.

Wayne moved to accept the minutes as amended; Jean seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Inclusion of Items Not on Agenda

Updates: Liddy's report from HOMEConnecticut Seminar on November7th in Hartford.

New Business: Preliminary Discussion on a new affordable housing application by Washington Partners LLC.

Both of these items were added to the Regular Meeting Agenda by unanimous consent.

Updates

A. Freedom Of Information Seminar

Commission secretary Patte Doran attended the recent FOI Training Session at Town Hall. An incredible amount of information was disseminated, and Patte found two items noteworthy:

1. While members of the public are allowed (& encouraged) to attend Regular Meetings of Town Commissions, they do not have the right to speak at these meetings. They may do so solely at the discretion of the chair, who may schedule public comment as an agenda item (Privilege of the Floor) or invite members of the public to participate on an ad hoc basis.
 2. A Town Commission may consider and act upon matters added to, but not previously listed on, an agenda in a Regular Meeting. In a Special Meeting, however, they cannot act on any added (unnoticed) agenda item
- . Patte passed out contact information for the State FOI Commission. Members thanked her for attending on their behalf.

B. Annual Volunteer Reception

Wayne reminded members of the Washington Rotary Club's Annual Volunteer Reception on Friday November 21st at Bryan Town Hall.

C. HOMEConnecticut Seminar - Hartford

Liddy attended this seminar as a representative of the Town of Washington. It was presented by Shipman & Goodwin LLC and Concord Square Planning & Development as a forum on creating Incentive Housing Zones. She thought the event was very well done, with a round table format involving towns both large and small (though Washington was by far the smallest town).

Each person had a few minutes to discuss what their town was doing and what their challenges were; Liddy listed the concerns over our proposed site (on the river, no water or sewer, unknown public support) and learned that many communities faced similar obstacles. Specifically, some towns have proposed converting old mill sites into IHZs and have already received grant approval; thus it is not disqualifying for an IHZ to be next to a river (or in a flood plain).

As for gaining public support and attaining the TA grant, moderator Tim Hollister made some observations:

1. To date 20 towns have applied for the TA grant and no one has been denied; 14 have been approved

and 1 already has their funding (Wallingford).

2. We should get our completed grant application filed sooner rather than later; the biennial state budget process is upcoming and those who do not have their application in place by the 1st quarter of 2009 may not be guaranteed funding.

3. When discussing this project with town commissions, the press and the public at large, the emphasis should be on mixed-use development and workforce housing. Though there is an affordable housing component to this plan, it is not the primary focus.

4. We should be prepared to debunk the “school myth” that this or any development proposal will have a detrimental impact on the town’s educational costs. We should be consistently reminding folks that enrollments are in decline, both at the local and state level.

Some interesting points were made by other town planners:

1. Stamford requires all new housing developments to include 10% affordable housing, or else they charge the developer a “fee in lieu of affordable housing” which goes into their city’s housing fund.

2. Hamden is going to comprehensively review/revise their zoning regulations to accommodate mixed-use development and incentive and workforce housing.

3. Several smaller towns are looking at partnering with neighboring communities to share planning & consulting costs (perhaps we could do the same?).

Shipman and Concord have extensive experience and have offered to help with the application process. Additionally, they will create a power point presentation from the seminar for our future reference.

Liddy brought back a copy of the seminar booklet, which has comprehensive information (including an approved completed application). She thought that the sponsors and participants were very knowledgeable and brought much to the table. The commission members thanked Liddy for attending this seminar.

Preliminary Discussion - Washington Partners LLC

Members examined an application that has been filed with the Inland Wetlands Commission for a 9-lot affordable housing subdivision called Pond View Estates. The site is a 30-acre parcel in New Preston between Route 202 and Flirtation Avenue.

The Commission examined a site map, and Wayne invited Chris Charles to the table to participate in the discussion. It was noted that the application appears to be for a “set-aside” development under the provisions of C.G.S. 8-30(g).

Wayne offered to extend an invitation to the principles of Pond View Estates to share the details of the proposal. Members noted that the applicants were not required to appear before the Housing Commission, but if they did so it would be construed as a good faith effort to move the proposal forward. Chris Charles thought this could expedite the application process – the developer would have some basic sense of whether the project would be approved before getting too far into the process.

The Commission did not concur on the timing, however, and agreed to hold off on an invitation until the application was further along.

Plan for Site Visits/Interviews - Postal Patron Mailing

The previous dates for site visits did not work out; the first was a rain-out and Wayne was called out of town on the second. The Commission agreed to try again for November 16th (weather permitting) and Wayne will try and coordinate with some of those on the list. Liddy added another name to site visit list – Wayne will give this person a call and inquire as to their interest.

Continued Examination of Incentive Housing Zone

A. Initial Drafts for TA Grant

Wayne has begun developing some of the drafts for the application (cover letter, overview) and will email these to Commission members for their review.

B. Discussion of Budget

The State OPM wants a line item budget as part of the TA grant application. The Commission is still unclear as to how detailed it needs to be, but agreed that certain categories need to be defined, even if

estimates are not available at this time.

Wayne asked for input from the Commission regarding this, specifically, “What basic line items do we need?” Suggestions included:

1. Engineering design/consulting – the Town is well into remediation of the site and has scheduled preliminary perc-hole testing, but we will still need septic design and examination of potential for Judea Water Co. to supply water.
2. Site planning/design - a professional planner who can offer a mixed-use model and give some creative alternatives.
3. Legal help - someone with experience/expertise with housing issues and working with the State.

Another question that came up was “What do we need to do to make this project feasible?”

Andy felt strongly that a mixed-use approach was the only way to succeed; perhaps a few businesses/storefronts as you enter with apartments/condos up above, then a few houses with small yards, maybe place a park along the river bank Sue agreed that public access along the river (park, path) was a must, and any plan without it would fail. Wayne felt that any overall plan needed to be integrated and ‘organic,’ as if this part of the Depot was always part of the Depot. Liddy added that at the seminar mixed-use applications were seen as more successful and desirable.

The Commission noted that commercial rents in the Depot business district were quite high and that adding a few more opportunities could help support small businesses. Members felt that proper site planning was key, so the bulk of the grant money should go for planning with engineering & legal fees taking the rest.

Adjournment

Wayne Hileman moved to adjourn the meeting. Jean seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:40pm.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be on Monday, December 8, 2008, in the Land Use Room at Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,
Patte Doran
Secretary
