

August 7, 2012

7:30 p.m. Land Use Meeting Room

Members Present: Ms. Roberts, Mr. Frank, Mr. Rimsky, Ms. Gager, Ms. Jahnke

Members Absent:

Alternates Present: Mr. Carey, Ms. Bishop-Wrabel

Alternates Absent: Mr. Osborne

Staff Present: Ms. Hill, Ms. White

Also Present: Mr. & Mrs. Bedini, Mr. Hileman, Mr. Charles

Ms. Roberts called the Meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

Seated: Roberts, Frank, Rimsky, Gager, Jahnke

Consideration of the Minutes

Regular Meeting of July 3, 2012:

The Commission considered the minutes from the Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission on July 3, 2012

Motion:

to accept the July 3, 2012 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Planning Commission as submitted, by Mr. Frank and seconded by Ms. Gager, passed by 5-0 vote.

Special Meeting of July 18, 2012:

The Commission considered the minutes from the Special Meeting of the Planning Commission on July 18, 2012.

Corrections:

1st paragraph, 2nd sentence under Preparation for Public Outreach Session should read: The Commissioners discussed each section and made adjustments to the presentation.

3rd paragraph remove the word 'in'

Last sentence should read: Ms. Gager adjourned the meeting...

Motion:

to accept the July 18, 2012 Special Meeting Minutes of the Planning Commission as amended, by Ms. Gager and seconded by Mr. Rimsky, passed by 5-0 vote.

Special Meeting of July 24, 2012:

The Commission considered the Planning Commission Special Meeting Minutes of July 24, 2012.

Motion:

to accept the July 24, 2012 Special Meeting Minutes of the Planning Commission as written, by Mr. Frank and seconded by Ms. Jahnke, passed by 5-0 vote.

Special Meeting of July 28, 2012:

The Commission considered the Planning Commission Special Meeting Minutes of July 28, 2012.

Corrections:

Page 1, 2nd paragraph, 1st sentence add: Mr. Carey: Use of the POCD in Town/Planning/Zoning/Conservation Commission decisions.

Ms. Hill read and email sent to her by Mr. Chute (dated Saturday August 4, 2012, on file in the Land use Office) stating that he “did not say the Planning Commission should project a mill rate increase.” But he did say “Planning and Finance should cooperate on developing some specific financial projections to accommodate actions recommended in the 10 year plan.”

Correction:

Page 5: 1st bullet point, 3rd sentence should read: “He also noted that good job the Board of Finance has done in keeping the taxes low, but thought the Planning Commission should coordinate with the Board of Finance in developing financial projections for the specific purpose of achieving some of the Plans goals.”

Motion:

to accept the July 28, 2012 Special Meeting Minutes of the Planning Commission as amended, by Ms. Gager and seconded by Ms. Jahnke, passed by 5-0 vote.

Subsequent Business

There was no subsequent business added to the agenda.

New Applications

There were no new applications to consider.

Other Business

Plan of Conservation and Development

Ms. Hill read an email from Mr. Looney, Planning Consultant from Milone & MacBroom, in which he suggested that the Planning Commission start thinking about how to engage the business communities in Washington and addressing the issue of economic development. In his email, Mr. Looney stated that Milone & MacBroom would be coming up with ideas and the Planning Commission would also need to come up with ideas about how they envision economic development in the Town via the Village Centers and these would be combined with the feedback from the business communities to produce an economic strategy for the future.

7:40 pm Ms. Bishop-Wrabel arrives.

The Commission discussed how they would engage the business communities and possible meeting dates to meet with the business owners of the Town. Ms. Roberts stated that she would contact the Business Association to discuss possible dates. The Planning Commission noted that these meetings would be for seeking input from the business owners and would not take the place of the previously discussed Regional Village meetings.

The Commissioners discussed how they see the role of the Planning Consultants during the process of revising the POCD. Mr. Frank stated that he felt there was a lot more opportunity for guidance from the consultants at the Town Meeting on July 28th. Ms. Gager stated that she feels that the meeting was a fact-finding forum and the consultants were there to observe and take notes. Mr. Rimsky stated that he felt that they lacked presence at the meeting. Ms. Hill stated that it seems that the one major criticism of the last plan was that the consultant came in with a preconceived framework and feels that the consultants are listening to the people and taking the information in. Mr. Rimsky stated that he felt there could have been more conversational interaction. Ms. Roberts stated that she felt that the people at the meeting felt very comfortable speaking up. Mr. Frank stated that he asked Mr. Looney at the preparatory meeting if they let people bring up whatever subject they please or would the consultants be guiding the meeting within a particular subject. Ms. Gager stated that she feels they were getting a feel for the audience and their level of interest and believes that future meetings would be more guided.

Ms. Roberts stated that she was surprised at the number of questions regarding affordable housing. Mr. Rimsky stated that he feels the public expressed key points of concern. Ms. Roberts stated that she thought Mr. Looney's comment regarding Washington's aging population was interesting.

Ms. Bishop-Wrabel stated that she felt the consultants stayed in the background and observed and feels that this is a nice contrast to the last plan process. She stated that she thought the consultants appeared to be listening to the free flowing comments. She stated that she thought it extraordinary to hear the huge percentage of comments addressing the concern of affordable housing in Washington for younger families.

Ms. Gager stated that she feels that this concern will also continue as the median age increases and the aging community would like to stay in Washington.

Ms. Roberts stated that it seems that most people in Town are aware of the decreasing number of children in Town and decreasing enrollment in our schools. She stated that there seems to be an interest in the need for adult communities in Town, which would involve Zoning. Mr. Rimsky stated that the Planning Commission is tasked with getting the Town and the various commissions, specifically Zoning, a guideline for how the Town wants to proceed with its use of land.

Ms. Bishop-Wrabel stated that at the Town meeting someone had remarked that the Town Garage property that is $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile out of the Depot village center could have been used more appropriately for housing for people that may not have cars. Mr. Carey gave a brief history on how the Town decided to purchase the current Town Garage property and why it was believed to be unsuitable for significant residential development.

Ms. Roberts noted that the Commission has discussed different ideas and realizes that there are various constraints with some of these concepts. She stated that somehow during this revision process she hopes that they are able to revise the POCD to encompass an understanding of these constraints. Mr. Rimsky stated that it is a matter of the Community coming to a consensus as to how it wants to proceed in the future and this revision should reflect that.

The Commission briefly discussed the number of farms that exist in Town and the possibility of the Town encouraging a certain amount of truck farming.

The Commission discussed what topics future meetings should focus on. Mr. Frank stated that he believed that the major topics to focus on are: Housing, Education, and Business/Economic Development and some Infrastructure. Mr. Rimsky stated he feels residents are more aware of the issues. He stated that people were happy that this meeting was held on a Saturday. Ms. Roberts stated that there was a suggestion that there be some kind of public forum for input from the residents. Ms. Gager stated that Mr. Looney suggested that the Town website provide an email address to which people could send in their comments. It was noted that Mr. Looney would be at the Town Hall on specific days when people could come and talk with him. Mr. Rimsky stated that these public meetings are important in a town like Washington and discussed how people meet others when they move to town.

Mr. Carey stated he noticed that the topic of Open Space was not mentioned at the Town meeting. The Commission briefly discussed Open Space. Ms. Gager stated that about 2% of the population was at the meeting and that there is still time to hear more opinions.

Mr. Frank stated that he feels that all the issues seem to point to housing to some extent and it should be a priority for the Planning Commission and the consultants to begin working on housing matters. The Commission discussed 'balanced or suitable housing. It was the consensus of the Planning Commission that they would confirm with the consultants that Housing would be a topic that they would like to concentrate on during the revision process of the POCD.

State of Connecticut POCD Locational Guide Map

Ms. Roberts stated that she and Ms. Hill attended the June meeting in Goshen regarding the update of the State of Connecticut POCD and she would like someone to volunteer to talk to Dan McGuinness regarding the POCD Locational Guide Map. The Town has been asked to send in comments to the State, which are due in October. Ms. Hill stated that some of the maps involve village centers and based upon how your town is designated on this map may determine its eligibility for discretionary State funding for grants, etc. She stated that many local village centers are not on the map and the State is in the process of updating them. Ms. Gager volunteered to discuss these concerns with Mr. McGuinness.

Chairman's Report on Meeting with Superintendent of Schools

Ms. Roberts stated that she and Mr. Bedini met with Patricia Consentino, the new Superintendent of Schools of Region 12. Ms. Roberts stated that she felt it was important to inform the Superintendent about the revision of the POCD and what the Planning Commission is doing. Ms. Roberts informed Ms. Consentino about the residents' concerns such as the declining student enrollment and Ms. Consentino stated that she understands the concerns and looks forward to addressing these issues and improving the efficiency of the school system. Mr. Bedini stated that she is actively working on improving communications with the public and has begun planning a television studio as part of the communications process. He stated that there is a meeting tomorrow on defining the costs of school buildings in the region, which would be the starting point of future planning.

Privilege of the Floor

Mr. Charles stated that the terminology regarding "affordable" housing can get confusing and the

term 'suitable housing' is a nice phrase but there are precise terms and there are legal terms. He stated 'workforce housing' has become a popular term but he feels the main point is diversity in housing in the community. Mr. Charles stated that some feel the business of Washington is Education and suggested the Town look at how the public schools and the private schools could work together. He stated that the Depot Study was a 'what if scenario.' Mr. Charles stated that at this point the Town has approximately 30% open space and some are saying that this is enough but the 30% was an arbitrary number. He stated people should consider that the build out under the Town's zoning would probably allow 4,600 building lots and there could be that full build out and the Town could still have 90% open space and preserve farmland and it is just about how the land is used. Mr. Charles stated that the Town has started the process of analyzing the Flood Plain. He stated that one of the problems in village centers is that septic soils don't always conform to the building lots so the Town needs to do an analysis of the soils in the Depot to see if there is a way to get the sort of diversity or intensity of housing in the Depot that has been discussed in the past. Mr. Charles stated that the last census reported that 685 people commute out of Washington everyday. Mr. Charles discussed Section 490 farmland, school population and the existing funded housing. He stated that the Town has put a lot of money toward open space and he feels more money should be put towards housing.

Mr. Hileman stated that he agrees that the issues being brought up for the revision of the POCD are all interrelated. But the thing that hangs over all the topics is demographics and as these issues are addressed the demographic reality of the Town now and in the future must be considered. He stated that the POCD needs to be based on what the Town has and should be realistic in its projections of where the Town could be in ten years.

Communications

Ms. Hill stated that the First Selectman is currently working on the lease for a cell tower at the Town Garage site and asked if the Planning Commission had any specific comments. Mr. Carey stated that the proposed location has been moved slightly from that previously proposed and it would apparently not affect nearby properties. There was a brief discussion regarding the how the tower company would be paying for the energy used by the tower.

Adjournment

Motion: to adjourn by Mr. Rimsky, seconded by Mr. Frank, passed by 5-0 vote.

Ms. Roberts adjourned the meeting at 9:20 pm.

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully submitted,
Shelley White, Land Use Clerk