

December 4, 2012

7:30 pm., Upper Level Mtg Room

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

Members Absent: Mr. Frank, Ms. Jahnke

Alternates Present: Mr. Carey

Alternates Absent: Mr. Osborne, Ms. Bishop Wrabel

Staff Present: Ms. Hill, Ms. White

Also Present: Mr. Fitzherbert, Atty. Fisher, First Selectman Lyon, Press

Ms. Roberts called the Meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

Seated: Roberts, Gager, Rimsky, Carey, Alt.

Consideration of the Minutes

The Planning Commission considered the minutes from the 11-13-12 meeting:

Motion:

to accept the November 13, 2012 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Planning Commission as submitted,

by Mr. Rimsky, seconded by Ms. Gager, passed by 4-0 vote

Subsequent Business

Mr. Carey submitted an article titled "Deval-ued Wind Power," by Kevin D. Williamson, for *National Review*, December 3, 2012 (on file in the Land Use Office).

New Applications

There were no new applications to consider.

OTHER BUSINESS

Request to Revise Approval of BEC Holdings, LLC. Two Lot Subdivision/Wykeham Road

Atty. Fisher was present to represent Mrs. Carusillo, property owner. The Commissioners and Atty. Fisher looked at the map titled Property Boundary Survey, prepared for BEC Holdings, dated October 2008 by T. Michael Alex, Lic. Land Surveyor. Atty. Fisher stated that the Planning Commission approved a two-lot subdivision for BEC Holdings in 2008 and there was a condition of approval that required a road maintenance agreement between the property owners and the Town for Clark Road. He said that at the time Clark Road was abandoned but still existed as a town road and in October of 2011 the Town voted to discontinue Clark Road from a point south of the Transfer Station to Wykeham Road and he is requesting that the approval be modified to delete the road maintenance agreement that the Town has with the property owner.

The Commissioners briefly discussed the property.

There were no further questions or comments.

Motion:

to accept the request to revise the subdivision approval of BEC Holdings, LLC Two Lot Subdivision/Wykeham Road to remove the requirement that BEC Holdings, LLC. and the Town have a maintenance agreement, subject to advice of Town Counsel, by Mr. Rimsky, seconded by Ms. Gager, passed by 4-0 vote.

Plan of Conservation and Development

Discussion of Draft Economic Development Report:

Ms. Roberts requested that the Commission go over the Draft Economic Development Report and make comments to forward to the Planning Consultants. She discussed the Town's slow transitioning to a service-based economy and the importance of tourism. She stated that some people in Town do not like the idea of being a destination but tourists are needed and it is helpful to the Town and it's business owners. Mr. Roberts feels that the Town needs a diverse mix of small business and the needs of the residents must be met on a regional basis. She stated that improved telecommunication is needed and is important to the Town's economic health. Ms. Roberts stated that problems the Town would be facing in the future are: 1. The aging population will lead to an inadequate number of people in the workforce. 2. Employment opportunities and quality of life are needed to aid young workers to come and stay in Town. This would require reasonably, priced housing. 3. There are a number of houses that are only occupied part time. 4. Small growth leads to a lack of support and leads to insignificant growth in the local economy. Ms. Roberts stated that the limits to economic growth are lack of land zoned for commercial and industry, lack of sewers and public water supply.

Ms. Roberts stated that the Consultants have talked about expansion of village zones and elimination of split lots in the commercial zones in the Draft Economic Development Report and she feels that this is important for the Zoning Commission to address. Ms. Hill stated that the Town should be aware of the fact that if all of the split lots were made commercial it would allow for development of a commercial strip. Mr. Rimsky asked if this could be addressed by making the zone a mixed-use zone rather than totally commercial. Ms. Hill responded that all of the Town's village centers are designated as mixed-use zones. Mr. Rimsky suggested looking at other towns that have done this type of zoning successfully and each of the villages of Washington has unique issues that would need to be addressed.

Ms. Roberts asked Mr. Fitzherbert, Chairman of Zoning, whether he agrees that it would be beneficial for the Planning Commission and the Zoning Commission to meet a couple times a year to discuss these sort of issues. Mr. Fitzherbert agreed.

Mr. Rimsky noted that the type of industry these days is not the same as industry that the Town used to worry about and we should be encouraging small business industry as well as agriculture industry. The Commission briefly talked about possible growth in the agricultural industry and the agricultural land in Town.

The Commission discussed the possibility of a part time economic staff position or a temporary

economic development commission to look into the possibilities for the Town. First Selectman Lyon stated that he thought this could be possible.

Mr. Lyon stated that the zoning in our village centers does allow for strip development and many towns usually set aside large parcels or areas for commercial development that would create a commercial district that would be more than 100 yards deep. He stated that one of the reasons he was in attendance was to discuss the recent conversations regarding the Town Garage property at 10 Blackville Road, which is located in a commercial zone and partially in a residential zone. Mr. Lyon stated that the Town is about to invest around \$800,000.00 in a new facility on the site to replace the structure that burnt down. He has been asked to consider this property for community center development before they go through with the new facility. He stated that he looked into this suggestion and found that the Town would need about an 8-10 acre site, relatively flat, which is not the case with the current site and is a problem but it is in a commercial zone. Mr. Lyon stated that 8-10 acre sites are not available in any of the commercial zones and if the Town Garage were to be moved it would have to be moved in a residential zone. He estimated the expense to be around a 3 million dollar investment for a new facility not including the cost of the land and it would be a minimum two-year project.

Ms. Gager feels that the current use as the Town Garage is a less intense use than a shopping center and the sight lines are not suitable for additional traffic. First Selectman Lyon stated that the argument that was brought to him is that in relation to the POCD, this is not the best use for this property for the development of the Town.

There was a brief discussion regarding the lack of available parcels in the commercial zones and how they could expand in the future.

Mr. Rimsky stated that because there isn't a strategic overview that is being driven by some particular agenda over the years all sorts of opportunities end up slipping away in terms of decision-making. He feels it needs to be a cohesive strategic plan.

Mr. Fitzherbert stated that he feels the POCD needs to be clear with the Town's objectives and he feels that the Demographic Report and Economic Development report that the Consultants have put together is a good start.

Ms. Roberts feels that it is important to educate the public regarding these issues in order to build consensus but she questions what would be the most effective way. Mr. Rimsky feels that a point person to represent the municipality has been mentioned and that it is a good idea.

Ms. Gager asked if there were any plans to update the Town website to promote the Town. First Selectman Lyons stated that that could be looked into. Mr. Rimsky stated that the business community has expressed that they would like the municipality to be more active in promoting things like "Christmas in the Depot" which brings the community together.

Mr. Fitzherbert stated that he supports the idea of an economic development person to promote the Town and bring business to the Town. Ms. Roberts stated that this Town has a strong volunteer spirit and needs to be matched with paid support.

There was a brief discussion regarding public and private partnerships and possible State budget cuts.

Mr. Fitzherbert stated that that the revised POCD should be a document that sets priorities for the Town. Ms. Roberts feels strongly that this revised POCD should be a working document and not put on the shelf.

Ms. Hill said she had reviewed the Economic Development draft. She agreed with Mr. Frank, who had suggested at the last meeting that pages 1-12 be included in an appendix. While she agreed with most of the broad concepts proposed, in general she thought they needed to be more specific and detailed. She thought the Commission should consider whether the elimination of "split lots" in the business districts might open the way for strip commercial development, which the Planning Commission historically has wanted to prevent. She also thought if the Commission decided to support both the increased role of Town government in the Town's economic development and the hiring of an economic development staff person, the responsibilities of each and the methods to achieve their goals must be explained in detail. Mr. Rimsky questioned how this could be done without lengthening the document, which he thought should be concise so that the public will read it. Ms. Hill responded that examples and specifics could be included as bullets.

Other POCD Discussion:

Mr. Carey stated that he is in favor of keeping the POCD short and concise and that it should not be "too hands on." He noted that attorneys have used it in the past to find loopholes and the Town cannot afford more litigation. He also expressed concern for the State and National economies and how these are going to affect the property owners of the Town of Washington. Mr. Carey believes that Washington is not a destination but a magnet because of its ambience

Public Comment

There were no further comments from the public.

Administrative Business

Approval of 2013 Calendar:

The Commission discussed regular meeting dates for 2013.

Motion:

to approve the 2013 annual calendar for the Planning Commission Meetings,
by Ms. Gager, seconded by Mr. Rimsky, passed by 4-0 vote.

Officers for 2013:

Ms. Roberts stated that next month the Planning Commissioners would vote on officers.

Adjournment

Motion:

to adjourn by Ms. Gager, seconded by Mr. Rimsky

Ms. Roberts adjourned the meeting at 9:28 p.m.

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley White, Land Use Clerk