

March 24, 2011

Plan Of Conservation and Development Subcommittee

1:00 p.m. Land Use Meeting Room

Present: Ms. Braverman, Ms. Jahnke, Mr. Hileman, Mr. Wadelton, Mr. Bedini, Mr. Templeton, Mr. Catlin, Ms. Payne

Staff Present: Shelley White

Also Present: Chris Charles

Ms. Braverman called the Meeting to order at 1:11 pm.

Consideration of the Minutes

The committee members considered the Minutes of the February 17, 2011 POCD Subcommittee Meeting.

Corrections:

2nd page: 3rd Paragraph, 4th sentence should read: Mr. Templeton stated that there is a likelihood that the Town will lose some state funding...

4th page: Under Public Comment, 1st sentence should read: Mr. Charles stated that the Planning Commission did consult an engineer in the past and the engineer suggested an evaluation should be done to determine sewage potential in the Depot...

Motion:

to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of February 17, 2011 POCD Subcommittee Meeting as amended,

by Mr. Hileman, seconded by Ms. Braverman, passed by 5-0 vote.

Regular Meeting:

Ms. Braverman read an email sent to her from Mr. Markert of the Conservation Commission who was unable to attend today's meeting. In the letter Mr. Markert stated that legislation requiring the plan is written vaguely and it does not recommend an implementation plan that includes all town government bodies that must establish and adhere to time bound milestones. In his letter, Mr. Markert stated that he feels that the Town's Commissions should have a level of commitment, which may not happen in one cycle and that he feels that if the Town could not move forward in that direction that it doesn't make a lot of sense to spend much time on new plans. He stated that he thinks it is worth the effort to initiate a process that involves all functions of town government working together and making commitments to a limited number of high priority projects that are consistent with the strategic view of how the town is likely to develop. He stated he had researched other towns that have been successful with some of there planning goals and he found that these towns have done some of the following things and suggests that the Town of Washington may want to consider: 1. Have a specific town employee work with all of the town government entities to follow up on the deadlines and deliverables and generally help with implementation. 2. Extensive and constant communication to all government functions and citizens about progress, delays and changes. 3. Reduce the long catalogues of things each department and commission wanted to do. It is essential to have only a few high priorities to which everyone is committed. He stated that he feels that the Town has existing material to work with and does not need to have a planner to produce a plan that is useful. Mr. Markert also suggested that Janet Hill, Land Use Administrator be involved.

Ms. Braverman stated that she feels that all the commissions seem to be on the same page and that some priorities have been established already and this could be the starting point for the revision of the POCD.

Mr. Wadeldon of the Inland Wetlands Commission stated that a group was formed to come up with a reasonable set of guidelines for development at the shoreline. He stated that a draft of these guidelines has been sent out to the other commissions and they are waiting to receive feedback.

Ms. Jahnke stated that she and Ms. Braverman thought that the Conservation Commissions side of the POCD was relatively complete and she asked for everyone else's opinion. Ms. Payne of the Conservation Commission stated that they have been reviewing the Natural Resource Inventory Report because it is part of the POCD. She stated the Conservation Commission is in the process of going through the Implementation Guide in the POCD, discussing what has been done, what still needs to be done and what, if anything, should be added. She stated that the C.C. has discussed and is interested in the idea of cluster development and that they realize this would require regulation changes.

Mr. Hileman stated that the idea of cluster development is a good idea but questions whether it would work in the Town of Washington.

Ms. Braverman stated that it is clear that one of the main issues is housing. She stated there aren't many options for families starting out. Mr. Hileman distributed an outline created by the Washington Housing Commission for a Study on the Creation of New Residential Zones for Washington and another sheet that contains the United States Census Bureau Population and Housing Data for Washington, CT. He stated that the data indicates that the Town of Washington lost over 300 people in the passed 20 years but gained 268 houses. He stated that 2/3 of the people that left town were children. He stated that the percentage of weekend homes is increasing and the Housing Commission estimates that it is approximately 1/4 to 1/5 of the houses in Washington. The committee members had a brief discussion regarding the population impact on town services. Mr. Hileman stated that the Housing Commission is still doing research and is not prepared at the moment to present a formal proposal to the Zoning Commission regarding the creation of a new residential zone.

Mr. Templeton stated that he feels there must be a way to plan for the community somewhere in the middle between hard economic times and booming economic times. Mr. Hileman stated that most of the foreclosures in town were million dollar homes. Mr. Templeton stated that these foreclosures could possibly become a burden to the community.

Mr. Bedini, from the Board of Education, stated that he attended a presentation on Monday where the Curriculum Director spoke about the crisis in Region 12. He stated that the population continues to decrease in the High School and soon there will be too few kids in the class to provide programs and when the school starts dropping these programs, parents start to pull their kids out of the school to put them somewhere else. He stated other schools have the teachers, space and kids so they offer more programs. There was a brief discussion regarding price of tuition at Shepaug and other schools. Mr. Bedini stated that the Curriculum Director suggested that an option would be to add grades 13, 14 and 15 operating somewhat like a small community college and it would provide A.P. courses for high school students. He stated that it would be beneficial to have data that goes back 10 years to see the trends in the student population. Mr. Hileman stated that the Housing Commission has researched the enrollment of schools in Washington and they found that from 1985 to approximately 2003 the enrollment was consistently up and down but in the last 7 years has steadily decreased. He stated that the number of students that are not enrolled in public school in the Town of Washington has remained consistent at about $\pm 20\%$. He stated that the Region's current private schooling percentage is 22%.

Mr. Bedini stated that another option is to combine grades 2 & 3 and 4 & 5 in some of the elementary

schools. Ms. Payne stated that she feels that that is not necessarily a bad thing. Mr. Bedini stated that people have mixed opinions and that some of the teachers feel that it will slow things down. There was a brief discussion about the populations of the three towns in Region 12. Mr. Bedini stated that it was recommended to have all grades in one building. He stated that one of the three towns could petition the Board of Education to put together a committee that would be made up of representatives from each town to discuss the future of the region, whether it is wanted, do all three towns want to be part of the region or maybe two towns are part of the region. He stated that this conversation needs to happen and it could happen without petitioning the B.O.E. but the people must be open-minded.

Mr. Templeton stated that he feels in order for each town to have a contingency built into the education system it would be necessary to have centralized schools then the school system would be better equipped to address the fluctuations in the student population. Mr. Catlin stated that he thought the reason behind the consolidation of the schools was financial and he feels that, considering conversations that he has had with other people in Town, they think the same. He stated that he feels something needs to be done to educate the public about the crisis in the education system and what their options are. Mr. Bedini stated that the B.O.S. and the Board of Finance of the three towns are working together and that he agreed that the parents and public need to be educated and get involved. Ms. Payne stated that there isn't a local newspaper to keep the Washington residents informed.

Ms. Payne stated that she feels that a great amount of work was done on the Depot Study and it provides valuable information that should be reviewed and that she feels that Mr. Talbot has done some visionary thinking for the Town on what could happen in the Depot. Ms. Payne stated that she feels that the coordination of all the commissions, and all of them working together is important and that the economic development is an important piece of the Town's planning.

There was a brief discussion about the Town website.

Ms. Braverman stated that the Housing Commission did not exist when the current POCD was created. Mr. Hileman stated that the Housing Commission is basically an advisory group and he feels it operates as a permanent subcommittee of the Planning Commission. He stated that they are not the Housing Trust and do not want to duplicate their efforts and that the Housing Commission's job is to study the information and make recommendations.

Ms. Braverman stated that it is the intention of the Planning Commission to consider the Depot Study.

Ms. Braverman stated that Education was not included in the current POCD and the Planning Commission feels that it should be addressed in the revised POCD.

Mr. Hileman stated that he attended the last Planning Commission Meeting where they discussed focusing on economic development. He stated the Housing Commission feels that more small houses around the Depot would be good for the businesses in Town. He stated that they have noticed a trend of a decrease of full time stores and an increase in part-time stores that seem to cater to the weekend/part-time residents.

Public Comment

Mr. Charles talked about the benefits of the Conservation Easement in an Open Space Subdivision.

There will be a follow up meeting for the POCD Subcommittee on Thursday, May 12, 2011 at 1:00pm at Bryan Memorial Town Hall in the Land Use Meeting Room.

Adjournment

Motion:

to adjourn at 2:32 pm by Ms. Braverman.

Ms. Braverman adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley White, Land Use Clerk