

June 7, 2011

7:30 p.m. Land Use Meeting Room

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

Members Absent:

Alternates Present: Mr. Carey, Ms. Braverman, Mr. Osborne

Alternates Absent:

Staff Present: Shelley White, Janet Hill

Also Present: Chris Charles, Steve Wadelton

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

Seated: Roberts, Frank, Rimsky, Jahnke, Carey, Alt. (for Gager)

REGULAR MEETING

Consideration of the Minutes

The minutes of May 3, 2011 were considered.

Motion:

to accept the May 3, 2011 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Planning Commission as submitted, by Mr. Frank, seconded by Mr. Carey, passed by 5-0 vote.

New Applications

There were no new applications.

Other Business

Referral from Zoning/Revision of Zoning Regulations/New Section 17.8 and renumber following sections/Enlargement or Extension of a Non conforming Use:

Mr. Frank gave a brief history of this referral. He stated that the Planning Commission did not approve the first referral sent to them from the Zoning Commission. He read the most recent proposed language submitted by the Zoning Commission and stated that he felt that, in his opinion, it was a good solution to the problem. Ms. Jahnke asked how many non conforming uses that are over 50 years old exist in Town. Ms. Hill stated that this was not known. There was a brief discussion regarding the conforming uses and non conforming setbacks in the Depot. There were no further questions or comments

Motion:

Resolved, that the Washington Planning Commission approves the proposed new section 17.8 of the Washington Zoning Regulations authorizing the grant of a Special Permit for enlargement or extension of a nonconforming use, which has existed continuously for no less than 50 years under certain circumstances. The Commission finds that this regulation is consistent with the Plan of Conservation and Development because, although it departs from the general policy restricting nonconforming uses, it is limited in its scope and is subject to procedures and standards for the granting of Special Permits contained in Section 13 of the Regulations. This resolution constitutes the report required by Section 8-3a of the Connecticut General Statutes, by Mr. Frank, seconded by Mr. Carey, passed by 5-0 vote.

7:45 - Sarah Gager arrives and is seated.

Plan of Conservation and Development:

Ms. Roberts stated that she reviewed the Planning Commission Regular Meeting Minutes of May 3, 2011 and would like to discuss some of the recommendations made by Mr. Wood and that she would like the Commission to narrow down the key issues that they feel need to be addressed in the revised POCD. She asked that the Commissioners have their ideas ready for discussion at the Planning Commission's Regular Meeting on July 5, 2011.

Mr. Rimsky stated that he read an article about demographics in the northwest towns of Connecticut and apparently the whole region is experiencing the same issues as the Town of Washington. He suggested that the Planning Commission reach out to the neighboring towns and share resources.

Ms. Roberts stated that she feels the Planning Commission's role is to make suggestions and not step on the toes of other town entities. Mr. Rimsky stated that he feels the Planning Commission should be able to voice the concerns of the town and address them.

Ms. Roberts stated that the 2003 POCD did not focus enough on the business community in Town.

Mr. Carey stated that the POCD should be revised with the future of the Town in mind. He stated that he has seen a map from Steep Rock that indicates protected areas of the Town and the Town has come close to its 30% goal. He stated that a member from the Steep Rock Association offered to come to a Planning Commission meeting to explain the map. He stated that the revised POCD should consider the previous goal of 30% protected areas when revising the POCD.

Ms. Baverman stated that the map would be helpful and that new mapping is a great expense to the Town.

There was a brief discussion regarding the relationship between the goal of 30% protected area and affordable housing.

Ms. Braverman and Ms. Jahnke stated that the Housing Commission and the Board of Education have been very vocal at the subcommittee meetings. The Conservation Commission made the suggestion to concentrate on a few key issues for the revision. Ms. Gager suggested that the representatives from each commission report on where their commission was at the beginning of the 2003 POCD, what has been accomplished, what still needs to be accomplished and what is no longer needed in the POCD. She also suggested that they bring a list of a couple of key issues that they feel should be addressed in the revision of the POCD. Ms. Roberts stated that this would help in starting a dialogue with the community.

Mr. Rimsky volunteered to create a timeline of goals for the Planning Commission to work towards to meet the deadline of the revised POCD. He stated that this would help specify what needs to be done by what date. Mr. Carey stated that the goals would need to be reprioritized and he feels the main concern of the Town is economics. Mr. Carey volunteered to look at the current POCD goals to see what has been done, what still needs to be done and what is irrelevant.

Discussion of Connecticut Statute 8-24 and Update POCD requested by Mr. Charles:

Mr. Charles was present to discuss the proposed pedestrian bridge at Hidden Valley. He stated that Selectman Lyon was able to get the DOT to commit to installing a pedestrian bridge along the existing bridge on route 47 that would be available to pedestrians, cyclists and horses. Mr. Charles stated that the Steep Rock Association submitted their own proposed plans for a pedestrian bridge because they felt that

the proposed bridge from the DOT was visually unappealing but he does not feel that they have addressed pedestrian safety. He stated that Steep Rock did not reach out to the community or share their plans until they came to the Board of Selectmen on March 31st. He stated that the language of Statute 8-24, addresses municipal improvement and 'abandoning a public way' and he feels that the contracted DOT bridge is a public way. Mr. Charles stated that the Town would receive funds into an account to pay for the Steep Rock proposed bridge and those funds, he feels, are municipal funds and the Town is making an improvement, which is going to benefit the Town and he sees it as a municipal improvement. He read a letter that Atty. Miles sent to the Selectmen, that states that the land owned by Steep Rock is private property and they could control or prohibit public access to their properties without the consent of the Town and that Statute 8-24 does not apply to this project. Mr. Charles asked if the Town really wants to gift the funds to an entity that could prevent the citizens' access.

Mr. Frank stated that the Planning Commission must deal with the state statute that addresses municipal improvement and he feels this bridge is a state facility.

Mr. Charles stated that he feels that his argument is based on the spirit of the law.

Mr. Carey stated that others have questioned as to whether a STEAP Grant should be spent on a private entity construction project because, theoretically, the purpose of this money is to benefit the maximum amount of taxpayers within a political boundary.

Mr. Rimsky stated that he agrees with Mr. Frank that this is not a Planning Commission issue. He stated that he feels that Steep Rock does control a large portion of property in the community and they do not always consider the concerns of the community and he feels they should.

Ms. Roberts stated that the Planning Commission has a role in the Town but it is not to run the Town.

Mr. Frank stated that the ultimate town's people input was the vote on the STEAP Grant.

Communications

5/4/11 letter/Report from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies:

Ms. White stated that the report is online at www.yale.edu/gisf.

Public Comment

There were no further questions or comments from the public.

Administrative Business

Mr. Carey stated that there was nothing to report on the proposed cell tower at the Town Garage site or the mapping of the river.

Adjournment

Motion: to adjourn at 8:50 pm by Mr. Rimsky, seconded by Ms. Gager

Ms. Roberts adjourned the meeting.

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully submitted,
Shelley White, Land Use Clerk