

January 8, 2013

7:30 pm., Upper Level Mtg Room

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

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

Alternates Absent: Mr. Carey

Staff Present: Ms. Hill, Ms. White

Also Present: Mr. Bedini, Mr. Charles, Mr. Harrall, Mr. Looney

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

Seated: Roberts, Gager, Rimsky, Frank, Jahnke

Consideration of the Minutes

The Planning Commission considered the minutes from the 12-4-12 meeting:

Motion:

to accept the December 4, 2012 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Planning Commission as submitted,

by Ms. Gager, seconded by Mr. Rimsky, passed by 5-0 vote

New Applications

There were no new applications to consider.

OTHER BUSINESS

Plan of Conservation and Development

Discussion of Village Centers Draft Report:

Ms. Roberts requested that the Commission comment on the Town of Washington Plan of Conservation and Development Update, Village Centers Draft Report prepared by Milone & MacBroom. She stated that she found the Opportunities listed on page 5 interesting and noted that there would be challenges because of the floodplain. Mr. Looney stated that a more detailed site analysis would need to be done for these sites and any structure proposed would need to be raised 2 ft. Mr. Rimsky noted that the shopping plaza on Green Hill is raised because it was built in the floodplain. Ms. Bishop-Wrabel agreed that the revised POCD should use specific language and be constructive when addressing issues such as the floodplain.

Mr. Rimsky suggested that the revised POCD address the concerns and provide achievable suggestions for each village center in a concise and directed manner and refer to the existing conditions.

There was a brief discussion regarding the Former Gas Station Site, the revisions made to the

Zoning Regulations to allow commercial development of sites such as this in the Depot and the limitations of this particular site due to its size. Ms. Hill stated that she would like to see a reference in the revised document recommending parking behind a commercial building whenever possible.

Ms. Roberts stated that the current Town Garage Site has been discussed at many meetings lately and the Selectmen have agreed to put off any building until March. She stated that the Town has been asked to consider whether this parcel should be developed differently in a way that would positively contribute to the vitality of the Depot rather than being used as the municipal garage and storage facility. She feels that whatever is decided needs to be well thought out because the impact would be substantial.

Mr. Osborne feels that the current Town Garage Site is adequate and that there is a little more site work to be done for materials storage. He spoke with First Selectman Lyon and from what he understands the proposed garage would have all the buildings in one area, increase floor space and provide an area for mechanic work. Mr. Osborne stated that the proposed garage would be built on the area previously approved for materials storage and the cement pad from the burned down building would be used for the materials storage, as it is not suitable for building.

Ms. Roberts asked if Mr. Osborne feels that there is enough flat area on the parcel to meet the needs of the Town Garage as well as its future needs.

Mr. Osborne responded that he does feel that it meets the Town's needs and he is not aware of any plans to move the Washington Ambulance to the site. He stated that the ambulance has one bay at the firehouse and room for another bay if needed.

There was a brief discussion regarding the Fire Department property on BeeBrook Road and possible uses of the Town Garage site on Blackville Road.

Mr. Frank feels that it would be nice to take the time to do some more studies on the Town Garage property but there is an enterprise to be run. Mr. Rimsky agreed with Mr. Frank and feels that the revised POCD should focus on the main areas of concentration and present cogent objectives.

There was a brief discussion about the cost of replacing the burned down garage.

Mr. Charles feels that the Town Garage should have been planned more thoroughly and the future growth of the Town should have been considered.

The Commission briefly discussed the process of how the Town Garage site was chosen.

Mr. Looney described CGS Section 8-2j and designating the B-2 zone as a Village District. He stated that this would give the Town a considerable amount of design control and would protect against strip mall type development.

The Commissioners and the Consultants looked at and discussed the map titled Proposed Parcel Based Zoning, by Milone & MacBroom, dated January 2013 (included in DRAFT Village Centers Report). Ms. Hill stated that she feels the easiest way to address the split-lot issue would be to put these lots into the less restrictive zone but she questions whether there should be a lot-by-lot analysis. Mr. Looney stated that the zone boundaries could not be changed without changing the zoning regulations.

The Commissioners and the Consultants discussed existing residential areas near the villages and what would be considered a mixed-use zone. Ms. Bishop-Wrabel stated that she feels that the housing near the village centers should be protected and enhanced.

Mr. Frank feels that it is important to have the meetings with the villages and public comments considered before the Consultant's Village Centers report is put on line. Mr. Looney stated that he would like to set up the meetings with the villages and the office hours when he or Mr. Harrall would be in the Town Hall. He said that the drafts should be put on line as well for public review and be able to provide suggestions and ask questions.

Mr. Rimsky stated that it is important that the Planning Commission is specific when going to the Zoning Commission to make recommendations for revisions to the regulations that would allow for more contiguous village centers.

There was a discussion regarding whether one village needs to be in one zone. Mr. Harrall stated that the Village District designation is primarily for design purposes and there could be more than one zone in a village. The Commissioners discussed the application of the village district approach in the Town of Washington. Mr. Harrall stated the specificity of a village district is up to the town and the impact of a particular use should be considered.

Ms. Roberts feels that the pedestrian circulation needs to be improved with a better system of crosswalks. The Commissioners and Consultants discussed the difficulty of crossing Route 47 to The Green.

There was a discussion regarding adjustments to the map titled Existing Land Use Washington Green, by Milone & MacBroom, dated August 2012 (included in the DRAFT Village Centers Report).

The Commissioners and Consultants discussed the possibility of meeting with the educational institutions in Town.

The Commissioners and Consultants discussed the institutions within the Washington Green village center.

The Commissioners and Consultants discussed the villages of Marbledale and New Preston. Mr. Rimsky stated that he feels that deepening the village centers would be valuable. Ms. Roberts stated that there has been resistance to that concept in the past but she is not sure how people feel about it these days.

Mr. Charles stated that the original plan for the 31-acre New Preston Open Space property was to purchase the property with Town funds and then it would be reviewed through a detailed planning process. He felt that there was an opportunity to create some small building lots, open space and passive recreation at this site. He feels that there is more value to this property than just open space and should be looked at. Mr. Charles also noted that the Housing Trust bought the property next to the Fire Department on Route 202. Since there is a water company nearby at Quarry Ridge and the Town is going to be rebuilding the road, he feels the Housing Commission could put its money into putting a water main there.

The Commissioners and the Consultants discussed adjustments to the maps titled Existing Land

Use Marbledale and Existing Land Use New Preston, by Milone & MacBroom dated August 2012 (included in the DRAFT Village Centers Report).

The Commissioners discussed whether Woodville should be restored to its former boundaries. They briefly talked about how they would need to work with the Zoning Commission to define a possible mixed-use zone.

Discussion of Sustainability Draft Report:

Mr. Looney stated that the Conservation Commission would be reviewing this report and providing feedback and suggested that the Planning Commission take more time to review the draft.

Mr. Harrall stated that he had met with some of the businesses in Town and confirmed that most of the employees that work for these businesses cannot afford to live in Town. He stated that the businesses have only limited dealings with the Internet and e-commerce, which are of increasing importance in today's economy. He spoke about the larger impact of Economic Development, Sustainability, Village Centers and Housing.

Ms. Bishop-Wrabel stated that improved cell phone service is necessary for people who run businesses out of their homes. She also mentioned that someone has asked her to mention the need of a dog park in Town.

Public Comment

Mr. Charles stated that these documents should be online and available for the public. He stated that the subject of Energy should be addressed.

Administrative Business

Election of Officers for 2013

Motion:

that the current slate of officers (Adelaide Roberts, Chairman; Sarah Gager, Vice-Chairman) be renominated,

by Mr. Frank, seconded by Mr. Rimsky, passed by 5-0 vote.

Adjournment

Motion: to adjourn by Mr. Frank, seconded by Ms. Roberts

Ms. Roberts adjourned the meeting at 10:25 p.m.

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley White, Land Use Clerk