

April 3, 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. Braverman

Alternates Absent: Mr. Osborne

Staff Present: Ms. White, Ms. Hill

Also Present: Peter Talbot, Chris Charles

Ms. Roberts called the Meeting to order at 7:36 p.m.

Seated: Roberts, Frank, Rimsky, Jahnke, Carey, Alt.

Consideration of the Minutes

Regular Meeting of March 6, 2012

The Commission considered the minutes from the Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission on March 6, 2012.

Motion

to accept the March 6, 2012 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Planning Commission as submitted, by Ms. Jahnke, seconded by Mr. Rimsky, passed by 5-0 vote.

New Applications

There were no new applications to consider.

Other Business

Available Grants:

Ms. Hill stated that there have been no updates regarding the grant from the NWCOG.

Revision of Subdivision Regulations:

Ms. Roberts asked that they revisit this subject at a later date.

Plan of Conservation and Development

Ms. Roberts stated that she read the submitted proposals and that she is concerned that the Planning Commission is going to run out of time due to the complexity and differences that need to be considered in choosing a candidate for the consultant position. Ms. Roberts stated that all but one of the candidates has something to add or something that they specialize in.

Mr. Rimsky stated that he read through the proposals and had a list of criteria that he was looking for with each candidate. He stated that he was looking at: 1. How the candidate would handle public participation and what would be their presentation for such participation, 2. How the

candidate addressed the economic component, 3. How the candidate broke their pricing down or if they broke the pricing down. Mr. Rimsky stated that he observed that most of the candidates suggested "Charette-type" meetings and another suggested teleconferencing. He stated that he feels that multiple public meetings would be necessary. Mr. Rimsky stated that most of the candidates did not really address the economic component. Ms. Hill stated that she feels that the candidate might want to discuss the economic component with the Planning Commission before they recommend specifics. Mr. Rimsky stated that he liked the approach of one of the candidates that suggested meeting with the business association.

The Commission briefly discussed the budget and what funds would and would not carry over to the next fiscal year.

Mr. Rimsky stated that he feels it would be a benefit to have one of the candidates that have worked with the Town of Washington before. He stated that some the candidates mentioned use the Internet for public meetings and he stated that he was not sure about this method and feels that there needs to be a personal component. Mr. Frank stated that the Internet is beneficial for the distribution of information.

Ms. Jahnke stated that she looked for candidates that had experience working with a POCD and preferably with a small town. She stated that she favored people that have worked with the Town of Washington before and that she feels that the Planning Commission must provide adequate direction during this revision process. Ms. Roberts stated that some of the candidates referenced steering committees and she stated that her sense is that the Planning Commission itself would stay in charge and they would have to figure out how steering committees would work.

Ms. Gager arrives.

Mr. Frank stated that he considered whether the candidate was a one-person operation or a more broadly staffed operation. He stated that he was not sure if one type of operation was necessarily better than the other. Mr. Frank stated that he liked the presentations that included some of the more specific issues and that the candidate should be willing to come to multiple meeting with the Planning Commission as well as the public.

The Commission discussed how a productive meeting might be run. Ms. Roberts stated that there might be fewer meetings that are more productive. Mr. Rimsky stated that one meeting would not be enough to get input from the community.

Ms. Hill asked the Commission what they thought of the use of surveys. Mr. Rimsky stated that the majority of the population would not respond to a survey and that he would rather have meeting in each village on a day that could allow maximum attendance. He stated that the group that attends these meetings could be surveyed and that sending out a blanket survey would be marginally successful.

Ms. Gager stated that she sees value to have a candidate that is familiar with the Town and that working with one person consistently would be beneficial. She suggested coming up with a short list of 4 candidates so that they could be brought in and asked specific questions.

Mr. Carey stated that all of the proposals use different methodology and that he feels that the most expensive proposal should be thrown out if one looks at this process from the budgetary point of

view. He stated that he feels the proposals all state that they could address the statutory requirements in the revised POCD and that he thinks somewhere in the middle of a “fresh approach” and an update to the POCD is “the most honest” proposal to present to the Town. Mr. Carey stated that he likes Mr. Rimsky’s idea of village meetings but he wonders how productive they would be if only a handful of people attend and he suggested informing the public through the media. He stated that he feels the list of candidates should be cut down to 3 or 4 people, have them come in and clarify what is necessary to meet the State Statute and what the Planning Commission has decided needs to be addressed. He stated that he broke the criteria down to objectivity, methodology, availability, ability to meet the deadlines and their knowledge of the Town of Washington.

Mr. Frank stated that he is not sure that at this point the candidates could be cut down to 4. Ms. Roberts stated that some of the proposals that came in lower did not provide everything that the Planning Commission is looking for and when those items were added to the proposal the cost is comparable to the other proposals. She stated that the Town could get grants to help pay but she feels this would encumber the process. Ms. Hill suggested that the Commission consider the cost of each proposal, that the less expensive proposal may not have all of what the Commission wants and when the cost of developing specific recommendations and regulations that could be adopted are added to the proposal it could be more expensive than other proposals. She stated that while experience working with the Town of Washington could be beneficial, some of the new companies have more experience with economic development and village centers. Ms. Roberts stated that there is some appeal to a fresh approach. Ms. Gager stated that the candidate should be someone who is in touch with what the residents of Washington would accept.

Mr. Carey suggested coming up with a budget for the revision, informing the candidates of the budget and let them tell the Town what they would get for that dollar amount. There was a brief discussion about the budget. Ms. Roberts stated that she was not sure that this was a good idea because she thinks the Planning Commission should focus on what was a good proposal and that she would fight for the money if needed. Mr. Carey stated that the consultant would be able to use the Flood Plain Study and other useful information on the Depot that was not available when the POCD was written in 2003.

Mr. Frank stated that the Commission has not discussed what type of document this should be and he feels that this would factor into the cost. Ms. Hill stated that the Commission did request additional chapters to the POCD. Ms. Roberts stated that one candidate did provide a list of deliverables with their proposal and she stated that she feels the Commission should consider what is necessary. Mr. Rimsky stated that the existing POCD should be edited and updated as well as incorporated in the revision. Ms. Gager stated that the consultant would be able to provide some direction to the Commission as to what revisions the Commission could do on their own. Ms. Frank stated that he does not feel that a document with an addendum would be efficient because it would be confusing with all of the statistical changes. Ms. Gager stated that the Commission stated that they would like the document in electronic format so that it may be referred to and updated and not become stagnant over the next 10 years.

The Planning Commission discussed the Implementation Section of the POCD. Ms. Roberts stated that other Town commissions must continue to meet with the Planning Commission a couple of times a year to continue implementing the POCD. Mr. Frank stated that meeting with the other commissions during this revision process would provide invaluable feedback. It was

consensus of the Planning Commission that meetings with the other commissions during the revision process would be necessary for them to take ownership of their role in the POCD.

Mr. Carey stated that the Conservation Commission has almost met its 30% goal for Open Space. The Commission discussed how the acquisition of Open Space would not be such a high priority in the revised POCD but it should address the importance of maintenance and use of these acquired parcels. Mr. Carey stated that 70% of our tax dollars go to the regional school system that is in crisis and feels that it should be addressed in the POCD.

The Commission discussed how they would ask the prospective consultants how they would implement individual meetings for each village.

Ms. Roberts stated that one of the candidates worked on the Woodbury POCD and she is interested to see it. Mr. Frank stated that there is something on the Town of Woodbury's website and he would look in to it and report back to the Commission.

The Commission discussed the Special Meeting for the Planning Commission on April 10, 2012 at 7:30 pm in the Land Use Meeting Room at Bryan Memorial Hall. At this Special Meeting the Commission will continue the process of selecting which candidates to interview and organizing the interviews. The Commissioners agreed that in preparation for the Special Meeting they would each come up with 5 questions to ask the candidates and at then Commission would compile a list of 7 to 10 questions. Ms. Hill stated that she thought the questions should focus on Housing Diversity, Village Centers, and Economic Development, which is what the Commission asked to be addressed in the candidates' proposals.

Ms. Jahnke asked if the school system would be addressed in the POCD. Ms. Hill stated that the Board of Education hired someone to do a strategic, 3-pronged plan and they would be having meetings and would like a representative from the Planning Commission to attend these meetings. She stated that she feels that creating housing diversity and improving the economic situation in Town would allow more affordable places for young families to live and put more children in the schools. The Commissioners agreed that they should voice their concern about the school system.

Mr. Frank stated that he attended a regional forum about comparing municipal POCDs with the draft of the State POCD and they discussed the process that the State was going through. Their draft of a plan contained several central statements of policy and he doesn't think that anything in the Town of Washington's POCD is inconsistent with the State Plan. A Map of Priority Funding Areas of the State of Connecticut is an important part of the State POCD.

Communications

There were no communications to discuss.

Privilege of the Floor

Mr. Talbot expressed concern for the Town's plans to install drainage in Bryan Memorial Plaza when the septic capacity has not yet been determined. He stated that he feels the capacity to expand business and improve economic growth would be hindered in the Depot if septic

capabilities were not improved. Ms. Gager stated that she would be concerned if businesses were using an area that the Town may need for future use and if private businesses are using the Town septic it would become a liability to the Town should the system fail. Mr. Charles stated that we do not know what the septic capacity is in the Depot and one of the Town's goals was to figure this out before the next POCD. Mr. Talbot stated that it is his opinion that the Town should know the septic capability in the Plaza for the Town's sake and that it would make sense to do this before the drainage is installed. There was a brief discussion regarding parking in the Depot. Mr. Talbot stated that there is a lot that could be looked at and proactively put out there so that when these issues come up before a grant is made available to the Town for any reason, that it is focused at the right place.

Mr. Talbot stated that Community Day is on June 2, 2012 and they are hoping to have 16 Titus Road (Old Town Garage Site) cleaned up and there could be some kind of celebration there. Ms. Roberts stated that she would talk to the First Selectman to possibly plan for a walking tour of the Depot and to reintroduce people to the 16 Titus Road property.

Mr. Charles stated that he feels the Planning Commission should rewrite the RFP to be more specific and resend it to the candidates so that the Commissioners could compare "apples to apples." He stated that it is his opinion that the POCD should be viewed as goals that have to be reached not suggested to be done. Mr. Frank stated that the Commission had discussed making more specific recommendations for action in a number of subject areas, which would then be followed up in the implementation process.

Adjournment

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

Ms. Roberts adjourned the meeting at 9:17 pm.

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully submitted,
Shelley White, Land Use Clerk