

# February 19, 2013

## Special Meeting

7:30 p.m., Upper Level Meeting Room

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mr. Frank, Ms. Gager, Mrs. Jahnke, Mr. Rimsky, Mrs. Roberts

**ALTERNATE PRESENT:** Mr. Carey

**ALTERNATES ABSENT:** Ms. Bishop-Wrabel, Mr. Osborne

**STAFF PRESENT:** Mrs. Hill

**ALSO PRESENT:** Mr. Bedini, Mr. Hileman

Mrs. Roberts called the Meeting to order at 7:45 p.m. and seated members Frank, Gager, Jahnke, Rimsky, and Roberts.

She noted the purpose of the Special Meeting was to discuss the following draft documents for the update of the Plan of Conservation and Development; "Demographics and Housing," "Economic Development," and "Village Centers."

Mrs. Roberts recommended the Commission write a preamble to the updated Plan to explain it focused on four issues that were either new or had not been adequately addressed in previous Plans; Housing, Economic Development, Village Centers, and Sustainability.

### Demographics and Housing:

Points raised included the following:

1. Mr. Frank asked whether the census population figures include weekenders. Mr. Hileman said they do not; only full timers with their primary residence in Washington were included. Mr. Frank said that fact should be mentioned in the text.
2. Mrs. Jahnke noted the 2000 census data for Washington was incorrect and so advised that the 1990 figures should be included.
3. It was generally thought there were too many charts and graphs depicting the same thing and so some should either be combined or eliminated.
4. It was the consensus that it was important to place the background information and analysis at the end of the chapter or in an appendix so that the focus of this section is on the goals and objectives and the recommendations.
5. Everyone agreed that specifics and more details are needed in the recommendations.
6. It was the consensus that this draft (and all the others) need a lot of additional work because they do not meet the Commission's expectations or requirements to be considered a final draft. Ms. Gager also said the sections need to have a consistent format. She asked, for example, why the SWOT analysis had been done for only one chapter.

7. Mr. Frank asked how the 2003 Plan would be integrated with the 2013 update. Ms. Gager noted that many of the recommendations were already in the 2003 Plan and so recommended that the Commission look into their current status and proceed from there.

8. Mr. Rimsky asked how the Zoning Commission and Zoning Regulations would be integrated into the update process. He asked for more of a focus on this issue.

9. Ms. Gager offered to reorganize the Demographics and Housing draft before the next meeting. When completed, it will be sent to the commissioners for review and eventually posted on the Town website.

### Economic Development:

The discussion included the following issues:

1. Mr. Frank asked for an explanation of the statistics. For example, he did not understand how the number of workers commuting into and from Washington could both be 714.

2. Again, it was the consensus that the general information and the tables and charts should be moved to the end of the section or placed in an appendix so the focus would be on the goals and objectives and recommendations. Mrs. Roberts thought the use of footnotes would be another option.

3. Mr. Rimsky thought the relevant information for Washington, as opposed to Litchfield County, should be used. Also on page 5, for example, he did not think references to the national economy were relevant and so thought there was no reason to include them.

4. Re: page 6, Mr. Rimsky asked for specific recommendations on how the Town's growth potential could be enhanced. Ms. Gager agreed, saying that for each goal listed the consultants need to tell the Commission how to make it happen.

5. The relevance of the Economic Comparison "bubble" chart was questioned.

6. Mr. Hileman noted that the public school jobs were included under government and everyone thought this should be clarified in the text.

7. Regarding page 11, Mr. Rimsky thought some of the statements were contradictory and suggested that the bullets be condensed and combined and that examples of businesses for each category be given.

8. Specific goals and objectives listed by the commissioners were:

- a) keep existing businesses and continue to support schools, arts, and culture,
- b) expand clean industry,
- c) encourage development along the Rt. 202 corridor – in depth development, not sprawl,
- d) enhance mixed use in the village centers,
- e) update, expand use of the Town website.

9. Ms. Gager noted it was important to state who has ownership of each recommendation and who contributes to the process because when this connection is shown there is accountability for implementation. Mr. Frank said that implementation charts were needed.

10. The Commission supports the idea of a new position for an economic development professional to work for the Town and coordinate with the Business Association and that this would be an initiative rather than a goal.
11. It was noted the Commission had received a suggestion that a future study be conducted about business development on Rt. 202, but the commissioners did not decide whether to recommend that this be undertaken.
12. It was thought the Zoning Commission should reevaluate its Regulations on the basis of economic potential. Mr. Rimsky also asked the consultants for working models for specific areas of Town and specific plans for village district zones.
13. Mrs. Jahnke voiced her concern that an across the board revision of the Zoning Regulations to shift all lots currently divided by a business district/residential district boundary line into the business districts might not be appropriate. She cited Cook Street properties as an example. Mr. Carey agreed that rezoning the NE quadrant of Cook Street would not accomplish anything. Mr. Rimsky thought Church Street properties in New Preston also needed to be reviewed and that the consultants should recommend a more workable, imaginative approach.
14. Mr. Frank noted the consultants had suggested tax deferments for new businesses. He asked for examples of other towns that have done this and whether it was a feasible idea.
15. Ms. Gager urged that the Town website be updated to provide links for business opportunities, economic development, the arts, and cultural events. Mr. Rimsky said the website could be used to foster Town spirit and to coordinate the different Town segments; schools, churches, government, etc.
16. Mr. Rimsky will reorganize this section prior to the next meeting.

#### Village Centers:

Points raised included the following:

1. It was agreed that although it states on page 1 that this section dovetails with the chapter on economic development, it doesn't.
2. It was also agreed that too much time was spent telling the reader what the Town looks like. We already know this.
3. Mr. Frank said there were many references throughout to soil types, but no explanation provided as to why soil types are significant.
4. The commissioners cited these goals for The Depot:
  - a) retain existing businesses
  - b) make the village center more conducive to foot traffic
  - c) improve Bryan Plaza – both parking and traffic circulation
  - d) encourage mixed use
  - e) have a sewage/septic capability report done
  - f) plan for use of floodplain areas

5. Mr. Carey voiced his disagreement with the Depot Study, noted the recently completed flood plain study found there was more floodplain in The Depot than we had thought, disagreed with what he described as Milone and MacBroom's findings that all is well in The Depot, when we know there are now many vacant business spaces, said that Mr. Hileman's undated document, "Achievable Goals for the Town of Washington 2013 POCD, Housing and Demographics," which proposed a Town sponsored local down payment assistance program, would get the Town into trouble, and said there were not five village centers because Woodville was zoned out and The Green is not an economic center. He thought the Commission should have undertaken the update itself because he did not think the consultants were doing an adequate job. Ms. Gager responded that although the drafts were not acceptable, the Commission would return them to the consultants with guidelines and directions and would hold them accountable.

6. Mr. Rimsky noted that if The Green was to be included as a village center, the hubs of the center; the library, museum, and churches had been left out of the draft.

7. Mrs. Roberts did not support the idea of coordinating lighting fixtures throughout the village centers.

8. Mr. Rimsky stated the old Texaco station property was the most significant site in The Depot. While all agreed the empty Ficalora former gas station property is an eyesore, they noted it is private property and so did not think the Town could mandate a plan for it or do anything other than keep the lines of communication open with the property owner. Mrs. Hill noted Mr. Ficalora had a very good development plan drawn up before the economy crashed in 2007.

9. Regarding The Depot, it was thought the following issues should be considered; possible alternate uses for the Town Garage property on Blackville Road should it become available in the future, village district designation for The Depot, Mr. Talbot's Mill Race plan for the old Town Garage site and adjoining properties, and reuse of the Primary School building if it should become available.

10. Mr. Frank asked what the consultants meant when they wrote that the Depot Study was incorporated in the update. Were recommendations being made based on that Study? He thought it would be confusing to have to refer to a number of documents whenever the Commission was asked if something was in compliance with the POCD.

11. Mr. Cary stated the sketch plan in the Depot Study for improvements to Bryan Plaza would not work because it had not been properly measured and would not fit in the area. Mr. Rimsky thought diagonal parking with a marginal planted median strip would require an approx. six ft. encroachment into the Town Hall lawn and could be accomplished.

12. Mr. Rimsky noted the Zoning Commission would have to reevaluate its Regulations to ensure they support business and mixed use.

13. Mr. Rimsky said it was important to make sure that Church Street was included in the New Preston village center and River Road was included in The Depot village center.

14. It was noted the 2003 POCD had recommended a gateway district for The Depot, but that this had never been implemented.

Ms. Gager again stated the drafts would be reorganized before the next meeting to better give the consultants new directions. Mr. Frank said he wanted to make each of the drafts a different kind of document.

Mrs. Roberts advised the Commission that she had met with Ms. Gager who had agreed to take a more prominent roll in the update of the POCD. Ms. Gager said the Commission would continue to do an in depth review of the drafts and to facilitate this work, public comments would be taken at the end of the meeting. She thought, and the Commission agreed, that continual public comments during discussions was disruptive and slowed the Commission's progress. She said the public would be encouraged to submit written comments before each meeting so there would be time to review and to think about them. Mr. Rimsky noted that although comments would be put off until the end of each meeting, this would not diminish their importance and that all input would be considered. Ms. Gager thought a better time for public input would be after the drafts had been revised.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully submitted,

Janet M. Hill, Land Use Administrator