

April 10, 2012

Special Meeting

7:30 p.m. Land Use Meeting Room

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

ALTERNATE PRESENT: Mr. Carey

ALTERNATES ABSENT: Mrs. Braverman, Mr. Osborne

STAFF PRESENT: Mrs. Hill

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Charles

Mrs. Roberts called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. and seated Members Frank, Jahnke, Rimsky, and Roberts and Alternate Carey for Ms. Gager. She noted that at the last meeting the commissioners had been asked to prepare five questions to ask each candidate who is interviewed regarding the update of the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Mr. Rimsky had the following questions:

1. Washington has several distinct and sometime disparate districts. Can you adapt your public outreach to include those areas rather than a single public meeting?
2. There must be several existing economic studies of the northwest corner and the state. Could they be used to assist the Commission in assessing the economic future of the Town?
3. Will you be meeting with business leaders through independent outreach to get their view of the community's future?
4. How can the report reflect the housing needs relative to the shifting demographics of the Town and its relationship to the regional school, or just to the Town itself?
5. How would you recommend setting an agenda for community action on the concerns of the new Plan?

Mrs. Roberts said several of the candidates had suggested using the Town website to get information out to the public during the update process. She reported that she had talked to the Selectman's Office about the feasibility of using the website in this way, but had been advised that the website was not set up well and it was not thought it would be adequate to use for this kind of communication. Mr. Rimsky said another possibility was the use of a Facebook page, but he questioned whether this would be legal for a public commission. Mr. Frank noted that interested people can now register on the Town website to receive notifications and so questioned why it was thought to be inadequate. Mr. Cary complained that the website had not been updated since last October and recommended the Commission talk to the webmaster about the possibility of using it for public notification. Mr. Rimsky thought perhaps the website was not capable of interactive use. Mrs. Roberts thought interactive use would be an important tool to ensure the flow of communication. Ms. Gager noted that survey monkey was easy to use and could be linked to the Town website. She also noted the down side of having a Facebook page would be that someone would have to monitor it. Mr. Frank said that Woodbury had effectively used a public website during its Plan update. Mr. Rimsky suggested that the webmaster meet with the Commission to discuss this matter.

Mrs. Jahnke began her list of questions:

1. If the Town has reached the 2003 Plan's goal of 30% open space, should open space be capped and no more land gifts accepted?

Ms. Gager noted that open space could not be capped because the Commission has an open space requirement in the Subdivision Regulations. Mrs. Roberts asked whether having more than 30% open space would be a detriment to population growth or to the school population. After further comments from Ms. Gager, Mrs. Roberts, and Mr. Rimsky, it was noted that if development was concentrated in the village centers, open space could reach 40% or more and still be beneficial for the Town. The possibility of cluster subdivisions was raised, but it was noted the public would have to be persuaded to accept that concept and the Zoning Commission would have to be involved in the discussion and implementation.

Mr. Carey urged the Commission to choose three or four candidates to interview and then decide on how to interview them. He noted that time was short and the most productive thing to do would be to get the interviews scheduled.

Mr. Frank had prepared the following questions:

1. What form should the updated POCD take? (Use 2003 Plan plus amendment book? Update 2003 and add new chapters?)
2. What is the most difficult subject area to be dealt with? How would you handle it?
3. What steps will you take to hold costs down?
4. How would you encourage and ensure participation by other Town commissions and boards?
5. How would you encourage and ensure public input?

Mrs. Hill noted that the Commission had agreed to a basic update of the 2003 Plan and the addition new chapters and that is what the cost estimates received had been based on.

Ms. Gager had the following questions:

1. What format would be used for the public dialogue?
2. What makes each candidate unique and the best choice for Washington?

Mr. Carey thought an important criteria to use to judge the competing firms was each candidate's familiarity with the 2003 Plan and 2005 Depot Study. He thought the Commission should consider each candidate's expertise in the updating process. He said other issues that the candidate selected should understand are the economy of the Town, its public health, safety, and welfare, and the floodplain and other natural limitations in Town. He noted the Town also has problems with its school system, but said this was not unique to Washington.

Mrs. Jahnke questioned how the Planning Commission could address the school district problems without "stepping on the toes" of the professional team now working on a plan for the schools. She thought the Plan should clearly state these problems.

Mrs. Jahnke also asked whether the candidates would be familiar with state and regional plans. Mrs. Hill said they would.

Mr. Rimsky listed his choices for those to be interviewed:

1. Planimetrics – He said it was familiar with the Town and had worked with us before. He suggested this firm could be more flexible with its community outreach.

2. Milone & MacBroom –He liked how the proposal considered consensus building.
3. W. Scanlon – He thought that due to his recent work in Woodbury, he would have knowledge of the area.
4. M. Connor – He was familiar with the Town.

Ms. Gager listed her choices for interviews:

1. Planimetrics
2. Milone & MacBroom
3. M. Connor
4. W. Scanlon

Mr. Carey selected Planimetrics, Milone & MacBroom, Connor, and Scanlon based mainly on their estimated cost and familiarity with the Town.

Mrs. Roberts agreed with those choices.

Mr. Frank noted he had first eliminated three firms; P. Talbot because he proposed a different concept and his estimate did not include the drafting of the update, Plan Three due to the high estimate, and 4Ward Planning due to its emphasis on teleconferences. His choices were:

1. W. Scanlon – He noted Woodbury had prepared a report with procedural recommendations a year ahead in anticipation of its update. He also said he would like to review Woodbury's Plan (done by Scanlon) and find out why Woodbury chose him over Planimetrics.
2. M. Connor – He thought he should be interviewed due to his familiarity with Washington.
3. Milone & MacBroom – He noted, however, their sample plans had been heavy on statistics.
4. Planimetrics
5. BFJ Planning – He noted it was based in Stamford and New York, but had recently worked for Middlebury.

BFJ Planning was briefly discussed. Mr. Rimsky said he thought it focused on mid to large sized towns and that it might not be able to get to Town often due to being located in New York. Mr. Frank noted it had a Stamford office. Mrs. Roberts said she did not like its proposed use of a steering committee or Power Point presentations. Mrs. Hill said she would be disappointed if the Commission did not interview BFJ due to its understanding of the proposed work and its experience with economic issues, sustainability, and village centers; three of the issues the Commission had decided should be added to the Plan.

Mrs. Jahnke thought the Commission should consider those firms who have completed a lot of POCDs and who have experience in northwest Ct. and with small towns.

The interview schedule was discussed. It was decided to schedule five interviews; two on Tuesday, April 24 and three on Monday, April 30. Each interview will be limited to one and a half hours. All candidates will be sent Mr. Frank's and Mr. Rimsky's questions (those questions that were submitted in writing at the meeting) and will be asked to respond to them during their presentations. To be interviewed are: Planimetrics, W. Scanlon, Milone & MacBroom, M. Connor, and BFJ Planning.

Mrs. Roberts asked Mr. Charles if he had any input. Mr. Charles raised several issues: 1) He did not think the website was up to date and he said he had asked the Board of Selectmen several times to require that all commission and board meetings be recorded. 2) He said the goal of 30%

open space was a compromise figure. He thought if the Town permitted 10% coverage and had more input on how the remaining 90% was protected, it would not be considered a taking. He added that he thought agriculture was a good use for some open space lands. 3) He recommended the RFP letter be clarified and sent out a second time so that it would be clearer exactly what work was included in each proposal and they could be more easily compared. 4) He strongly recommended that the Commission interview Mr. Talbot based on his innovative ideas, work on behalf of the community, and understanding of Washington. 5) He raised several questions about the recent flood plain mapping. Mr. Carey told him the mapping and hydraulic studies were completed, but Mr. Charles did not think the hydraulic analysis had been done. 6) Mr. Charles reminded the Commission that two objectives of the last Plan were to have a flood plain analysis and a septic capability analysis for the Depot. He noted the septic study had not been done.

MOTION:

To adjourn the Meeting. By Mr. Rimsky.

Mrs. Roberts adjourned the meeting at 9:02 p.m.

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully submitted,
Janet M. Hill
Land Use Administrator