

December 17, 2002

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mrs. Averill, Mr. Bender, Mr. Byerly, Mr. Charles

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Mr. Rimsky, Mrs. Roberts, Mr. Sabin

MEMBER ABSENT: Mr. Buck

STAFF PRESENT: Mr. Chalder, Mrs. Hill, Mr. Wood

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Boling, Mrs. Friedman, Mr. Martin, Mrs. Payne

Mr. Bender called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m. and seated Members Averill, Bender, Byerly, and Charles and Alternate Roberts for Mr. Buck. He noted the discussion of the Development section would continue with the topics of the village centers and business development.

Mr. Chalder suggested the Commission consider categorizing different sections within each of the existing business districts to reflect the different uses and development patterns in each.

Washington Depot:

Mr. Chalder described four distinct areas in the Depot Business District: the core, periphery core, gateway, and linear sections. The map on page 27 was reviewed. Mr. Chalder noted the boundaries between districts did not always follow property lines, some properties being divided in unique ways, and thought the Planning and Zoning Commissions might discuss revising the boundaries to follow property lines to avoid problems in the future. Mr. Bender noted currently if a property is located in two districts, the more stringent regulations apply. Mr. Chalder said if the boundaries were not changed, this could still be handled if Zoning revised the Regulations so this would no longer apply in the Depot Business District.

Mr. Charles pointed out the location of the old Andrus farm property, which he thought should be preserved. He said the Town could purchase this property and finance it with condominium development similar to Bee Brook Condos on that part of the property close to Rt. 47 and the Shepaug River. He thought development in this area would help to tie the village center with Hidden Valley. He gave a brief history of the business district and said such development would be in keeping with historic development patterns.

Mrs. Roberts stated the Greenways Committee wanted a footbridge across the Shepaug along the Rt. 47 bridge and thought this would serve to connect the different sections of the Depot Business District.

Mr. Chalder explained the separate business areas in more detail. He described the core as the area promoting business and a pedestrian friendly environment, while housing, offices, and mixed uses would be recommended in the other areas. He noted the linear area was already more vehicle oriented and said revised regulations could reflect that fact.

Mr. Sabin thought this was an interesting approach. He recommended a buffer be maintained between the Bee Brook Condos and the business district so that the higher density development could not be seen from the road. He thought the old Town Garage area and Titus Road should be included in the core area because 1) the two areas are tied historically and 2) the river is a natural boundary. Mr. Bender also questioned why Titus Road and the GW Tavern area had not been included in the core district.

Mr. Charles thought the valley along Canoe Brook to Rt. 109 should be included in the core district and stressed the importance of agriculture, parks and recreation areas, and greenways in the Depot Business District. He urged the Commission to recommend this valley be preserved by the Town as a common

Town area.

Mr. Rimsky noted the Rt. 109 and Cook Street areas include traditionally smaller homes for working families and encouraged mixed use within walking distance of the Depot. He thought whatever the Commission could do to bring residential values to the center of Town would strengthen the business district. He also cautioned the Commission should try to protect against the possibility of a developer purchasing adjoining small properties and demolishing the existing houses.

Mr. Charles noted the number of residential units and mixed use properties in Town could be increased if there was a Town sewer system. He urged the Commission to promote a vital village center that would furnish the needs of the residents as it had in the past. He noted there used to be a doctor's office, shoe store, movie theatre (in the Town Hall), and lunch counter in the Depot.

Mr. Bender noted the Commission agreed 1) residential units should be established in the Depot, 2) the business zone boundary line should follow rear property lines, 3) it would be difficult to expand the business district along Calhoun Street due to poor sight lines and traffic concerns.

Mr. Boling suggested regulations be implemented to require "build to" lines rather than setback lines in the business district. Mr. Charles thought "in fill" development would be appropriate for the Depot. As an example, he mentioned a cluster of commercial buildings in Kent, which look like barns and the old blacksmith shop that existed in the Depot before the flood.

It was noted the steep topography surrounding the business district, the location of the flood plain, and the lack of a Town septic system were limiting factors when the Commission considered its vision for the Depot Business District.

Regarding boundary lines for the Depot the following decisions were made. 1) The property at the corner of Rt. 47 and Blackville Road (Shepaug Flower Farm) should remain in the R-1 District to preserve agriculture and the character of the gateway area. 2) The residential character of Calhoun Street should be maintained and the last property in the business district in this area should be the telephone utility property. 3) The entire 108 acre Washington Supply Company property at the corner of Rt. 47 and Calhoun Street would be included in the Depot district for the time being with the recommendation that the Zoning Commission study whether there would be any unintended consequences if the boundary line were drawn through this property so that the current business area could legally continue its commercial use and the remainder of the property revert to the R-1 district. Mr. Martin had warned that the regulation requiring the more stringent rules to apply to parcels located in two districts had helped to preserve the Town in the past and it might be more appropriate to think of a different way to address the Supply Company property than to change the regulations for the entire district for the good of this one parcel.

The linear business district along Rt. 47 north of Rt. 109 was discussed. Mr. Chalder pointed out that the area differs from the rest of the district because it is straighter, the vehicles travel faster, and the traffic is more difficult to manage due to the proliferation of driveways. Mr. Rimsky thought the existing residential uses here should be preserved. Mrs. Roberts thought this would be a good location for mixed uses and hoped Planimetrics would come up with some ideas to slow the traffic.. Mr. Martin noted the core district is already developed with many grandfathered uses so it would be helpful from a zoning perspective to treat the linear district differently. Mr. Boling suggested the Commission recommended a residential component be required for all commercial proposals in the district. Mr. Chalder stated he would consider mixed uses, adaptive reuse, access management plans, mandatory two story buildings, and streetscapes when drafting a plan for this district. Mr. Bender thought second story residential uses should be required in the core area as well as the other sections and that the old railroad bed might be used as an internal driveway in the linear section.

Mr. Charles asked why the school property was not included in the village center. Mr. Chalder explained it was separated from the village by the river. Mr. Charles thought it was important to incorporate into the core the properties over which the Town has control, namely the old Town Garage site and the school property. Mr. Sabin questioned whether it was a good policy to locate a school in a business zone. Mr. Charles thought the school fields could possibly be used for a community septic system so that more intense residential development could be permitted in the Depot. Mrs. Roberts asked Mr. Chalder to look into other possible uses for the school property should a new central regional elementary school be built in the future.

New Preston Business District:

Mr. Chalder noted parts of the New Preston Business District do not relate to the current uses and so suggested the current boundaries be modified. In addition to the small existing business area, he suggested the historic portion of New Preston be taken out of the R-1 District and be made a separate N. Preston district. He said this new zone would recognize the existing non conforming uses and would replicate current R-1 uses, but provide fluctuating dimensional standards to reflect the unique character of the area. He noted these possible changes were not intended to create major new development opportunities. Mr. Chalder compared this area of New Preston to the Washington Green Residential District. Mr. Martin said there was some historic basis for Mr. Chalder's proposal, but thought there should be a significant unique situation in the area as a reason to establish a new district rather than merely trying to eliminate non conforming uses and properties. Mr. Chalder thought the area immediately surrounding the New Preston Business District was different than the R-1 district, but was not being treated differently. Mr. Martin countered there are peripheral areas in the Depot, which continue to be in the R-1 district with no zone changes proposed. Mr. Boling suggested the peripheral New Preston area might be more appropriate as a historic district, but added the value of a separate zone would be to preserve the existing traditional dimensional standards of development. Mrs. Payne noted the cultural map in the Natural Resources Inventory recognizes this area as historically significant. Mr. Sabin asked how non conforming the existing properties in the New Preston area are and said he supported a village district with higher density permitted. Mr. Rimsky agreed. Other New Preston issues noted were lack of parking, over abundance of antique stores, and development restrictions due to wetlands and watercourses. The Commissioners did not think they had enough information to decide whether Mr. Chalder should proceed with a draft for an R-4 District. Some thought there would be no value to it, while others thought the entire greater New Preston area should be considered a unique area to be preserved and was deserving of an in depth plan. Mr. Chalder will do more background work and the Commission will discuss this issue again at the next meeting.

Marbledale Business District:

It was noted Marbledale had been discussed at the last meeting. Mr. Chalder reminded the Commissioners the points brought out at that time included 1) traffic should be slowed down and the district made more pedestrian friendly, 2) mixed uses should be encouraged, 3) the commercial base should be reinforced, 4) design guidelines should be strengthened, 5) a special development district could be established, 6) a more village-like pattern should be established around the core area, 7) possible expansion of the district could be in the Wheaton Road/Mygatt Road area.

Mr. Sabin noted in addition to these points that transitional areas are needed in Marbledale.

Mr. Rimsky wanted to make Marbledale a more workable developable gateway area so it could absorb the development pressure as it progresses up Rt. 202.

Mr. Bender asked whether the Quarry Ridge property should have 200 feet along Rt. 202 located in the

business district and he also noted the cemetery has commercial acreage. Mr. Martin noted in recent Zoning meetings the Quarry Ridge residents had expressed concerns about too much noise from the commercial zone, excessive lighting, too many cars, and were worried about the Zoning Commission's goal of trying to help small businesses get established in Marbledale.

Mr. Chalder described the three separate sections of the Marbledale Business District: 1) from Findley Road to New Milford on Rt. 202, 2) the Wheaton Road/Mygatt Road area, and 3) the Rt. 202 corridor north of Findley Road. He thought a unified whole could be created from these three sections.

Mr. Charles discussed the area between Wheaton Road and Rt. 202. He said it now contained beautiful fields, which could be transformed into a village common and the present commercial center reoriented to this area. Mr. Rimsky compared this to the commercial section of Kent and said such a design could accommodate internal parking. Mr. Chalder noted the natural resources here would have to be protected. Mr. Sabin agreed future expansion should be in a central area rather than along the corridor. Mr. Chalder said the goal would be to create opportunities for the private sector to realize Marbledale's potential, while working within the constraints of the property lines and natural resources.

Mr. Bender suggested commercial planned unit development be permitted in the areas immediately surrounding the existing Marbledale District.

Woodville Business District:

It was noted the Zoning Commission had significantly downsized this district, turning all but the small area between Rt. 202 and Wilbur Road to R-1. Mr. Chalder proposed no changes at this time.

Washington Green Residential District:

Mr. Chalder noted this district was confined to a very small area, but asked if there would be interest in expanding it since much of its immediate surrounding area has similar characteristics. Mr. Rimsky supported the idea noting the Mayflower property should be included. Mr. Bender thought this district's boundaries should adhere to property lines and that further study on the issue of whether to expand it would be appropriate. Mr. Rimsky stated the Wykeham Road area's rural setting was in jeopardy and suggested further study on this issue, too.

Mr. Martin explained the problem the Zoning Commission has encountered in this district is the need of the existing institutions to expand and develop. This often conflicts with the existing residential uses in the area. He asked that the Plan address whether a zoning concept that would allow intensification of development by providing relief for lot coverage, setbacks, etc. should be implemented. He noted such a policy might affect the residential character of the area. Mr. Rimsky thought the Town should take steps to ensure The Gunnery's health as the loss of this institution would cause many problems. Mr. Bender thought this was a matter for the Zoning Commission to address. Mr. Wood noted it would be helpful if the Plan provided a recommendation. Mr. Bender thought the Plan could recommend this matter be evaluated.

It was generally thought the R-2 District should be expanded per Mr. Chalder's proposed boundaries.

Infrastructure issues will be discussed at the next meeting, which will be held on Tuesday, January 21, 2003 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting. By Mrs. Roberts.

Mr. Bender adjourned the meeting at approximately 6:10 p.m.

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully submitted,

Janet M. Hill
Land Use Coordinator