

TOWN OF WASHINGTON
Bryan Memorial Town Hall
Post Office Box 383
Washington Depot, Connecticut 06794
Planning Commission Regular Meeting
MINUTES
April 7, 2021

7:30 P.M. – Meeting via Zoom

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Hileman, Ms. Matteo, Mr. Mongar and Mr. Rimsky (arrived at 7:44pm)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Carey, Ms. Gager

STAFF PRESENT: Ms. White, Ms. Rill

PUBLIC PRESENT: Mr. Charles, Ms. Gorra

Chairman Hileman called the meeting to order at 7:34pm.

He seated himself, Ms. Matteo and Mr. Mongar.

CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES:

MOTION: To accept the March 3, 2021 Washington Planning Commission Meeting Minutes, by Ms. Matteo, seconded by Mr. Mongar, passed 3-0 vote.

NEW APPLICATIONS:

There are no New Applications.

PENDING APPLICATIONS:

There are no Pending Applications.

Chairman Hileman explained to the Commission that Habitat for Humanity, whom attended the March 3, 2021 Planning Commission meeting, did not need to be seen before them because the property/lots are not subdivided, so there are no lot lines to officially adjust, only within their own Home Owners Association.

Mr. Dimitri arrived at 7:44pm. He was seated by Chairman Hileman.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATES:

Sustainability Committee –

Ms. Matteo stated that the Sustainability Committee has been meeting monthly and have recently welcomed two new members, Mr. Hagenbach and Ms. Dwyer. Their main focus currently is obtaining certification from Sustainable CT. Ms. Matteo also mentioned that she has attended a few workshops pertaining to Sustainability and was pleased to see that other towns throughout Connecticut had presented up and coming was to keep Sustainable, such as electric cars, boats and energy efficient housing. Ms. Matteo stated that Ms. Gorra may be interested to hear some of the information that was presented.

Ms. Gorra added that Washington will be hosting an Earth Day event that will introduce the Sustainability Committee, Washington Environmental Council, Steep Rock Association, Lake Waramaug Association, as well as the Shepaug Agri-Science Program to the community.

Economic Development Committee –

Ms. Gorra stated that the sidewalk project in the Village of New Preston has been delayed a little due to State of Connecticut requirements, but was slowly moving along.

Chairman Hileman stated that he was drafting a Request for Proposal regarding a Phase I Engineering study for a fiber-optic-to-the-home network. Chairman Hileman added that the Town of Washington will be receiving funds under the Connecticut Cares Act that could be used for a Phase I Engineering study regarding broadband needs.

Affordable Housing Committee –

Mr. Mongar stated that the next meeting will take place on April 13, 2021 and would be discussing strategies going forward regarding the upcoming Affordable Housing Plan.

Ms. Gorra added that the Washington Housing Trust would be attending the April 13, 2021 meeting. The Housing Committee was hopeful for some insight from the Trust as they move forward with the Housing Plan.

Reopening Committee –

Mr. Rimsky stated that a flier was recently circulated informing residents, especially those more isolated, regarding Covid vaccinations, rides to and from those appointments and more.

CONTINUED DISCUSSION – 2023 PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT:

Virtual Bulletin Board –

Chairman Hileman shared the framework of the existing Plan, and explained that if any of the Commissioners wanted to add ideas or thoughts that could be added to the 2023 POCD, they could do so. Chairman Hileman added that one of his goals with the 2023 Plan was to be rid of any

“squishy language” that is included in the current POCD, making it as direct and straightforward as possible. Mr. Rimsky agreed with this, emphasizing that the POCD the main foundation of the town, and the other Commissions and Boards receive their direction from it. Mr. Rimsky also noted that currently, 30% of the land in Washington is conserved, and felt that possibly the “development” side should be more of a focus in this plan.

Chairman Hileman announced that the 2020 Census results will be available prior to the May Planning Commission meeting, noting that the population may not be as high as expected. He explained that the numbers were tallied based on where a person resided pre-Covid, and despite the influx of new residents in Washington, this year’s total would not reflect this.

Chairman Hileman questioned whether or not a section regarding Lake Waramaug should be added to the Plan. Ms. Matteo, whom resides in the area, was in favor of this, adding that she didn’t feel as though residents in the area were not as attached to the Lake as in years past. She suggested asking Lake Waramaug Association and/or The Lake Waramaug Task Force for their input.

Chairman Hileman suggested adding broadband and fiber-optic technology to the Plan, as well as addressing possible infrastructure failures. He stated that after the terrible storm last year that knocked out power for many days, that the town may want to start thinking about what were to happen if something equally, if not more, devastating was to happen in Washington.

Mr. Rimsky stated that he would love to see the open property along the Shepaug River next door to the firehouse on Bee Brook Road used as a picnic area, a parking area, or something inviting to residents and visitors.

Ms. Gorra mentioned that she felt that an Emergency Plan may be beneficial to the town, adding that with all of the wild fires, droughts, high winds and storms in the world currently that this may be something to consider.

Finally, Mr. Rimsky questioned what the status was of the Zoning Commission considering multi-district issue that Chairman Hileman brought to their attention almost a year ago. Chairman Hileman stated he would reach out to them once again.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Chairman Hileman asked Ms. Matteo to inform the Commission about the webinar she attended that was hosted by the Connecticut Bar Association regarding Land Use Laws.

Ms. Matteo stated that something that caught her attention was a Section stating that if there was an application submitted to one of the various Boards or Commissions that was contested by neighbors but aligned with the Plan of Conservation and Development, that it would be considered appropriate for the Commission to consider the Plan over the objectors.

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

Chairman Hileman announced that there was some interest in the open Alternate seat on the Planning Commission and was hopeful for a new member soon. He reminded the members that there was still one more Alternate position open.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: To adjourn the April 7, 2021 Washington Planning Commission meeting at 8:41pm, by Chairman Hileman, seconded by Mr. Mongar, passed 4-0 vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tammy Rill

Land Use Clerk

April 9, 2021