

TOWN OF WASHINGTON
Bryan Memorial Town Hall
Post Office Box 383
Washington Depot, Connecticut 06794
Planning Commission Regular Meeting
MINUTES
March 4, 2020

7:30 P.M. – Main Level Meeting Room

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Hileman, Mr. Carey, Mr. Rimsky

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Ms. Matteo

STAFF PRESENT: Ms. White, Ms. Rill

PUBLIC PRESENT: Ms. Gorra, Mr. Charles

Chairman Hileman called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

He then seated himself, Mr. Rimsky, Mr. Carey and Ms. Matteo.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (14sec.):

In appreciation for Tim Cole –

Chairman Hileman began the meeting by paying tribute to our friend and colleague, Tim Cole, who passed away suddenly last month. Mr. Cole's dedication and commitment to the Town of Washington, the Washington Planning Commission, as well as the Washington Plan of Conservation and Development were remarkable as well as passionate, and we are grateful for all of his hard work.

Ms. Matteo added that she was very saddened and shocked to hear of Mr. Cole's passing, and was grateful that she had the chance to know him over the last year through The Planning Commission, which she considered to be like family.

Mr. Rimsky stated that he had gotten to know Mr. Cole via various groups and events in Washington. He noted the fact that Mr. Cole had not been a resident of Washington for a very long time, however when he arrived he jumped in eagerly and was willing to volunteer immediately, which was extraordinary and quite rare.

Chairman Hileman offered condolences to Mr. Cole's family and loved ones, stating that there would be a memorial service in April at the First Congregational Church in Washington.

Mr. Cole will be greatly missed.

CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES (5MIN. 25SEC.):

MOTION: To accept the February 5, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes as submitted, by Mr. Carey, seconded by Mr. Rimsky, passed 4-0 vote.

PENDING APPLICATIONS (5min. 45sec.):

There were no Pending Applications for this evenings meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS (5min, 45sec.):

A. Economic Development Committee –

Chairman Hileman stated that the Committee will be meeting next Tuesday, March 10, 2020. He said they have been fine-tuning a job description for the possible Community Development Coordinator position, as well as preparing to make this position a line item in the budget. Chairman Hileman added that the Committee has also been discussing the possibility of a Senior/Community Center in Washington, and he would be receiving an update on this at next week's meeting.

B. Sustainability Committee Update –

There was no update for this evenings meeting.

C. POCD – 5 Year Revision(s):

Chairman Hileman explained that this will lead into the next item on the Agenda.

D. Proposed Revisions to the Zoning Regulations, Re: Waiver of Section 3.2 by Special Permit for the Washington Depot and Woodville Business Districts –

Chairman Hileman sent the Commissioners a draft letter addressed to the Zoning Commission regarding Section 3.2 – Zoning District Boundaries. This would allow the Zoning Commission to waive, under the Special Permit process, Section 3.2, where currently it states that if you live in more than once district, the more restrictive regulation shall apply. He explained that currently in Marbledale, they have the authority to waive this regulation by Special Permit, and felt that it made sense to expand this practice to Washington Depot and Woodville as well. The Planning Commission had recommended that this be done some time ago, but for whatever reason, it had not gone forward. Chairman Hileman requested the Planning Commission's approval to send his letter to the Zoning Commission.

MOTION: To submit proposed revisions regarding a Waiver of Washington Zoning Regulations Section: 3.2 by Special Permit for the Washington Depot and Woodville Business Districts to the Washington Zoning Commission, by Mr. Rimsky, seconded by Ms. Matteo, approved 4-0 vote.

E. Referral from the Zoning Commission Regarding 12.8 – Temporary Uses

Chairman Hileman inquired when the Public Hearing was scheduled regarding 12.8 – Temporary Uses. Ms. White informed the Commission that the Public Hearing was set for April 27, 2020 at 7:30pm.

The Commission reviewed the proposed revisions and had the following thoughts and/or concerns regarding them.

The Commission felt that proposed Section 12.8.1 – Temporary Construction Structures as well as 12.8.2 – Temporary Trailers for Living Purposes, had no bearing on the Plan of Conservation and Development.

12.8.3 – Temporary Events Requiring No Permit – The Planning Commission is concerned with the term “Incidental and Customary”, stating that this was extremely vague. Chairman Hileman questioned whether this was defined in the Zoning Regulations currently. Ms. White explained that currently “Incidental and Customary” are not defined in the Regulations, however legal counsel advised this language.

The Commission discussed “Annual Events That Have Been Held at the Same Location for a Period of Five Years or More Before [Insert Date of Amendment], agreeing that “grandfathering” is arbitrary. The Planning Commission voiced their concern with this language originally, and still feels as though it is not in line with the Plan of Conservation and Development. They questioned how many current events taking place in town would be effected by this language.

Next, the Commission discussed “Temporary Events on Property Owned by the Town of Washington, Religious Institutions or Schools”. The Commission is concerned with the effect this would take on places such as The Gunn Memorial Library and Museum, Steep Rock Association, H.O.R.S.E of Connecticut, and The Washington Art Association, to name a few.

And finally, “Temporary Events Within the B1, B2, B3 and B4 Districts”, that would allow as many events as one wished within this district with no permit needed whatsoever. This concerned the Commission, stating that the Zoning Commission seemed to be backing themselves into a corner over what appears to be one particular current event.

The Commission questioned whether or not Section 12.8 was truly necessary, or if a noise ordinance would be more beneficial. If an event were to take place on the weekend, the Enforcement Officer would not be available to deal with any complaints that could occur. However, if there was a town noise ordinance, a constable could deal with the complaint as it occurred.

12.8.4 – Temporary Uses Requiring a Permit – The Commission is concerned with the following; “No more than two (2) such permits shall be issued in any one calendar year on the same site”. The commissioners believe this will create a chilling effect for a number of events in town that currently take place, as well as limit future cultural growth.

12.8.5 – Temporary Events Requiring a Special Permit – for events lasting more than one day. The Commissioners named the events listed, (circuses, carnivals, festivals, concerts, artistic performances, galas and similar type entertainment), and wondered if there were possibly some that had not made the list.

Overall, the Planning Commission did not feel as though the language of the proposed Regulations was not consistent with Plan of Conservation and Development. Chairman Hileman Stated that he will craft a letter that he will forward to the Planning Commission prior to the April 1st, 2020 Planning Meeting for review, and from there will submit it to the Washington Zoning Commission.

COMMUNICATIONS (40min. 19sec.):

Each Commissioner was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation from the Washington Board of Selectmen, in recognition of their volunteer work. The certificates were originally a part of “Washington Gives”, which took place on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, on January 20th, 2020.

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS (40min. 44sec.):

There was no Administrative Business for this evenings meeting.

Ms. Gorra, Board of Selectmen member, asked Chairman Hileman if she could update the Commission on a few items. Chairman Hileman agreed.

Ms. Gorra stated that the Board of Selectmen were working diligently on the Town Budget, and felt that a number of Planning’s concerns and needs were being met. She said there are still a few final numbers that needed to be fine-tuned, but overall, it was coming together. Ms. Gorra reiterated that the support from the Commission will be essential when the budget is presented to the Board of Finance, and encouraged everyone to voice their support.

Chairman Hileman informed the Commission that the Northwest Council of Governments would be hosting an upcoming event that will be held on March 18th, 2020 at 7:30pm titled, “Legal Requirements and Procedures in Land Use Decision Making”. Ms. White stated that if anyone was interested in attending that she would need to know by Friday, March 6, 2020. Ms. Matteo informed the Commission that she would be attending. Chairman Hileman thanked her for doing so.

Chairman Hileman then informed the Commission that there would be an Economic Development Summit on April 29, 2020 in Torrington, CT that is held annually and hosted by the Northwest Connecticut Economic Development Corp., The Chamber of Commerce, as well as the Northwest Hills Council of Governments. Chairman Hileman announced that he has taken on a new role as Chair of the Board at Northwest Connect, so he would be attending in that capacity. He stated that this is a free event, but you do have to register.

Mr. Charles asked Chairman Hileman what role the Planning Commission would play in the decision making regarding a new Senior/Community Center. Chairman Hileman explained that the Town would need to come before the Planning Commission for an 8-24 referral if the location is on Town Property. Mr. Charles questioned if the Town should present a plan to the Planning Commission before money is spent on developing a plan. Chairman Hileman stated that they would be required by Statute 8-24 to present a plan to the Planning Commission before they broke ground. There would be no requirement to seek Planning approval if they were to do a study to see if the area is feasible.

Mr. Charles stated that a number of years ago, GW Tavern had wanted to use a portion of the Old Town Garage site for their septic. Chairman Hileman stated that this had dated back to the 2003 Plan of Conservation and Development. Mr. Charles agreed and stated that the Commission's chairman at that time thought that the issue should be looked at separately, and that is how the Depot Study was formed. Mr. Charles went on to explain that in the 2003 POCD, it was mentioned that flood plains should be analyzed, as well as all of the available soils so that the town would know what the potential build out would be, and they discovered that GW Tavern should not be allowed to put a septic on that property.

Mr. Charles explained that he felt that the Old Town Garage location may not be the best location for the Senior/Community Center for these reasons, and wanted to make Planning aware.

Chairman Hileman stated that the most current version of the POCD was 2014, and that they are now following this plan, and are not basing policy on the 2003 POCD.

Mr. Rimsky questioned if there had been a request put in to the Republican and Democratic Town Committees for new members. Ms. White stated that she had asked First Selectman Brinton to add a list of openings on his weekly email blast, and that he would be doing so as early as next week. Chairman Hileman stated that he put in requests to both Town Committees, and hoped for some potential names. Ms. Gorra stated that the process of putting together names has begun and that she was hopeful to fill a number of open vacancies soon.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, CHAIRMAN HILEMAN!!!

MOTION: To adjourn the March 4, 2020 Washington Planning Commission Meeting at 8:29pm, by Chairman Hileman, seconded by Mr. Rimsky, passed 4-0 vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tammy Rill

Tammy Rill
Land Use Clerk

March 6, 2020