**TOWN OF WASHINGTON**

**Bryan Memorial Town Hall**

**Washington Depot, CT**

**Sustainability Committee Meeting**

**Draft MINUTES**

February 29, 2016

**Members Present: Chris Charles, Susan Jahnke, Peter Armstrong**

**Members Absent: Mark Picton, Howard Rosenfeld, Dick Heffernon**

**Erica Ryland**

Susan Jahnke called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

**Consideration of the Minutes:**

The Commission considered the minutes of the February 2, 2016 Sustainability Committee Meeting.

**Motion:**  To accept the February 2, 2016 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Sustainability Committee by Chris Charles, seconded by Susan Jahnke, passed by 3-0.

**Depot Plaza Renovation**

**Electric Charging Stations in Plaza**

**Mark Picton and Dan Sherr spoke with Courtney Hendricson from CERC about issues regarding Electric Charging Stations.**

**There was additional discussion at our meeting about the need to contact Eversource about infrastructure requirements and the Town of Bethlehem who has already installed an electric charging station.**

**Addition of Parking Spaces**

**The Sustainability Committee had three concerns about increasing the number of parking spaces in the Depot Plaza:**

* **The impact on the permeability of the surface.**
* **The economic need for additional parking.**
* **The septic soils in the Depot need a more rigorous evaluation so that we can assess the impact of new infrastructure development on the Depot’s septic capacity.**
  + **The Conservation Commission has done some work on current septic capacity as part of its resource inventory.**
  + **Action item – check with TPA to make sure concerns about the septic capacity of the Depot Plaza have been addressed.**

**Water Supply**

**Aquarion Water Company provides the water to the businesses in the Depot.**

* **The Washington Food Marketplace has expressed concerns about the lack of water in the summertime.**
* **We have not seen data on the capacity of the current wells to support the businesses in the Depot nor have we seen data on the pipelines distributing the water.**
* **Action item – Contact Aquarion to get data on the capacity of its wells and the pipelines in the Depot.**

**The Depot Plaza Committee is planning to have a meeting on either March 7 or March 10 to discuss revisions to the Proposal.**

**Action item – Somebody from the Sustainability Committee should attend that meeting.**

**The Economic Development Committee is having a workshop on April 28.**

**Ag-Stem Project**

**Six Schools participating in Project**

**Erica Ryland updated the committee on concerns expressed by the State of Connecticut Committee on Education. The six schools participating in the project are expected to state that they will send a number of students in excess of the number they already sent to existing Ag-Stem projects to the project at Shepaug. None of the schools have provided a statement to that effect and they would need to have the School Board and the First Selectman approve that statement. Five of the six schools have declining school populations. Danbury, the only school with an increasing student population, has a middle school Ag-Stem project. It is not clear that they would be motivated to move students in that program to programs outside their district.**

**Local Foods at Shepaug**

**There was a discussion about increasing the awareness and use of local foods at Shepaug High School. The Ag-Stem project will be growing vegetables on site and the local farmers may be able to supply food throughout the year. The Ag-Stem program will operate for eleven months each year so it should be able to contribute to a local foods initiative when the rest of the school is not in session.**

**School Board Meetings**

**Even though the School Board meetings are open to the public the Sustainability Committee needs to put issues on its agenda if we expect the issues to be discussed at their meeting.**

**It will also be critical that the Sustainability Committee get Status reports from architectural firm before the board meetings so that we can review their plans.**

**Action item – Mark Picton will talk to the School Board about getting timely information on the plans. Our goal is to have input before decisions are made.**

**Action item – Does the architectural design firm have to go to the Zoning Board before it can proceed with its plans?**

**Guidelines for Managing Sustainability**

**Zoning Regulations**

**The scope of zoning regulations and regulations enforced by other commissions such as Wetlands needs to be expanded to address sustainability issues such as the capacity of septic systems and water supply.**

**Communication**

* **It is critical that the Sustainability Committee gets input from groups responsible for implementing projects like the Depot Plaza Renovation and the Ag-Stem project prior to the point where decisions are made regarding these plans. Our goal is to offer feedback which would make the decision making process more effective.**
* **Erica Ryland felt that the POCD provided a clearer vision of why we need to move forward with these sustainability initiatives. Chris Charles pointed out the challenge of encouraging wider participation in the process while implementing planning ideas and regulations that are uniform and consistent. There needs to be an effective way to control the change management process during the project**
* **The Sustainability Committee needs to get organizations within the community to coordinate with each other so that they can pool resources to provide speakers for events.**
* **There should be additional sustainability features which could be adopted by individuals privately upgrading their property or business on a voluntary basis.**

**Organization**

**Membership in the Sustainability Committee.**

**A person does not need to be a member of the Planning Commission nor do they need to be a resident of Washington to participate in the Sustainability Committee.**

**Motion: To adjourn at 6:27 PM by Susan Jahnke**

**The next Sustainability Committee meeting is Monday, April 4, 2016 at 5 PM in Town Hall.**