

January 27, 2004 (Chairmen)

Attendance:

Richard Sears, First Selectman

Nicholas Solley, Selectman

John Allen, Building and Property Commission Chairman

Susan Payne, Conservation Commission Chairman

Dorothy Hill, Inland Wetlands Commission Chairman

Sheila Anson, Parks and Recreation Commission Chairman

Chris Charles, Planning Commission Vice-chairman

Hank Martin, Zoning Commission Chairman

Polly Swain, Zoning Board of Appeals

Robert Tomlinson, Emergency Management Coordinator

First Selectman Dick Sears called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m. and welcomed the chairpersons or their representative from each area of town government. He noted his appreciation for their volunteer efforts provided to the community and requested a brief synopsis of their current activities.

Parks & Recreation Commission: Sheila Anson reported the Commission continues its fund-raising for new bathrooms, storage, and an upgrade to the Town pavilion at the Washington Primary School. The Commission extended its appreciation to Susan Payne and Linc Cornell for their fundraising assistance. Applications have been submitted to the Inland Wetlands and Zoning Commissions for this project. The Town budget had included \$50,000 in matching funds in the 2003-04 fiscal year. The Commission will put the future of the beach and boat ramp and the old town garage property on Titus Road on hold until the Pavilion project is complete. Requests for funding for fencing and backstops will most likely be included in their budget request for 04-05. They will also bring these projects to the attention of the Region 12 Board.

Building and Property Commission: John Allen reported the Building and Property Commission continues to monitor and make recommendations to the Selectmen. Upgrading the pavilion at the Washington Primary School was included in their proposed projects and John established that this would be part of the Parks & Recreation fundraising project for bathrooms/storage at that site. John noted many issues involved with Bryan Memorial Hall, including heat, electric, handicapped access, the boiler and plumbing, steps, the stage, etc. The Commission will recommend that a study be initiated to address these issues that will address building and handicapped codes, as well as practicality. They are hoping to have costs estimated by the end of this fiscal year. Funding will be sought from the Bryan Hall Trustees, in addition to the Small Cities Grant that is being completed for the installation of an elevator. Other projects include:

- Minor repairs to Boys Club in preparation of outside painting.
- Installation of windows and sills in the old firehouse in Depot.
- Replacing boiler (\$23,700) in same building - 50 years old.
- Replacing shrubbery at town hall, with the possibility of some outside Town agencies assisting with costs.
- Repairing and replacing three entries to the town hall, exclusive of the front steps.
- Old and new town garage properties have not been discussed.
- Town hall custodian, will paint front foyer and hallways.

Hank Martin suggested wiring for digital technology be considered. Dick Sears noted this is being reviewed and high-speed Cable internet access is anticipated within the next few months, depending on

funding sources.

Inland Wetlands Commission: Dorothy Hill reported the Commission is streamlining their administrative procedures. Unfortunately, due to staff hours, members, two meetings/month, etc., this is difficult to accomplish. They need to readdress revision of their regulations and are working on procedures. They will request a better taping system and an increase in legal fees, mileage and enforcement hours for the 04/05 budget.

Emergency Management - Homeland Security: Rocky Tomlinson reported Emergency Services in the area towns have agreed that in order to meet the mandates of the state and federal governments regionalization of services would serve them best. This is being coordinate through the regional planning agencies. Updating town warning systems and technology for sirens, 911, etc. is also a priority. He noted the Litchfield County Dispatch budget is high due to personnel and benefit costs. The Task Force studying these costs recommended the establishment of a Finance Committee comprised of two First Selectmen from NWCOG and two from the Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials for reviewing expenditures. LCD coordinates nineteen towns. Rocky will meet with the Town's Emergency officers on February 8th for a table-top exercise and drill. He noted their training and operational control is constantly being upgraded.

Planning Commission: Chris Charles represented the Planning Commission in the absence of George Bender. The Commission has completed the revisions to the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development. They are currently reviewing the State's Plan for 2004-2009, with the initial result that they have responded with our Plan. Subdivision Regulations are also being reviewed to insure that they conform to the new Town Plan. Paul Frank and Chris are seeking consultants to provide a Study of the Depot. He noted the Commission would welcome feedback. They have received their first Scenic Road application for Turner Road. Since this is a new process, the Commission will review in more detail what will be required of the residents on a specific road. Buffum Road residents have also initiated an application.

Grants: Nick Solley reported the Town has submitted a preliminary application for a Small Cities Grant, which will include a generator and handicapped upgrade to bathrooms, in addition to the proposed elevator and handicapped access. A formal invitation to apply is awaited. It is hoped these changes will also allow more space for a communications conduit. The Selectmen have begun working on next year's General Fund and Capital Fund budgets. He noted his appreciation of the excellent Town website that has been established by Rex Swain, it's constant update and its increased usage by the public.

Zoning Board of Appeals: Polly Swain represented the ZBA in the absence of Ed White. She noted the Board's concern over increased legal costs. They are working with the Zoning Commission to tighten up definitions and regulations and have been empowered by the Zoning Commission to make decisions in limited situations for special exceptions and to exercise flexibility in areas of setbacks and lot coverage on single-family dwellings and outbuildings. This will allow the ZBA the flexibility to allow smaller home owners the ability make modification to update their homes, which sometimes are not allowed through the zoning regulations. The Zoning Board of Appeals currently does not have a formal mechanism for review after a variance is granted.

Zoning Commission: Hank Martin commended his Commission members, noting there has been no turnover for the past two years. Copies of the revised Plan of Conservation and Development have been circulated to the Commission for review prior to their preliminary discussions on approximately twenty zoning issues contained within the Plan. The Commission recently enacted regulations to enhance protections to water quality at Lake Waramaug based on their review of models from several towns. They have collaborated with the Zoning Board of Appeals about definitions regarding setbacks and lot

coverage, which has made them aware of this practicality. These concerns are useful to Zoning for their consideration in the future.

Conservation Commission: Susie Payne reported on the various efforts of the Commission:

- Serves as an advisory on the Town Greenway and is preparing a guide to show the points of interest on a walking tour. She noted they are always looking for property links to enhance the Greenway.
- Concern over the stability of Canoe Brook and is working with the Washington Environmental Council on water monitoring.
- Land use brochure entitled "Welcome to Washington" which will convey the philosophy of preserving rural character and how to go through the normal application process. Possibility of this being put on the website.
- Completed the Scenic Road Ordinance, which was recently adopted by the Town. They are working on a "how-to" kit.
- Betsy Corrigan updates the Commission on flora and fauna invasive species. Of particular importance is the Japanese Knotweed. They are working with Steep Rock and Natalie Dyer to retard its growth.
- Monitoring town properties, i.e. easements, etc. They are doing a survey to locate town properties without buildings.
- Land Use Data Management. The use of the Arc View program, which is an excellent tool. Hopefully, its use will increase once people on staff are trained to use it.
- Worked with Zoning Commission on cell tower issue and reminded commissioners to remain attentive to this issue.
- Commission uses Natural Resources Inventory Report as their guide.
- Have Open Space Committee inventory to reactivate. Try to bring in more and various people.
- Concerned about "set-asides" in a subdivision. Suggested it would be better to require a fee in lieu of a piece of land as a set aside.
- Conservation easements: Would like to be involved when Inland Wetlands Commission has a discussion since the Conservation Commission will be responsible for review.
- Felt conservation easements are better than deed restrictions.
- Thanked Dick for attending meetings and is appreciative of his support.

First Selectman: Dick opened discussion on the specific initiatives and responsibilities the commissions will have in working with the Planning Commission on the revised Plan of Conservation and Development. The following areas were discussed:

- A Study of the Depot. A detailed study addressing all elements is needed. A decision whether to seek the services of a vendor to provide a "canned" product or to spend more for a more detailed

report will be made. Budget implications must be considered. It was felt a committee of 8-10 people could follow this, consisting of a broader-base than just land use commissioners. The Selectmen and Planning chairman will confer further on this.

- Land Purchase Fund/Open Space: It was the consensus that the Board of Selectmen should take the leadership in establishing a strategy for Open Space. It was suggested that more discussion be held on whether to create a separate commission or a sub-committee of a standing Commission, perhaps Conservation. Susie noted while her commission has reviewed water quality and resources regionally, they have also done work on open space inventory. They have concluded that an inventory should not be set up until there is more discussion with the townspeople. Dick reported there are currently no funds for the Open Space Acquisition Fund at the state level but he will keep in touch with Sen. Andrew Rorabach. He did not feel this should stop us. Chris Charles reported it had been suggested the Town create a \$5 million fund through bonding. While the Town's strategy is usually to pay as you go, this could be a strategy since the interest rates are so low. Susie also noted Jack Field has investigated various ways to get this done and would be willing to help. Chris felt parcels could be created as limited equity parcels and that housing must be addressed at the same time. It was agreed more conversation is needed and public support must be built.
- Hank reported the Zoning Commission held preliminary discussion re the Plan of C&D. There are 23 recommendations that require their attention. He reiterated the three most important issues of preserving rural character for the Town is through the protection of our natural resources, enhancing the village centers and guiding housing development. The Zoning Commission also plans addressing the protection of our scenic resources, i.e. ridgelines, in the future. This will need more discussion. The Town's four centers will be reviewed with regard to boundaries and zoning regulations. It was felt review of the Depot center would wait until after a study is completed, Marbledale has been addressed over the past few years, and the Green will be their priority. They will also review their regulations with regard to development flexibility, dimensional restrictions on frontage, setback, heights, area of structures and water quality protection. He noted the areas of concern are many and are complicated. A consultant will be required for each and this has been given consideration in their budget request.
- Cell towers: Rocky Tomlinson reported while the Town is in good shape for emergency communication, at the same time it must keep pace with the 21st century and as technology proceeds and things become available, we should not reject this area. Nick noted the Town had been prepared to work with the cell tower companies. He noted a good deal of the residents seemed to want this form of communication and it was agreed that a the Town should find a favorable site.
- Dorothy Hill reported that Chapter 7 of the Statutes mandates that the Wetlands Commission protect the water quality and wetlands. Margie Purnell has begun working on storm water runoff and the Zoning Commission will also address this issue in their regulations.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m. The next meeting will be held in approximately three months.

It was agreed by all to be attentive to the implementation of the Plan.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Gollow
Selectman's Assistant