

PLANNING & ZONING
COMMISSION
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TOWN HALL ANNEX
238 Danbury Road
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PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP
SUMMARY MINUTES
DECEMBER 1, 2008

PRESENT: Sally Poundstone, Chairman, John Wilson, Vice Chairman, Bas Nabulsi, Secretary, Alice Ayers, Doug Bayer, Marilyn Gould, Dona Pratt, Michael Rudolph and Town Planner Robert Nerney (Eric Osterberg – excused absence)

ALSO

PRESENT: Glen Chalder and Heidi Samokar of Planimetrics, LLC, Jerry Lindsley of Sacred Heart University Center for Research and Public Policy, and members of the public and press

Chairman Poundstone convened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. In their first order of business, the Commission voted to approve the minutes of the October 6, 2008 and November 3, 2008 meetings. Chairman Poundstone welcomed the consultants and acknowledged the presence of Jerry Lindsley of the Center for Research and Public Policy. Chairman Poundstone stated that the purpose of the meeting was to review survey questions that would be randomly asked of 400 Wilton residents. The survey findings would be incorporated into the Plan of Conservation and Development. Chairman Poundstone requested the cooperation of the press and asked that survey questions not be printed prior to the survey as the release of such information would potentially skew survey results.

Ms. Samokar provided the Commission with an updated work schedule noting that they were roughly half-way through the POCD process and completing work assignments on schedule. Chairman Poundstone requested the Town Planner put together a schedule of the upcoming 2009 special meeting dates.

Ms. Samokar stated that the purpose of the poll is to obtain a representative survey of community attitudes. Useful information can be obtained by way of asking carefully worded questions which can then be cross-tabulated to identify public opinion based on demographic profile or geographic locations.

Mr. Lindsley provided his background experience noting that much of his experience involves working for governmental entities. Mr. Lindsley stated his interest in turning to the Commission

for feedback and sign-offs with respect to type of information the Commission may be interested in seeking. Mr. Lindsley further explained the survey process noting that telephone numbers are randomly selected through the aid of computer programming. Several Commissioners expressed concern regarding the advent of internet telephones; however, Mr. Lindsley noted that such technology, due to its present limited use, does not appear to skew results.

Mr. Lindsley stated that the survey would begin on Monday, December 8, 2008 and run until Saturday, December 13, 2008. When necessary, up to eight call backs are attempted. Mr. Lindsley also explained that people have the opportunity of returning telephone calls at pre-scheduled times.

Ms. Samokar was asked if a press release had been sent to local newspapers to which she responded affirmatively. It was noted that caller ID appearing on a recipient's telephone reads "Center for Research and Public Policy" as, for disclosure purposes, it is important to accurately reveal the source of the call. It was suggested the pollster begins by stating: "Hello, I am calling you on behalf of the Town of Wilton. My name is" Mr. Lindsley stated that raw data will be released to the Commission without revealing the recipient's telephone number.

Mr. Bayer expressed concern regarding the lack topic ranking adding education should be listed as a separate topic. Commissioner Gould questioned whether the poll should target individuals over the age of 18 or focus on head of households. Several Commissioners felt that the poll should represent the opinions of all residents over the legal age of 18.

Ms. Samokar discussed questions involving community quality of life. Commissioner Pratt noted that questions could be re-written to read: "Should the Town dedicate tax dollars for the purpose of" Ms. Pratt stated that questions should be structured in a manner that reveals one spending priority over another.

Commissioner Bayer stated that certain items with cost implications could be flagged and then prioritized by the responder at the end of the survey. Mr. Bayer suggested rewording certain questions to read: "Should the Town consider the purchase of additional open space when it becomes available.....?"

Ms. Samokar next discussed residential development. Several Commissioners expressed concern regarding the vagueness of certain questions. With regard to residential development, it was suggested that questions be reworded so as to yield a definitive opinion.

Ms. Ayers stated that Georgetown should be added as a special area of interest. The Commission further stated that defined areas of Danbury Road should be studied, looking at perhaps 3 or 4 segments of the highway corridor versus one combined area.

Ms. Samokar spoke to the issue of business development. Several Commissioners opined that the issue of business development in Cannondale needs to be further explored. Mr. Nabulsi stated the need for identifying and prioritizing the type of business development in addition to identifying potential locations.

Discussion ensued regarding community facilities. Commission comments were made regarding the need to better prioritize facility needs. It was also suggested that existing economic conditions be factored in the survey by adding language such as: “notwithstanding current economic conditions, how do you feel about.....”? Several Commissioners expressed concern with lumping educational and athletic facilities with other important community facility needs.

With regard to transportation issues it was suggested question #30 and #33 be removed. Commissioners queried whether transportation topics should include a fiscal qualifying statement. The Commission recommended additional questions be added to better understand the nature of train commuters as well as determine the support for additional pedestrian and bicycle paths throughout the community. Commissioner Nabulsi felt it would be desirable to hear resident views concerning high traffic volumes on local roads as well as ways addressing such problems.

Discussion ensued concerning storm water drainage attenuation as well as possible provisions for encouraging “green” development. It was the collective opinion of the commission that questions #39 and #40 be eliminated from the survey.

Chairman Poundstone thanked the consultants and the Commission and requested that any additional comments be forwarded to the Town Planner no later than Thursday, 12 o’clock noon. Chairman Poundstone adjourned the meeting at 9:05 p.m.