

PLANNING & ZONING
COMMISSION
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TOWN HALL ANNEX
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PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP
SUMMARY MINUTES
MARCH 9, 2009

PRESENT: Sally Poundstone, Chairwoman, Doug Bayer, Marilyn Gould, Dona Pratt, Michael Rudolph, Eric Osterberg and Town Planner Robert Nerney

ALSO Heidi Samokar of Planimetrics, LLC and members of the public and press

EXCUSED John Wilson, Vice Chairman, Bas Nabulsi, Secretary and Alice Ayers

ABSENCE:

Chairwoman Poundstone convened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Ms. Samokar stated that the primary purpose of the meeting is to review the draft copy of the Plan of Conservation and Development. To assist the Commission with the editing process, Ms. Samokar provided a card outlining four fundamental levels of review. Ms. Samokar emphasized the need for feedback and clear directives following the conclusion of the planned March 30th meeting.

The Commission commenced with its review of the plan. Commissioner Rudolph mentioned the need for a document disclaimer stating that the document should not be construed as being obligatory in any manner, rather merely advisory.

It was recommended a bullet note referencing a "community development action plan" on page 3 be removed as such a plan does not exist in Wilton. Commissioner Bayer suggested a re-ordering of topics under the heading "Things to Focus on" so as to more accurately represent priorities. Commissioner Bayer stated that his top priorities include Traffic, Housing Needs, Natural Resources, Business Development and Community Facilities. After continued discussion, it was concluded that traffic was not a top community priority.

Commissioner Gould opined that "community character" should be a fundamental topic of the plan noting that additional descriptive language could be placed in the preamble of the document. It was noted that some issues appear somewhat misleading, in particular, topics involving open space and natural resources.

Commissioner Pratt questioned whether topics should be consolidated and grouped. It was suggested the table be converted to a narrative.

Commissioners requested several editing changes. Specifically, the Commission requested the abbreviation “WWII” be changed to World War II. It was the consensus that the term cul-de-sac on page 6 be changed to “dead end”. It was agreed the term “mall” used in describing the Stop & Shop site be changed or eliminated. Several commissioners expressed concern regarding the size of maps and photographs throughout the document and requested that such images be enlarged for clarity. With regard to demographic data, it was suggested that references be provided; particularly with regard to demographic projections.

The Commission suggested Chief Financial Officer Joe Dolan be contacted in an effort to obtain the latest financial data. Concerning the “grand list” of neighboring towns, it was noted that Westport was inadvertently excluded.

Discussion ensued regarding the land use chapter and it was suggested that definitions appearing on page 14 be clarified. Several commissioners questioned the description of Super 7 as “dedicated open space”. It was requested that references to “fish and game clubs” be removed as no such entities exist in Wilton. The Commission did note the presences of several large land holders including golf courses, private clubs and a riding club and recommended such entities be acknowledged.

Regarding community facilities needs, the commission stated that any introduction and modernization of technology should serve the purpose of promoting efficiency as deemed appropriate and affordable.

The commission next reviewed “Conservation Strategies”. The commission noted the lack of an introduction and expectation statement. Several commissioners opined that the two main areas of the chapter deal with the preservation of natural resources and energy conservation. It was suggested that language within the chapter could be consolidated.

Discussion followed concerning ecological issues. It was noted that drainage review requires specialized staffing that should be considered when implementing the plan. It was suggested a side bar be added to more fully describe the desire for promoting policies geared toward ensuring a largely non-sewered community. The Commission stated that detailed information pertaining to Alternative On-Site Sewerage Disposal Systems (ATS) be refined and presented as a generalized statement.

The Commission took note of a statement on page 34, describing Wilton as being “fairly built-out”. It was the Commission’s opinion that this description be quantified. Commissioner Rudolph opined that lengthy passages concerning deer population control be rewritten so as to be more succinct as it represents only one of several environmental concerns.

With regard to energy consumption, the Commission expressed concern regarding the first three paragraphs found on page 35 of the document and requested that the passages be deleted. The Commission concluded the statements appear conjectural in nature and extend beyond the scope of the document.

The Commission suggested the acronym LEED-Certified be fully defined. The Commission also requested a more precise description of Connecticut's Natural Diversity Resource Database.

Discussion ensued regarding the desire and/or interest in eliminating use of the terminology "Super 7" in describing Conn-DOT's past proposal of developing a limited access highway through Wilton.

Commissioner Bayer expressed concern with regard to existing affordable housing policies, stating that the Commission has an opportunity to be pro-active in identifying suitable sites and establishing more meaning for procedures for developing such housing. Concerns were expressed regarding the emphasis on social service planning, noting that the document's main focus pertains to land development.

The Commission determined that it may be difficult in meeting the March 30th document review deadline. Chairwoman Poundstone stated that the Commission should revisit the need for additional review time following the March 30th meeting, further noting that the planned informational meeting for May 4th could be rescheduled, if necessary.

Chairman Poundstone thanked Ms. Samokar and adjourned the meeting at 9:45 p.m.