

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
APRIL 6, 2009

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

ALSO Bruce Hampton and Patrice Gillespie of the Energy Commission and members of the public

Chairman Poundstone convened the meeting at 7:20 p.m. explaining that four members of the Commission would lead POCD topic discussions. Topics included Route 7 development, housing and residential considerations, economic development of and energy conservation.

Commissioner Pratt led discussion regarding energy conservation issues and introduced Bruce Hampton and Patrice Gillespie of the Energy Commission. Commissioner Pratt stated that many of the recommendations provided by the Energy Commission did not appear in the draft plan. Following a discussion with Energy Commission members, Commissioner Pratt mentioned that she re-wrote sections of the original text in an effort to create a more concise document. Commissioner Pratt stated that the amended information could be further modified by the Commission, if desired.

Commissioner Bayer expressed concern regarding the potential misinterpretation of information as it relates to energy consumption, stating that such information could be used to justify non-desired development.

Commissioners raised questions regarding the statistical information in determining Wilton's high energy consumption. It was suggested that CL&P be referenced as the source of information and further explanation and clarification be provided. Commissioner Gould suggested that bullet point #3 be removed as it is no longer relevant.

Conversation ensued regarding the goal of reducing energy emissions by 20% by the year 2020. Mr. Hampton explained that Wilton is in the process of joining ICLEI (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives); a worldwide organization that advocates emission reductions

and sets forth ideas that can then be adopted at the local level. Regarding emission reductions, Commissioner Poundstone suggested goals be clearly stated. It was suggested that goal statements be modified to clearly provide measurable standards. Referencing a newspaper article, Commissioner Nabulsi indicated that carbon footprint is not related solely to wealth or life style, but can also be attributed to older, inefficient buildings.

Commissioner Gould questioned the reduction of waste generated by construction projects and opined that bullet point #6 under LEED criteria should be removed. Mr. Hampton explained the concept of LEED development, further noting that although the reduction of carbon emissions is a policy of the state, it will still require initiatives from local communities.

Commissioner Nabulsi stated that he foresees no resistance to the policies outlined in the document further stating that such information is good for both the town and the plan. Under the paragraph of Conservation, Commissioner Pratt stated that the word “begun” should be changed to “completed”. Mr. Hampton mentioned that state codes are currently in the process of being rewritten and have yet to be promulgated; however, the town should consider moving forward with policies, including incentives. Commissioner Pratt stated that incentives could later be defined. Commissioner Bayer suggested that incentives be modified through the word “explore”.

Commissioner Osterberg requested thought be given to unanticipated consequences. Mr. Hampton explained that the LEED certification is evolving and resultant policies are likely to change as necessary. The Commission requested the language be modified to clarify this matter.

Commissioner Rudolph noted the need for outlining incentives and specifying types of conservation. Commissioner Pratt stated that the Commission had requested the removal of references to specific LEED conservation measures, instead broadly referring to such standards. With regard to goals, it was suggested that regulations be reviewed to determine appropriate opportunities for alternative energy. It was agreed that action statement #5 be removed.

As a means to measure progress, Commissioner Nabulsi suggested baseline dates be added to the action statement. A number of other editorial changes were recommended and it was suggested a recording of the discussion be forwarded to the town’s consultant.

Commissioner Nabulsi led discussion pertaining to future development along Route 7. Commissioner Nabulsi started the discussion reviewing public opinion survey results as it pertains to existing conditions along Route 7 from Norwalk to Lambert Corner, Lambert Corner to Cannon Road and Cannon Road north to Georgetown.

The Commission reached a consensus to retain similar policies along the southerly approach of Route 7 from Norwalk to Lambert Corner. It was agreed that parcels split by zone lines be reviewed with a re-delineation of zone boundaries where necessary. Commissioner Pratt expressed interest in reviewing setback and landscaping policies along Route 7, including South Wilton. This position was shared by other members of the commission.

Discussion ensued with regard to the area of Route 7 between Lambert Corner and Cannon Road. Commissioner Bayer opined that this area possesses little or no residential development; hence zoning policies should be changed to accurately reflect such conditions. Commissioner Gould reminded the Commission of several large residential developments along Route 7, including Perry Green and Crowne Pond. Following discussion, the Commission reached a consensus to pursue zoning policies aimed at fostering a more uniform appearance along this segment of Route 7. The Commission also reached consensus to re-examine existing adaptive use policies.

With respect to the area of Route 7 north of Cannon Road, the Commission unanimously agreed to maintain existing policies given the presence of limiting constraints including the Norwalk River as well as severe topography.

Commissioner Bayer moderated discussion pertaining to affordable housing. Commissioner Bayer expressed the need for more affordable starter housing and queried the need for incentives to foster such housing opportunities. Commissioner Gould stated that there have been success stories and referenced the Autumn Ridge development as an example.

Commissioner Bayer asked whether the Commission would support the concept of ½ acre zoning, noting several examples of neighborhoods consisting of ½ acre lots. Several commissioners expressed interest in identifying hubs capable of supporting higher density housing. Grumman Village was noted as a successful example. Commissioner Gould mentioned that portions of the Super 7 right-of-way could possibly be used to support affordable housing opportunities. Commissioner Ayers expressed concern over the lack of protection for traditional, smaller-scale housing, further noting that incentives to preserve such housing should be considered. Commissioner Osterberg stated that the word “small houses” should be used to describe housing needs. Commissioner Osterberg further stated the desirability of reusing larger buildings, such as former school buildings, to meet housing needs.

Commissioner Wilson led the discussion with regard to economic development. Commissioner Wilson suggested the creation of an economic development commission. Commissioner Wilson further explained that the commission could comprise a mix of members from existing boards as well as a number of at-large positions. The commission expressed support and felt efforts should be made to better support the business community

Chairwoman Poundstone thanked the Commission, expressing appreciation for those members who participated in moderating topic discussions. Chairwoman Poundstone adjourned the meeting 9:10 p.m.