

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
January 27, 2010 Special Workshop

Commission Members Present: Alan Gannuscio, Janet Ramsay, Marshall Brown and Vincent Zimnoch

Town Staff Present: Town Planning Coordinator and Assistant Zoning and Wetlands Officer Jennifer Rodriguez, and Town Planning Consultant Michael O'Leary

Chairman Gannuscio called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

Mr. O'Leary distributed a Plan of Conservation and Development 2007 Planning Policies document to all Commission members and staff. He explained that the document contained all of the objectives that were listed in the Plan of Conservation and Development (the Plan). He went on to say that the Commission should look at the items in the Plan that had stated that something should be done.

Mr. O'Leary suggested that they first add the name of the Board or Commission that had the primary responsibility for each objective where needed and make any necessary corrections where necessary. He went on to say that if the Commission felt strongly about any of the objectives that were the responsibility of other Boards or Commissions they could assemble them and present them to the appropriate Board or Commission.

Mr. O'Leary suggested that the Commission do the following:

1. assign responsibility for each objective;
2. remind the various Boards and Commissions of the objectives requiring their action; and
3. prioritize the objectives that were the responsibility of the Commission itself.

He then suggested that the Commission members take the document home and prioritize the top ten objectives and then bring those lists back to a future workshop. Chairman Gannuscio agreed that the Commission members should take the document home, review it and then come back at a future workshop to discuss further.

Mr. O'Leary referred to Item IV.A.5, "strengthen land use regulations to require Stormwater Management Plans to improve water quality discharges within the Town's Stormwater drainage systems," and stated that the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) had a Stormwater Quality Manual that they were encouraging the towns to either refer to in their regulations or to include the key components in their regulations. Ms. Rodriguez commented that that was something that she had listed as a goal and that she had given it to the State, therefore it was something that should really be addressed this year. She went on to say that she would talk to Mr. Steele about it.

Ms. Ramsay left the meeting at 7:30 pm to attend another meeting.

Ms. Rodriguez referred to Item IV.A.1, “perform an inventory of each of the Town’s major watercourses to evaluate their health and open space opportunities,” and stated that the Inland Wetlands Commission had asked her to do an inventory. She went on to say that she would probably go out to do so in the spring.

Ms. Rodriguez referred to Item IV.A.2, “involve school groups and other organizations in an education program about the importance of the Town’s watercourses,” and stated that the Lego League had asked her to go to the Middle School to speak with the kids about floods. She went on to say that, if she were to suggest them, they would probably be receptive to her going out to give some other talks as well.

Ms. Rodriguez referred to Item IV.B.1, “seek to update the Town’s Inland Wetland Regulations consistent with the latest CT DEP model regulations,” and stated that the hearing had opened on the new complete set of Inland Wetland Regulations which incorporated all of the DEP’s model regulations. She went on to say that the hearing had been continued to February, because they were awaiting comments from the DEP.

Ms. Rodriguez referred to Item IV.B.2, “consider the establishment of increased regulated areas in the Town wetland regulations particularly associated with the Town’s major watercourses and their associated wetlands,” and stated that the Inland Wetlands Commission had voted not to increase the regulated area to 100 feet as had been recommended by the DEP.

Chairman Gannuscio referred to Item IV.C.3, “establish a no net loss policy of inland wetland soils as the result of new development,” and commented that that was how he thought that the Inland Wetlands Commission operated anyway. Ms. Rodriguez noted that they still allowed some impact to wetland soils.

Mr. O’Leary asked what the status was of Item IV.C.1, “the Aquifer Protection Agency should proceed to adopt regulations based on the State model regulations.” Ms. Rodriguez replied that she did not believe that they had adopted it. She went on to say that she would call and ask them for an update. Mr. O’Leary then asked what agency was responsible for aquifer protection. Ms. Rodriguez replied that it was the Conservation Commission.

Chairman Gannuscio referred to the Traffic and Transportation Planning Policies Section and stated that it looked like Enfield was going to get the bulk of the money for a train/transportation hub.

Chairman Gannuscio stated that once the priority of the objectives was updated they could email the document to the various Boards and Commissions.

Mr. O'Leary reiterated that they should look at the Responsibility column, look at the Commission's objectives and then prioritize them. He went on to say that the Commission members could email their prioritized list of objectives to him and he would tabulate it and come up with a list of the top ten objections.

Mr. O'Leary referred to Section VI, Economic Development Planning and Policies, and distributed a packet of information regarding Village Districts. He then referred to Item VI.B.8, "consider Village District or Historic Overlay zoning in the Main Street Commercial areas to encourage new development and redevelopment compatible to a downtown setting." Mr. O'Leary stated that the Economic and Industrial Development Commission (EIDC) had been focusing on the following four things:

1. a parking study between the Congregational Church and Dexter Plaza;
2. short term aesthetic recommendations;
3. intersection improvements; and
4. vegetation management recommendations along the canal.

Mr. O'Leary distributed the Short Term Aesthetic Recommendation map. He noted that the darker stars on the map indicated the more expensive options and the lighter stars were the less expensive options. He then suggested that they have Mr. McMahon, EIDC consultant, come to a future workshop to bring the Commission up-to-date on what had been happening.

Mr. O'Leary stated that the EIDC had submitted a Capital request in the amount of \$50,000 to complete some aesthetic improvements along the canal (a sign and the fountains). He went on to say that the EIDC had not had Ferraro Hickson develop any models, because there were models that already existed. Mr. O'Leary then commented that he did not agree with that decision, because he felt that they could not just cut and paste Windsor Locks into an existing model from another Town; doing a Village District would be very involved.

Mr. O'Leary pointed out that Village Districts were contained in the Zoning Statues and, therefore, creating a Village District would be a rezoning of an area of Town. He then referred to Item (d) in the packet of information regarding Village Districts and stated that that was usually what discouraged towns from proceeding with a Village District. Mr. O'Leary pointed out that they would have to hire or appoint an architect, landscape architect or planner as the Village District Consultant to review the applications and make recommendations. He went on to say that the regulations would have to be very detailed.

Mr. O'Leary passed around, for the Commission members review, a map from the Main Street Study which defined the Downtown area. He went on to say that even if they were not going to do a Village District they could still create a Main Street Downtown District.

He then noted that they should have some architectural design standards for all of the districts. Mr. O'Leary commented that some type of rezoning on Main Street should be a goal.

Chairman Gannuscio asked Mr. O'Leary if he wanted to email Mr. McMahon to see if he wanted to come to a future Commission meeting. Mr. O'Leary replied that he would. He then asked Mr. Gannuscio if he wanted Mr. McMahon to attend a special workshop. Mr. Gannuscio replied that he did and suggested that Mr. McMahon come in the next couple of months. Mr. O'Leary stated that he would ask Mr. McMahon if he was available for the next couple of meeting nights in case the Commission ended up with a light agenda.

Mr. O'Leary asked Ms. Rodriguez what questions she had been getting with regard to political signs. Ms. Rodriguez replied that size had been the biggest issue (the Town should not be limiting the size).

Mr. O'Leary stated that they could not control political speech on someone's private property, except where it infringed on road safety. The discussion continued and Ms. Rodriguez commented that the question was really should the Commission take a few things regarding signs out of the current Regulations. Mr. O'Leary stated that they should remove the things in the Regulations that were not enforceable.

Mr. O'Leary commented that in another town that he had worked with they had stepped way back with regard to regulation of political signs. He then suggested adding a statement to the regulations that would say something to affect of "nothing in these regulations shall be interpreted to restrict or limit the constitutional right of citizens to express their views on political matters or other matters of public interest by means of signs, provided however, that any such signs shall not be so constructed or located as to interfere with traffic sight lines or otherwise pose any public hazard".

Mr. O'Leary asked if they should get rid of the maximum sign area from the Regulations. Mr. Zimnoch replied that if it was not enforceable, then why have it.

Chairman Gannuscio commented that the Commission should look to make the necessary changes to the regulations regarding political signs soon. Mr. O'Leary asked Mr. Gannuscio if he wanted him to draft something up. Mr. Gannuscio replied that he did.

The workshop was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Ferrari
Recording Secretary

THIS IS A DRAFT

Please check the following month's meeting minutes for official approval of these minutes and any amendments or corrections that were made.