

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
March 8, 2010 Meeting

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

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

Chairman Gannuscio called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm.

Commission roll call was taken.

MINUTES:

Chairman Gannuscio referred to the January 27, 2010 special meeting minutes and noted that he, Ms. Ramsay, Mr. Brown and Mr. Zimnoch were present at that meeting. He then asked the Commission members and staff for any comments or corrections. They had none. Mr. Gannuscio moved to approve the January 27, 2010 special meeting minutes, as published. Mr. Zimnoch seconded the motion. All were in favor. The vote was 5 – 0, the motion was approved.

Chairman Gannuscio referred to the February 8, 2010 meeting minutes. He then asked the Commission members and staff for any comments or corrections. They had none. Mr. Gannuscio moved to approve the February 8, 2010 meeting minutes, as published. Mr. Zimnoch seconded the motion. All were in favor. The vote was 5 – 0, the motion was approved.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

There were none.

REVIEWS:

There were none.

ACTION ON CLOSED PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS:

There were none.

NEW BUSINESS:

Patrick McMahon, Economic and Industrial Development Commission (EIDC) Consultant, was present to give the Commission an update on the Main Street Study.

Mr. McMahon stated that they had had a very in depth Main Street study done. He went on to say that that study had been completed in May, 2008. He then noted that they had gone back to the Town to request some additional funds in order to complete some additional studies. Mr. McMahon noted that they had looked at a shared parking concept between the Congregational Church and Dexter Plaza, vegetation management on the canal side of Main Street, and the intersection of Bridge Street, Church Street and Route 159. He went on to say that they had also asked their consulting firm to come back with some short-term aesthetic improvements. He then pointed out that they had prepared some additional drawings related to that request.

Mr. McMahon stated that they were continuing to try to move forward and that they had made a request in the current Capital budget for \$50,000. He then explained that they were asking the Town to allocate \$50,000 each year towards some Main Street project. He then commented that it was his understanding that they would not receive \$50,000 this year, but that they might receive some of it. Mr. McMahon stated that they were going to use those funds to try to clear the vegetation from the southern end of the canal to open it up.

Mr. McMahon stated that they had received a grant from the Connecticut Main Street Program and the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism to look at a “way finding” signage system. The signs would be placed on Main Street and on Route 75 directing people to Main Street.

Mr. McMahon stated that they were pursuing moving the Amtrak station back into the center of Town. He noted that they would not utilize the historic train station because it was too close to the intersection. He went on to say that they would move the station to just north of the historic train station. Mr. McMahon stated that funding had been allocated at a Town Meeting to hire Campbell Technologies regarding railroad circuitry and vehicle signalization. He went on to say that Campbell Technologies had been conducting a review of that intersection and that they should be receiving the preliminary draft of their findings later in the week. Mr. McMahon noted that they would then take that preliminary information to the Department of Transportation and Amtrak to pitch the Town’s case to relocate the station. He then pointed out that what they were proposing was exactly what they had been hearing state-wide in regards to transit oriented developments. He went on to say that they were hoping that the State had received approximately \$40 million for the New Haven-Springfield line to do some additional

environmental studies and that the State would be able to get their designs and information prepared in time for the second wave of stimulus dollars. Mr. McMahon commented that they were not looking for the relocation of the train station to cost the Town any money; they were looking for State or Federal funds.

Historic Train Station

Mr. McMahon referred to the historic train station and noted that it was still vacant. He went on to say that the Windsor Locks Preservation Association was really eager to get going on it and had been negotiating with Amtrak. He then noted that they were waiting for a letter from the Town stating that they supported the sale of the train station and some land to the Windsor Locks Preservation Association. Mr. McMahon stated that the request for the letter had come in the fall, but that they had not submitted the letter because they were waiting for the results of the signalization study. He commented that they wanted to have a very clear sense of where the platforms would need to be if they were to move the train stop before Amtrak sold land to the Preservation Association that might need to be incorporated into the bigger plan.

Ms. Ramsay commented that she had spoken with both groups recently and that her understanding was that the Preservation Association was willing to sign off any land around the train station; they just wanted the train station. She went on to say that she had also spoken with Peggy Sayers who had said that she was planning on contacting the DOT. Ms. Ramsay stated that she did not understand what the hold-up was if all the Preservation Association wanted was the actual train station and not the land. Mr. McMahon stated that they had initially thought that the signalization study was going to be completed in December, but that it had taken a little longer than they had anticipated.

Montgomery Mill Complex

Mr. McMahon stated that the Town had initiated a foreclosure action, because the owners had not been paying their taxes. He noted that the Town also had liens on the property from the fire that had taken place a few years earlier. He went on to say that they were trying to determine the best way to move forward; the Town could potentially try to take the property over. Mr. McMahon stated that before the Town were to take the property over they wanted to understand completely what the ramifications would be.

Mr. McMahon stated that there were new programs that had been established by the State to try to encourage brown field redevelopment. He went on to say that the State wanted to see some of the mills converted to affordable workforce housing.

Mr. McMahon stated that the current ownership did not seem to be doing much. He then noted that Primrose had entered into an agreement with the owner, but had put it on hold when the owner had not come through with their part of the deal. He went on to say that the ownership of the property was from Brooklyn, New York and was very hard to communicate with; therefore they were currently in a holding pattern.

Main Street Master Plan

Mr. McMahon stated that the Commission had a roll in bringing the vision that had been produced in the Master Plan to reality through some Zoning Regulation changes. He went on to say that with appropriate regulations they might be able to see some changes in the next decade or two. Mr. McMahon referred to a Village District and stated that there were two options; they could either have a Design Review Board or appoint a consultant.

Mr. McMahon distributed a couple of conceptual drawings to the Commission members and staff. He then pointed out that what was depicted in the drawings could not be possible under the current Zoning Regulations. The discussion continued briefly regarding what they would and would not want to see on Main Street.

Mr. O'Leary asked how the discussions with Dexter Plaza were going regarding the proposed shared parking. Mr. McMahon replied that those conversations had not been very productive; therefore they were trying to go through the property management company.

Mr. McMahon stated that EIDC would be happy to assist the Commission in any way that they could. He noted that they were utilizing Ferraro Hickson on an ongoing basis and that the Commission could also utilize them.

A discussion regarding parking and the Main Street area in general then followed.

Bradley Gateway Project

Mr. McMahon stated that they were trying to work with Congressman Larson's Office to get an allocation of Federal funds to go towards the Gateway Project which incorporated the two back access roadways and improvements along Route 75. He went on to say that they had been told that Larson's Office was very much interested in the project, but that nothing would likely happen until the election cycle was complete.

OLD BUSINESS:

a. Discussion with Commission and Staff

Mr. O'Leary distributed an updated Planning Policies document to the Commission members and staff. He explained that he had included some of the comments and updates that had been discussed at the recent workshop. He then noted that Chairman Gannuscio had given him his priorities which he had listed as "high" in the updated document. Mr. O'Leary stated that he had shaded the items that he thought were areas where the Commission should do something/take some action; he had not included anything that was considered ongoing by the Commission.

Mr. O'Leary stated that he was still waiting to hear from the other Commission members regarding what their priorities would be. He then suggested that at the Commission's next meeting they look at the top four or five priorities that they should start working on. Mr. O'Leary asked the Commission members to send him emails containing their list of what they felt was most important.

Chairman Gannuscio commented that the Commission had hopped to it for Chapman Chase over the last couple of meetings and that staff had given their time to Chapman Chase as well. He then stated that he had received a letter earlier that day basically saying "forget it"; Chapman Chase was going to remain as the developer and their original home styles would also remain in place.

NEW BUSINESS:

a. Public Input

There was none.

b. Receive New Applications

There were none.

Chairman Gannuscio referred to the Route 20 Interchange Project and stated that the stick in the works was that the DOT was saying that it would cost millions more than what had been estimated. He went on to say that the construction companies disagreed with the DOT and felt that the original figures were accurate.

COMMUNICATIONS AND BILLS:

Chairman Gannuscio stated that the Selectmen had instituted a spending freeze.

Chairman Gannuscio stated that the Commission's advertising and supply lines had been cut by the Board of Finance more than the Commission had suggested. He went on to say that the Periodic Secretary, Mr. O'Leary, and the Professional Development lines had remained the same as had been requested. He then noted that the Advertising line had been reduced from the requested \$3,750 to \$3,500 and the Supply line had been reduced by \$150 more than the Commission had suggested. Mr. Gannuscio commented that the Printing Regulations line had been cut as the Commission had suggested.

Chairman Gannuscio stated that he had received a bill for Mr. O'Leary's retainer for January/February, 2010 in the amount of \$3,333. He then moved to approve Mr. O'Leary's bill in the amount of \$3,333. Ms. Ramsay seconded the motion. All were in favor. The vote was 5 – 0, the motion was approved.

Chairman O'Leary asked the Commission members and staff if they had any issues to discuss. They had none.

Chairman Gannuscio moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Zimnoch seconded the motion. All were in favor. The vote was 5 – 0, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 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.