

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
December 5, 2012 Special Meeting Minutes

These minutes are not official until approved at a subsequent meeting.

Commission Members Present: Vincent Zimnoch, Alan Gannuscio, Jim Szepanski, Anthony Scarfo, Peter Juszczynski, and Paul Harrington

Town Staff Present: Jennifer Rodriguez (Town Planner), and Dana Steele (Town Engineer)

The special meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission started at 7:09 pm.

Members of the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Economic and Industrial Development Commission were present at this meeting.

Ms. Rodriguez, Town Planner, discussed recent efforts to revitalize downtown Main Street.

- Main Street Study and Addendum 2008-2009
- Plan of Conservation and Development (incorporation of Main Street Study)
- Relocation of active station downtown
- Historic train station restoration
- Transit Oriented Development Study
- **Main Street Overlay Zone and Village Area Regulations**
- **Main Street Overlay Map**

Ms. Rodriguez emphasized the importance of incorporating the Main Street Study into the town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). The POCD is updated every 10 years and is a very important tool which boards and commissions should be using. She stated that a steering committee has been formed for the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Study and has had three meetings so far which have generated some very interesting recommendations. Specifically, in tonight's meeting the Main Street Overlay Zone and the village area regulations will be discussed.

In order to meet the objectives of the Town Plan of Conservation and Development and implement the recommendations of the Main Street Study, the town must define the focus areas; specifically, the Main Street District and the Transition District. On the Main Street Overlay Map, the red areas represent the Main Street Overlay Zone, and the blue areas represent the Main Street Village Area. A question was raised: Were the owners of the properties in these areas consulted when the zones were being defined? Ms. Rodriguez replied that they were not, but this is just a draft and there will be a public forum in January where this can be discussed. She also pointed out that three areas in particular (Elm Street near Walgreens, Maple Avenue, and 2 North Main Street) may benefit from having both commercial and residential zoning.

Ms. Rodriguez discussed meeting the objectives of the POCD through the Main Street Overlay Zone.

- Promote Vibrant Commercial Uses
- Prohibit Uses Not Conducive to Main Street
- Maintain Architectural Standards
- Encourage Mixed Uses
- Increase Pedestrian Traffic/Provide Spaces
- Provide Bicycle Access and Storage
- Permit/Encourage New Parking Options

There was some discussion regarding drive-throughs and whether to allow them on Main Street. Ms. Rodriguez stated that some towns prohibit properties having frontage on a main street from having drive-throughs that exit onto their main streets, but they are allowed to exit onto a side street. She asked for feedback. The general consensus was that this approach made sense.

Ms. Rodriguez discussed implementing the recommendations of the Main Street Study.

- Encourage mixed uses
- Allow increased density to 15 units per acre
- Require buildings to be built up near Main Street
- Require parking to be behind buildings
- Relax parking requirements downtown and encourage shared parking and on-street parking
- Allow existing underlying zones to regulate existing uses and minor renovations
- Revise Sections 402 and 403 and add Sections 418 and 419 to accommodate the new MSOZ and transition zones
- Provide design and architectural standards

Main Street Village Area—A Place of Transition

- Promotes a functional and attractive downtown area
- Implements goals of the Town Plan of Conservation and Development and the Main Street Study
- Maximize advantage of proximity to downtown retail and mass transit facilities
- Promote a mix of uses near Main Street
- Rehabilitate buildings and sites and stabilize property values
- Promote economic vitality of the Town of Windsor Locks

Ms. Rodriguez stated that the specific regulations that are being revised are Sections 402 (permitted use table), and 403 (setback requirements). Also being revised are Sections 418 (MSOZ) and 419 (Village Area). New construction and renovation of more than 10% of a building in these areas would be held to some architectural and design standards but would also have more flexibility of design and increased square footage.

Ms. Rodriguez mentioned that the TOD Study is discussing a Model Code and the Capital Regional Council of Governments (CRCOG) is conducting sustainability and market studies for village areas and main street corridors. It may be a year or longer before all these things come together, so it is important in the meantime to have new regulations that provide design and architectural standards. First Selectman Wawruck pointed out that some of the improvements that are going to take place such as the train platform, 2 North Main Street, and Montgomery Mill, will be in the next 5 to 8 years, but some will not happen for 10 or 15 years, so adopting the new regulations now is very important because as buildings age and reach the end of their economic life the owner will have to decide whether to demolish or rebuild. What we have on the books now with the present regulations would mean the creation of another Dexter Plaza, which does not work for our town.

A brief discussion took place regarding the Ground Field Assessment Grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the \$5 million grant from the State of Connecticut for the improvement of the Church Street/Route 159 intersection.

Ms. Rodriguez explained that the Planning & Zoning Commission has been working on the regulations for a little over a year, getting feedback from other consultants. The regulations are now in draft form, and the next step will be a public forum to include some of the neighborhoods which are being considered for the transition areas. After the public forum the draft will be finalized and then a public hearing will be held at which time an action will be taken.

A discussion took place regarding how many stories would be appropriate for the buildings on Main Street in order to maintain the small town feel that Windsor Locks has. A comment was made that the town as a whole has to buy into this renovation 100%, with each of us stepping up to the plate. Mr. Gannuscio remarked that Fuss & O'Neill said that Windsor Locks has the chance for a new, dynamic downtown while still maintaining its mill village charm.

Increased traffic, longer gate down times, and signalization were discussed.

Ms. Rodriguez mentioned two opportunities coming up to discuss the train station: the DECD Grant TOD workshop next week and the public forum in mid to late January.

A discussion took place regarding the proposed amendments to the liquor regulations; specifically, whether to allow café permits and tavern permits, and the 1,500 foot distance limitation.

The meeting ended at 8:37 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Seymour
Recording Secretary