

Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) Implementation Committee

Thursday, February 27, 2020

6:00 p.m.

Wallingford Town Hall – 45 South Main Street

Ground Floor – Planning and Zoning Conference Room

MINUTES

Chairman Seichter called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.m.
Due to the lack of a flag, the Pledge of Allegiance was not recited.

Roll Call: Present: Jim Seichter, Chairman, Planning & Zoning; James Fitzsimmons, Planning & Zoning; Jim Wolfe, Economic Development; Dave Ellis, Wallingford Land Trust; Rich L'Heureux, Wallingford Land Trust; Karen Hlavac, Board of Education, Steve Lazarus, Wallingford Center Inc.; Liz Landau, Wallingford Center, Inc.; Don Crouch, Recreation Commission; Kacie Hand, Town Planner; Mary Heffernon, Conservation Commission and Chris Shortell, Town Council.

Approval of Minutes – January 30, 2017 Meeting

Mr. Wolfe: Motion to accept the minutes of the January 30, 2017 meeting as submitted.
Ms. Heffernon: Second
Vote: Unanimous to approve with Karen Hlavac abstaining.

Approval of Minutes – April 3, 2017 Meeting

Mr. Wolfe: Motion to accept the minutes of the April 3, 2017 meeting as submitted.
Ms. Heffernon: Second
Vote: Unanimous to approve with Karen Hlavac abstaining.

Approval of Minutes – November 30, 2017 Meeting

Mr. Wolfe: Motion to accept the minutes of the November 30, 2017 meeting as submitted.
Ms. Heffernon: Second
Vote: Unanimous to approve with Karen Hlavac abstaining.

Approval of Minutes – May 6, 2019 Meeting

Mr. Wolfe: Motion to accept the minutes of the May 6, 2019 meeting as submitted.
Ms. Heffernon: Second
Vote: Unanimous to approve with Karen Hlavac abstaining.

Reports from Agency Representatives

2. POCD/Action Agenda Progress – Report by each member agency.
Chairman Seichter asked for reports highlighting what has been accomplished since our last meeting and what each agency is working on for the next year.

Mrs. Hand reported for the Planning and Zoning Commission that they held a workshop regarding the Town Center Zone and IV and IX regulations. The Town Center was intended to be a clarification of the regs, not substantive changes. She reported that she made a recommendation for a change to the landscaping requirements and there was a conversation

about potentially allowing office use and whether that should be considered in the front 50 ft of the building on the first floor. The creation of the Town Center regulations was one of the recommendations of our Plan of Conservation and Development, so it was already completed, but they continue to make sure they are the best they can be. One of our high priority recommendations was to revisit uses permitted in the IV and IX zones, which was also discussed at that workshop. A consideration for a small reduction in open space (5-10%) requirements in order to facilitate additional development, was also discussed. The primary conversation was around what uses might be added to those zones as well as potentially allowing some of the uses allowed in the IX in the IV. For example breweries and the like, as well as specifying data centers and potentially some recreational uses. About ¾ of the IV is in the watershed and some portion of the IX is in the watershed, so we would only be recommending those use changes for the properties that lie outside of the watershed. At this point the Water and Sewer Division wasn't supportive of adding uses within the watershed. Ms. Hand noted that long term, it would be valuable to talk about our stormwater management requirements in the watershed and look to strengthen those. Uses are one way to limit what occurs in the Watershed but probably not the best way. For the time being, the use changes and open space reductions were discussed only for properties not in the watershed. They also discussed including language in the regulations that the quality be looked at in terms of it being cohesive over the space. The Water and Sewer Division recommended some language. Mrs. Hand also reported that Transit Oriented Development is the next thing on the horizon. Options are expanding or modifying our incentive housing zone and/or creating a separate independent TOC zone. Ms. Hand also shared that Amy Torre has moved to full time Land Use Specialist and Zoning Enforcement Officer. She announced that she will be out on maternity leave and that Tom Talbott, a former Assistant Planner will be filling in during her absence on a part time basis.

Question – as far as the IX/IV planning, is there going to be another workshop before it goes to the Planning and Zoning Commission? Ms. Hand replied that she had hoped that the proposed changes were simple and that maybe they'd be ready to be taken up by the Commission for public hearing after that workshop, but she expects another draft round and then another workshop. Chairman Seichter commented that Commission should discuss this at the next Planning and Zoning Commission meeting. There were issues where there was general agreement but the Commission decided to wait on the results of a survey being conducted on types of uses in Town Centers. From his perspective some of the areas where we may have had some agreement on it may be more beneficial to go forward with some of that at a public hearing. He will be working with the Commission and Ms. Hand to determine how to proceed.

Don Crouch, Park and Recreation Commission shared that they have a new Director, Jason Michael and a new Program Specialist, so they are fully staffed. He mentioned some of the big projects including the Community Pool, which is moving along. He reported that the time frame is tight. The intention is to keep the pool closed this year, unless too many deadlines are missed and the project gets pushed out. The pool was winterized and could be opened this year. If everything is on track, it will only be closed this year. He also reported on Grant Street Park which they are hoping will be completed in May or June. He explained that the old playground equipment is being replaced, the grass area is being upgraded and some fencing repaired and they are considering a pollinator garden.

Liz Landau, Wallingford Center, Inc. reported that with the blessing of the EDC and WCI, she and Tim Ryan met with CT Main Street and have a list of comparable towns. They will meet with these towns to see how they handle office space issues and get suggestions for simple adjustments that can be made to accommodate the property owners. They start meeting with

the eight towns on the list next week. She shared that they are going to implement one suggestion from CT Main Street, which is painting a logo and catch phrase on empty storefronts. This is personalized to the property owner. She has talked to one of the art studios in town and the Spracket building on Center Street is the first that will be done. She noted that there's a lot of activity down on the corner of North Colony and Center Street with the sale of 4 Center Street. She stated that they would like to have a little bit more money in their façade program. She noted that one real positive thing is that all these stores are expanding and instead of leaving downtown, they are finding other space downtown. She stated that they will be asking for another \$10,000, bumping their budget to \$20,000. Steve is very helpful with this work. She stated that she is excited about this and that the downtown is really starting to thrive. Ms. Landau also reported that the Simpson Court grassy area pavers project has received \$4,500 from five different local non-profits. Steve did a rendering. The project is going out to bid in the next couple of weeks. Chairman Seichter commented on the blade signs on the buildings are very attractive. Ms. Landau stated that they paid for 75% of the cost through the Façade program.

Chris Shortell, Town Council, reported that some work has been on the train station committee recommendations. They have not formed a committee yet. He and Councilor Laffin have had some conversations with Dr. Menzos, the primary occupant, who as expected is not willing to move. It was noted that Tim Ryan talked to the Mayor who felt that the railroad station is currently underutilized. Mr. Shortell apologized that he has no update on the rest of the items, which include requesting funding and writing a letter. He would try to close out some of the action items that are timely for budget season, i.e. Initiating a dedicated stream of money for the town center sidewalks separate from public works. He will talk to Vinnie Cervoni to see what he can get on the agenda or maybe schedule a workshop to tackle some of the items. Mrs. Hand noted that now that we have the fee and loop open space provision in lieu of parking provision in the Town Center Zone, she needs to approach the Town Council about creating the dedicated fund to be used toward parking or traffic related improvements. She stated that it might tie into the sidewalk funding conversation. She explained that under State Statute, the regulations allow the payment of a onetime fee of \$2000 a space instead of building the parking space. This is less expensive than buying land and building the space. That money goes into a dedicated fund that can be used for things like parking lot improvements. Mrs. Hand also noted that following this meeting there is about a grant that the Town was given for pedestrian activity improvements along Route 5 in the vicinity of the train station and town center. The meeting will be a public input meeting to review design options. Mr. Shortell asked who actually decides what to do. Mrs. Hand replied that ultimately the report, done by an outside consultant, will make a recommendation. Staff has provided their input. Eventually the Council would decide if they want to pursue it. Chairman Seichter stated that one of the suggestions is to consider undergrounding of the utilities to get the telephone poles out of the middle of the sidewalks. Due to the cost it would be the Council's decision.

Karen Hlavac, Board of Education, asked if everyone had a copy of Patrick's update. She added that she isn't sure where the POCD is going with the school garden idea and she isn't sure if they were gardens with edible items or flowers or other plants to be used for pollination. She noted that they try to use farm to table when possible for food service. She stated that everyone is aware of the facility study. The only update is that a fourth option should be added to look at the idea of obtaining enough land to perhaps build a new high school. This option is being pursued and tracts of land are being looked at. They don't have any firm information yet. She reported on the energy audit. The head of maintenance has selected a bid and the Board will get three options with three different prices. They have not received them yet. She reported that they are thinking of developing their own energy efficiency committee, in house. Ms. Hlavac

noted that they have a lot of interest in that committee from parents. Consensus of the POCD was that this is a great idea. Mr. Shortell noted that the Council recently heard a recommendation to reinstate the energy conservation commission. Ms. Hlavac suggested that if that committee is developed that Patrick Reynolds represent the Board of Education on that committee. Mrs. Hand noted that the Energy Conservation Committee is supposed to have representation on this committee.

Rich L'Heureux, Wallingford Land Trust, noted that they continue to thrive and grow, and they are always looking for new members. They hold a monthly work party and maintain our trails. He noted that people have thanked them and complimented Wallingford's hiking trails. He noted that they maintain the kiosks with trail maps and corporate sponsors at each of the properties. The financial support recognition is new. He reported that they are always looking to gain more exposure, and will participate in the Historical Day, Jubilee 350 and Celebrate Wallingford events. He noted they are always looking for new property donations as well. Dave Ellis talked about the website. He explained that there are interactive maps and a printable trail guide on the website. He noted that they have expanded their Facebook presence and announce events and meetings there. He was asked if they mail renewals to members, and replied that they will be moving that to email and Facebook. It was noted that they have been getting a lot of positive feedback from out of town people hiking the trails.

James Wolfe, Economic Development Commission, reported that they have been working with the P&Z on the IV/IX zone revisions. He also reported that they worked diligently on doing something with the Railroad Station. They are looking at several usages, from restaurants to museums to arts. He also talked to Sal Menzos. Lastly, he reported that the Bristol Myers building is completely down and we have had some interest from potential users. He doesn't know who they are.

Mary Heffernon, Conservation Commission, reported that the Fresh Meadows property with it's fully accessible trails is getting incredible use. She noted that they spent the first half of 2019 cleaning up their properties from the microburst. She reported that they are working on some education programs that they hope to launch in 2020, covering things like locally grown foods, property management for forestry and a pollinator garden program. She reported they are also working on some open space and that the farmland lease programs continues. Chairman Seichter asked how much land is under the farm lease program. Ms. Heffernon directed the commission to the map on the wall that showed the number of properties. She noted that the program helps the farmers and allows the town to maintain different habitats for wildlife. She noted that their commission is very supportive of getting the Energy Conservation Commission moving, as some of the things in the POCD plan the Conservation Commission is supposed to do with them. Mrs. Hand noted that there is support for that commission in the POCD.

Chairman Seichter invited public comment. None was offered. Chairman Seichter suggested the Commission set the date for the next meeting and also the date for the Forum with the public. He noted that it would be beneficial to have the Forum when Mrs. Hand returns from her leave. He suggested looking at the fall, maybe early October. There was consensus to proceed with early October. He recommended having a meeting of the POCD before that, maybe in September. He suggested polling for date availability for both meetings. There was consensus to proceed.

Mrs. Hand noted that there are a lot of items in the POCD that have been worked on or are getting worked on. This is exciting. She suggested reviewing what has been accomplished as

well as current status for the public forum. It was noted that this POCD has done the best of any POCD over the last 30 years.

Motion to Adjourn (male)

Seconded (female)

Vote: Unanimous to adjourn

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl-Ann Tubby
Recording Secretary

