

**PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
DECEMBER 8, 2015**

Place: Room 206, Town Hall

TIME: 8:00 P.M.

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MEMBERS ATTENDING:
Olvany, DiDonna, Cunningham, Sini, Jr., Voigt

STAFF ATTENDING: Ginsberg
Channel 79

Vice-Chairman Olvany opened the meeting at 8 P.M. and read the first agenda item:

GENERAL MEETING

Town Plan of Conservation & Development.

Review and discussion of first draft of Town Plan. Provide guidance on Plan format and preparation. Any other issues related to preparing the 2016 Town Plan. Aim is to get through first 9 chapters.

Mr. Olvany noted that the purpose of the meeting was to review the first final draft of the Town Plan of Conservation and Development. The goal this evening is to discuss and comment upon at least the first eight chapters.

Mr. Olvany said that he likes the look and style and layout of the document which is similar to the booklets which Mr. Chalder has provided in the past. Mrs. Stevenson said that the new Board of Selectmen will review the prior Vision Statement from 2014 and update it as necessary. Mr. Sini agreed that having the 2016 Vision Statement would be appropriate for the Plan. Mr. Chalder said that the final document will have tabs on the side to make it easier to find certain chapters. Mr. Voigt then asked about the possibility of including larger maps to make them easier to read. Mr. Chalder noted that the eventual final document will be placed on the Web which should help readers enlarge the maps on their screen, however, he can consider the possibility of including 11"x17" maps in the Plan, where appropriate. Mr. Cunningham noted that on Page 3 the words "or so" should be deleted when referring to Section 8-23 of the Statutes. Mr. Sini suggested a change to Page 6 of the draft Plan, adding the words "and Regulations." Mr. Chalder said that 2006 Town Plan has 10 tabs and the Commission should decide whether having 5 tabs or 18 tabs would be appropriate. Mrs. Stevenson then asked whether the pages which have no sidebars could have a little more space dedicated to the text. Mr. Chalder responded that this is an issue he will have to look at relative to Microsoft Word.

At about 8:15 P.M., the Commission started reviewing Chapter 2 of the draft. Mr. Olvany asked if on Page 9 there is updated information for the sidebar. Mrs. Stevenson suggested that the sidebar be sourced. Mr. Sini noted on Page 9 that the word "subdivisions" should be added to the last paragraph since that is another way that Darien can have housing growth. Mr. Chalder confirmed that on page 13, the soon to be completed Milone & MacBroom report is referenced in the sidebar. Mr. Olvany noted that there are different forecasts.

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Mr. Chalder confirmed that he has reviewed the Board of Education, the State of Connecticut and the Planimetrics population projections and they are all slightly different. They are consistent, but not identical. Mr. Chalder suggested on Page 13 in the sidebar adding a disclaimer. Mr. Olvany suggested speaking to realtors in Darien regarding in-migration and where new residents are coming from. He stated that the public schools have huge cost implications for the Town. Mr. Sini said it might be important to call out the differential between the Board of Education projections. Mr. Chalder confirmed that Darien is outside of the norm of what's going on in most Connecticut communities relative to school enrollment. Mr. Olvany mentioned that the City of Stamford has recently had to build a number of schools to keep up with their enrollment, and the growth going on in Stamford. Mr. Sini suggested placing the Milone & MacBroom projections as well as the Planimetrics projections on the same page for easy comparison. Mr. Olvany noted that "teardowns" result in larger houses with more bedrooms. Mr. Sini asked on Page 99 whether it would be possible to get more "teardown" information prior to 1996 and update the 2015 information. Mr. Olvany noted that zoning changes could result in more housing units which could result in possible changes to school enrollments. Mrs. Stevenson asked whether it would be possible to glean from larger existing developments what could occur in the future. Mr. Ginsberg said that he had spoken with Rebecca Augur of Milone & MacBroom and their report might cover this topic, but Ms. Augur explained that because there so few of each type of development in Town, a "one size fits all" multiplier could not be justified by Milone & MacBroom. Mr. Olvany suggested trying to find comparables in other similar communities.

Mr. Sini noted that on page 15, the charts need headers. He asked whether the white boxes on pages 12 and 13 could have color added so they are easier to differentiate. He recommended that the charts on those pages be sourced. He asked whether a sentence on page 17 could be added regarding the Town's upcoming 8.30g moratorium application. He also suggested adding the Town of Ridgefield in charts where it is appropriate. Mr. Stevenson agreed that Ridgefield is certainly more relevant than Weston which is a rural community. Mr. Olvany recommended on page 17 that the chart be matched to the text.

Mr. Ginsberg will check and update when the State Department of Housing numbers on affordable housing come out. Mr. DiDonna suggested adding information about empty nester housing, and explained that there is certainly a need for more in Darien. Mrs. Stevenson referenced page 14 and explained that the elderly population in Town needs to be considered relative to both uses and housing. Mr. DiDonna then asked why seniors leave Darien. Mrs. Stevenson responded that this could be due to a number of reasons. Mr. Sini suggested that tax implications could certainly be one of those reasons. Mr. Olvany then made a suggestion to cut off at the year 2030 the charts and graphs since the time frame from 2030 to 2040 is so far into the future. Mr. Chalder agreed with that and said that putting the graphs out to 2030 would be appropriate since that covers at least ten years.

At about 8:50 P.M., the Commission then reviewed Chapter 3 of the draft Town Plan. Mr. Sini suggested adding a reference to the RTM PZ&H Committee who was consulted and met with Mr. Chalder as part of the Town Plan update. Mr. Olvany noted that the top four choices were in both charts in Chapter 3. Selectman Susan Marks explained the very successful Weed Beach survey which had been recently completed and received over 2,000 responses. Mr. Cunningham noted on Page 24 that both scale and density are worth including in a bullet. Mr. Sini, Mr. DiDonna and Mr. Olvany agreed. Mr. Chalder confirmed that on Page 24 and 25 this reflects what was brought up at

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the meetings. It may be worth adding the phrase “during the introductory exercises” to clarify that this was what came up. Mr. Cunningham asked whether sewer extension lines came up during those meetings. Mrs. Joanne Hennessey said that Chapter 3 is an outgrowth of the original meetings and density did come up in the original interviews and is certainly a concern of residents. The Town needs to manage its growth. After some consideration, Mr. Chalder asked whether it would be appropriate to delete pages 24 to 26 to avoid confusion. Mr. Cunningham agreed that those pages are appropriate for deletion, but he suggested that those subject items be placed elsewhere in the Plan as they are still important. Mr. Chalder suggested possibly adding them as sidebars at other spots in the document. Mr. DiDonna then referred to the “sorrys” and “prouds” in Chapter 3. Mrs. Hennessey said that she was at that meeting where “sorrys” and “prouds” were noted and that there were about 50 participants at that meeting. She did note that some people may have been confused when placing their “sorrys” and “prouds” on the map.

At about 9:05 P.M., the Commission then reviewed Chapter 4 of the draft Town Plan. Mr. Sini noted the importance of adding the beaches to the Community Character Map as well as Five Mile River Road and Cherry Lawn Pond as scenic areas. He then asked about the numbers on the Map on Page 31. Mr. Olvany pointed out on Page 30 that the Vision is quoted and that should be a direct quote from the Board of Selectman’s Vision and, if that Vision is changing, this Page 30 needs to be consistent with that. Mrs. Hennessey said that on Page 30 it is confusing as Mr. Chalder refers to the “Town” in the chart and what exactly does that mean. It was suggested that Mr. Ginsberg work closely with Mr. Chalder to better specify those instances where “Town” is referred to and try to better identify the leader who would be responsible for implementation. Mrs. Hennessey then noted the confusion on page 32 relative to the paragraph on lighting. Mr. Olvany agreed that the lighting paragraph is broad and needs to be more specific. Mr. Ginsberg explained that there are 4 types of lighting that need to be identified and possibly addressed: residential lighting; commercial lighting for commercial developments; street lights; and lighting for ball fields. It was noted that the Selectmen are now looking into the issue of purchasing street lights and converting them to LEDs. Mr. DiDonna noted on page 34 that 1950 Boston Post Road is listed as a “Landmark” structure and he mentioned that the structure has recently been approved for demolition and is likely to be demolished within the next month and thus it should be deleted from the chart. Mr. Voigt suggested sourcing that chart. Mr. Chalder agreed. On pages 36 and 37, Mr. Sini suggested referencing sporting and youth events as civic events in the Town which bring the community together. All Commission members agreed. Mr. Ginsberg will take a photograph of the Weed Beach playground to better reflect what is there for insertion in the Plan on page 38.

At about 9:20 P.M., Commission members then reviewed Chapter 5 in the draft document. On Page 40, Mr. Sini had a question about “right of first refusal” and how that should be clarified. Mr. DiDonna asked whether leases would also be part of that. Mr. Ginsberg said that he had never read the document which grants the Town the right of first refusal, so he was not sure if leases are also included. Mr. Olvany then had a comment on Page 40 in the first paragraph. In response to that, Mr. Chalder noted that it might be appropriate to flip the two sentences.

At about 9:25 P.M., Commission members reviewed Chapter 6. Mr. Cunningham made a suggestion to add a sidebar to Page 46 regarding the Harbor Management Plan. Mr. Voigt had a comment on Page 45 regarding the limits of heights and fences and walls. He said that in some specific circumstances, it is appropriate to keep hedges and other plantings low to protect scenic views over properties towards the water. Mr. Ginsberg explained that there was an example of this

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in Tokeneke where the Commission specifically required that hedges be kept low to allow for continued scenic views. Selectman Susan Marks then asked about page 48, number 4--the Advisory Commission on Coastal Waters. Mr. Chalder explained his thought process behind that recommendation.

At about 9:30 P.M., the Commission reviewed Chapter 7 of the draft. Selectman Susan Marks had a comment at page 54 and noted that, in the past, there has been a recommendation to separate the EPC and Flood and Erosion Control Board and that recommendation did not get approved by the RTM. Mr. Ginsberg confirmed that, and noted that the EPC also serves as the Inland Wetlands Agency and the Conservation Commission, and Mr. Chalder believed that serving all three roles in one board was difficult. Mrs. Hennessey suggested the use of fewer adjectives on page 53 and elsewhere in the document. Mr. Chalder agreed. Mr. Cunningham had a question about page 54, sidebar number 7 and a discussion about "freeboard" ensued. Mr. DiDonna asked about the Natural Diversity Database. Mr. Chalder agreed that it would be worth a sidebar to explain what that database is all about.

At about 9:35 P.M., the Commission reviewed Chapter 8 of the draft Town Plan. Mr. Sini asked about the meaning of "resilient adaptation". Mr. Olvany then made a suggestion to swap out some of the photographs to be representative of the entire downtown, not just downtown west of the train tracks. Mr. Cunningham noted that on page 60 number 2 there should be an emphasis placed on scale and density.

Attorney Bruce Hill then spoke against the concept of Village Districts, especially its potential use in Noroton Heights. He believed it was a terrible idea and not appropriate to use as a tool. He believed the design guidelines are better way to address the character of proposed buildings and/or Planning & Zoning Commission review in conjunction with the Special Permit process. It was mentioned that during the Town Plan process in October 2015, Mr. Hill wrote a memo in October 2015 noting his concerns with the potential of using the Village District concept in Noroton Heights. Mr. Ginsberg said that he would get that memo to the Commission members and to Mr. Hill. On page 60 number 3, Mrs. Hennessey said she had a concern about the word "transition". Mr. Olvany noted that there are now denser buildings in downtown and this would be transitioning to single family neighborhoods around downtown. Mr. DiDonna then asked about Page 61 Number 3, what did Mr. Chalder mean about public art? Mr. Chalder then explained how public art is being used in other communities such as Kent, CT. Mr. DiDonna then asked about the source of Pages 66 and 67 and wondered if that figure is too confusing for the general public. Mrs. Hennessey questioned whether these should be in the ten-year Plan. She said that the concept shown in the figure is good, but she had concern about too much detail being shown. Mr. Cunningham said that he needs a little more time to digest those figures and maybe the Commission should review that next time. It was agreed that the Planning & Zoning Commission needs to be comfortable with the figures shown on these pages in the Plan. Mr. Chalder said that these figures would be easy to modify and that the sketches and drawings can be modified to reflect the Commission's wishes. Mrs. Hennessey noted that on Page 63 they show a possible connection between Old King's Highway North and South which is a very expensive project and not likely to occur. On Page 65, she noted the length of the crosswalks across Leroy Avenue and Ledge Road and Mr. Chalder's sketch. Mr. Chalder responded that the sketches are for illustrative purposes only and certainly not engineered. Mr. DiDonna mentioned that a disclaimer may be appropriate such as "possible pedestrian improvements." Mr. Sini suggested a disclaimer on Page 71 by adding the word

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“possible.” Mr. Ginsberg brought up Page 70 Number 7 Parking Structures, and noted the importance of the Commission to address that specifically in the Plan. He said that that is one of the biggest changes between prior plans and this plan, was the recommendation for possible underground and above-ground parking structures. Mr. DiDonna suggested adding the street names to the graphic on Page 68 and 69 to make them more readable and understandable for the reader. Mr. Chalder agreed.

Mr. Olvany said that at the next meeting on January 12th, the Commission will then start the discussion of the Draft Plan with Chapter 9 and work its way through the rest of the draft document to the end. Mr. Ginsberg said that there may be a need for 15 minutes at the start of that meeting to go back and address any items mentioned tonight, but the goal certainly is to get through the rest of the document on January 12th. Mr. Ginsberg explained that the January 12th meeting will be held in the Mather Center at 8:00 P.M.

There being no other matters on the agenda, Mr. Voigt made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:15 P.M. That motion was seconded by Mr. DiDonna, and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeremy B. Ginsberg
Planning & Zoning Director

12.08.2015min