

APPROVED

PLANNING COMMISSION  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
Monday, May 31, 2011  
S. Conference Rm. – Mulvey Municipal Center

Members Present: Phil Bassett, Bill Neale, Libby Waldron (alt.), Marie Farrell (alt.), Ashley Jones, Carole Ketelsen, Marilyn Ozols

Also Present: Meg Parulis, Town Planner; Jason Vincent, Planimetrics

Ms. Ozols called the meeting to order at 7:07. Since all regular members were present, no alternates were seated.

**BILLS:**

| GENERAL ACCOUNTS                 |            | SPECIAL FUNDS                                    |             |
|----------------------------------|------------|--|-------------|
| 1. Rec. Sec. POCD – N. Rudek     | \$         | 1. POCD – Planimetrics                           | \$          |
| 2. Rec. Sec. PC - S. Helchowski  | \$         | 2. AH Study - Planimetrics                       | \$          |
| 3. Engr. – Woodard & Curran      | \$1,305.20 | 3. Historic Survey<br>Taylor & Taylor Associates | \$ 9,000.00 |
| 4. Legal – Branse, Willis, Knapp | \$217.50   |  |             |
| 5. GIS – Doane Collins           | \$150.00   |  |             |
| 6. Printing - Ciel               | \$120.00   |  |             |
| 7. Hartford Courant              | \$         |  |             |
| 8. Conferences- CAZEO L.DeMaria  | \$25.00    |  |             |

**Mr. Neale made a motion to approve the bills paid from the General Accounts and to authorize payment of the bill from the Special Fund as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bassett and unanimously approved.**

**MINUTES:**

**Mr. Bassett made a motion to approve the Special Meeting minutes of May 16, 2011. The motion was seconded by Ms. Ketelsen and unanimously approved.**

Ms. Ozols noted that approval of the Special Meeting Minutes for May 23, 2011 would be tabled until the next meeting since they were not included in the packets.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

1. Plan of Conservation and Development – proposed revisions to draft plan

Ms. Ozols turned the meeting over to consultant Jason Vincent. Mr. Vincent summarized what he perceived as the three main areas of concern raised at the Public Information Meeting and in written comments – Tourism, Housing and Town Center. He went on to discuss each of the concerns and options to consider in modifying the plan.

Tourism

Mr. Vincent suggested that the narrative be re-cast to emphasize the need to manage tourism. He went on to say that if we make Westbrook an attractive place to live, visitors will want to come here. Maybe “tourism” isn’t the right word.

In general, Commission members felt that the tourism industry was important to Westbrook and didn’t want to diminish its contribution to the local economy. Mr. Neale cautioned that they not throw the “baby out with the bathwater” and emphasized the strong desire for business development expressed at public workshops. The Commission went on to discuss how local businesses depend on tourism. Also, the community benefits from businesses such as restaurants that would not survive if they didn’t have the added customers during the summer. Instead of softening the support of tourism, it was agreed that the first paragraph should better explain the benefits of the tourism industry.

Ms. Parulis called to the Commission’s attention, a resource she had recently come across on nature-based tourism for small communities that might be helpful in putting the recommendation in the proper context.

Commission members questioned the singling out of B&B’s and felt that the title of that section should be broadened to include other tourist industries such as cottage rentals, seasonal restaurants, etc. Mr. Vincent explained that the reason’s B&B’s were singled out was that they were located in residential zones and additional sensitivity was needed. He agreed to incorporate the suggested changes.

Mr. Vincent re-capped that the section will be re-organized around promoting tourism and managing impacts with a lead-in on the benefits of tourism.

Ms. Farrell noted that there was no mention of providing information for tourists such as developing a website that promotes activities and places of interest. Ms. Parulis mentioned that the Tourism subcommittee of the Chamber of Commerce had recently put together a website [www.visitwestbrookct.com](http://www.visitwestbrookct.com) that could potentially be linked to the Town website.

Ms. Farrell also noted that in the section on Business Retention (p.86), it was recommended that the Economic Development Commission be the lead agency. She questioned why specific agencies responsible for implementation were not mentioned in other sections. Ms. Parulis responded that the Implementation Guide will assign responsibility for each of the recommendations and perhaps the reference to EDC should be eliminated for consistency sake.

Ms. Ozols further suggested that the first line in the first paragraph starting with “Westbrook’s first economic development priority...” could also be deleted.

### Housing

Mr. Vincent relayed concerns from the public that affordable housing is not a problem the community needs to address. He suggested that the section be expanded and clarified.

Ms. Farrell expressed her opinion that people don’t understand who this housing is intended to serve – teachers, firemen, young people starting out – and that it is not low income housing.

Ms. Ozols agreed that it was important to make that point. The text as written does not convey the need.

Ms. Parulis suggested adding some statistics from the Affordable Housing Study.

Ms. Ozols went on to say that she didn’t think meeting the state goal and comparison to surrounding communities should be the focus of the section. The town is not highly susceptible to a developer coming in under CGS. 8-30g since there are no sewers. The fact is, kids graduating

from Westbrook High School move to surrounding towns because they can't afford to live in Westbrook.

Ms. Ketelsen disagreed that we should not try to meet the state mandate of 10%.

Ms. Ozols responded that it is not likely that the Town will ever get to 10% and that the plan should focus on meeting practical needs.

After discussion, it was agreed that the plan should recommend that the town "make every effort to meet the state criteria" as suggested by Ms. Ketelsen.

Mr. Vincent will make revisions to the section as discussed.

### Town Center

Mr. Vincent relayed that there had been public concern over the perceived expansion of Town Center into established residential neighborhoods. Most concerns centered around the boundary line as shown on the plans and language in the plan related to the "Town Center".

Ms. Ozols commented that the line depicted on the maps in question was intended to define a place, not activities. The Town Center includes residential areas as well as commercial areas and both activities need to be coordinated.

Ms. Parulis noted that similar lines were used to define other "places" such as the marinas and regional business areas and were not intended to be exact.

To clarify the intent of the plan, Mr. Vincent suggested the following revisions:

1. Change the underlying map used on p. 100 to the Business Development Plan instead of the Existing Land Use Map. The Business Development Plan very clearly distinguishes commercial from residential.
2. On p.102, in the 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph, add "It is not this plan's intent to expand commercial uses into residential districts."
3. On p. 104, clarify that the Village District Overlay can include commercial as well as residential uses. Also, remove reference to "Town Center Extents Triangle".
4. On p. 86, add "commercial area" after Town Center.
5. On p. 100, under the heading "Define Limits of Town Center" – describe the elements that make up the Town Center and relationship between residential and commercial.
6. Consider tightening the "boomerang" shape.

Mr. Neale suggested that the main goal of Chapter 9 be revised to include the residential component.

Ms. Ozols noted that the commercial area (pink) as shown on the Business Development Plan appeared to extend further into the residential districts than it should and asked that the consultant make sure it is accurately depicted.

At this point, Chairman Ozols recognized Nancy Moore who reiterated her concerns about how the plan will be interpreted with regard to expanding commercial development and encouraging civic activities (i.e. parades) on S. Main Street.

Mr. Vincent responded that the plan is only a guide to future land use decisions.

Mr. Neale suggested that the sections on pages 102 (Attract New Development and Encourage Redevelopment) & 103 (Ensure that Development is Appropriate) be reversed in order.

Ms. Parulis further suggested that wherever mixed use is discussed that it be made clear that it pertains only to Town Center commercial areas.

Mr. Vincent next addressed the items included in the e-mail from the Town Planner dated 5/31/11. He indicated that he would incorporate suggestions for housing. With regard to Open Space comments, a sidebar will be included describing the elements of a Management Plan and the text will be revised to identify specific parcels that are not legally dedicated for Open Space rather than suggesting that all Open Space be researched.

In response to Community Character comments, it was agreed that Grove Beach Rd.N & South should not be included as scenic roads and that the word "Potential" would be added to the legend on the Character Resources Plan on p.53. The features suggested by the Town Planner will be added. Ms. Farrell noted that Johnson's Pond is mislabeled.

Mr. Vincent agreed to the changes suggested by the Town Planner. The Plan will show "Areas of Concern" and "Existing Open Space". A definition of "Areas of Concern" (wetlands, steep slopes, flood hazard areas, etc.) will be added.

The chart on p. 65 will be revised to show general criteria for pedestrian and bicycle improvements for each of the funding priorities rather than listing specific locations.

Ms. Farrell suggested that the chart on p. 67 be moved below the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph and that the chart be referred to in the narrative.

Changes will be made to the Transportation Plan as recommended by the Town Planner.

Ms. Ozols suggested that instead of the map showing Priority Areas for Cisterns and Wells on p. 75 that a list of criteria for requirement of cisterns in new development be included to which Commission members agreed.

Mr. Bassett inquired as to whether existing water lines could be shown on the map entitled "Priority Areas for Public Water Supply". Ms. Parulis responded that due to Homeland Security issues, it could not.

Upon review of the Residential Densities Plan, it was decided that Hill Farm and the parcel to the south adjacent to I95 would be classified as medium density. The Town Center Area Boundary would be added to the plan to reinforce the concept that the Town Center is made up of both residential and commercial development.

Ms. Ozols reiterated that the purpose of the Housing Opportunity Area needed to be explained better in the text.

Lastly, the Commission discussed the comments received from the Regional Planning Agency. Ms. Ozols pointed out that it appears there was a page missing. Ms. Parulis will check into this and circulate a full copy.

Ms. Parulis indicated that an addendum of all the changes discussed along with some minor re-wording would be provided for Commission review no later than June 13<sup>th</sup>. It would also be made available for review by the public. Mr. Vincent agreed to get the sections that needed the most work (Tourism, Housing, Town Center) to Ms. Parulis for review as soon as possible.

There was discussion about the possibility of re-scheduling the regular meeting on June 13<sup>th</sup> to June 20<sup>th</sup> or some other date to give the Commission time to review the addendum before the public hearing. Ms. Parulis will send a Doodle message to determine the best date.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Proposed Open Space Management Ordinance

Ms. Ozols explained that the ordinance is being proposed by the Conservation Commission and has been reviewed by Town Counsel. In accordance with the ordinance, the Planning Commission will need to stipulate whether any Open Space approved as part of a subdivision is to be managed by the Conservation Commission. Adoption of the ordinance is scheduled for a Town Meeting on June 9<sup>th</sup>. Since the ordinance involves the Planning Commission, she wanted to be sure members of the Commission had no objections.

**Mr. Neale made a motion that the Planning Commission had no objection to the language as proposed. The motion was seconded by Ms. Ketelsen and unanimously approved.**

**Mr. Neale made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bassett and unanimously approved.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Meg Parulis, Town Planner