

# Regular Planning Commission Agenda

## MINUTES

7:30 PM Thursday, March 19, 2015

Room 133

### 1) Convene Meeting

Chairman J. Van Hise convened the meeting at 7:30 p.m. and established a quorum of members: Chairman J. Van Hise; Vice Chairman A. Kerley; Secretary D. Frankel; and Alternate I. Agard.\*

Also present: Community Development Director K. Daniel; and Recording Secretary J. Llewellyn

Absent: Regular members L. Taylor and G. Hunton, and Alternate G. Blass.

\*Alternate I. Agard was appointed a voting member.

### 2) Review Minutes of Previous Meeting

**A motion was made by A. Kerley to accept the minutes of the 3/5/15 meeting as submitted. Motion seconded by J. Van Hise, who then realized there were not enough members present at the 3/5/15 meeting to call a vote.**

**This item will be continued to the next regular meeting.**

### 3) Informal Discussion

[no item]

#### a) Plan of Conservation and Development

*Todd Poole, from 4ward Planning, who was part of the Four Corners study committee, and who did the Housing study for the Plan, also present.*

Community Development Director K. Daniel presented a PowerPoint overview of the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD or the Plan), beginning by noting that the POCD must be updated, by law, every ten years, in order for the Town to be eligible for discretionary funding. At the present time, she added, we are on track to adopt a new plan by the end of June of this year. This Plan helps balance both conservation and development, and takes into consideration the changes the Town has undergone since the last Plan was done in 2002. The major portion of the Plan is a Statement of Issues, Goals, and Strategies. Ms. Daniel then outlined the process involved in putting the Plan together, which includes, but was not limited to, meetings with key Boards and interest groups in Town, Planning Commission meeting discussions and analyses; the "Envision Brookfield" website soliciting feedback from residents; and focus groups. One feedback comment Ms. Daniel noted that somewhat summarized a common sentiment was the goal to "maintain our country charm while modernizing."

26 issues contained within these sub-headings are laid out in this plan:

-Community Character Issues;

-Natural Resource Issues;

-Open Space Conservation and Preservation;

-Protecting Historic Resources;

-Revitalizing the Four Corners;

-Promoting Economic Development;

-Housing;

-Facilities;

-Transportation;

-Utility Services.

Chairman Van Hise agreed that the comments should flow in the order of topics in the POCD draft, which was available to all present, as well as projected on the screen.

Comments and concerns raised included Commissioner A. Kerley's concern over paving sidewalks in the Four Corners area, followed by installation of water lines and other utilities necessitating tearing up said sidewalks. K. Daniel responded by noting that these utilities are already in the road.

Public comment from Mr. Ripple added an alternative of placing conduits under the sidewalk at interim locations to remedy the problem for any future sidewalk location proposals.

H. Kurfehs, Chairman of the Economic Development Commission (EDC) said he'd reviewed the entire document, and he clarified that Route 202 between Silvermine Road and Route 133 has undergone a zone change from Industrial to Commercial, but the change is not going to happen "overnight."

Addressing Section 2, A. Kerley offered to provide some kind of wording to bridge what he termed a "disconnect" as the text cites the Town's history information at the Turn-of-the-Century and then the 1950's, with no information of the time between.

A discussion on Labor and Industry Trends brought up the State's loss of younger workers, with H. Kurfehs adding that there are an "awful lot of discouraged workers" whose "salaries are not going up." A. Kerley added that the 2002 plan didn't recognize the need for economic development, but the recent discussion focuses on developing existing business areas to their highest and best use. R. Ripple, Crestview Drive, noted that Brookfield is a commuter town, adding that there is a "salary gap" within the state (specifically citing the greater Stamford area vs. Brookfield). He asked if there has been any discussion of corporate development as well as commercial development.

H. Kurfehs responded by stating that there is virtually no "Class A" offices in Brookfield, though Class B and C offices exist. As a result, it is difficult to attract businesses that require a Class A office. On the Industrial side, there are vacancies which are difficult to entice here as workforce and facilities are taken into consideration. Retail remains strong, he maintained, but that "it is a very competitive market."

Todd Poole concurred with these comments, adding that his company does analyses on business trends across the country. "Little office space is being developed on spec, if at all," adding that there is usually a tenant already on board which prefers to be where the talent (Millennials and Generation Y's) want to be. He feels, however, that Brookfield has an opportunity to create office space for small entrepreneurs, which tend to be 50+. Other avenues for growth here that he noted would be in medical offices and retail, adding that a void in town is nice, sit-down restaurants

Resident Liz Lambert addressed the Open Space issues (ref. pp. 39-42), specifically the Strategies chart. Those in the 2002 POCD were not followed up: she asked where the information would come from. Chairman Van Hise said a workshop will be held where the Commission will seek out people from these specialty areas. Ms. Lambert noted that the Land Trust would like to be involved in this. Chairman Van Hise noted that input from the Conservation Commission, Brookfield Open Space Legacy and Weantinoge Land Trust would also be sought.

Resident Jeff Lajava addressed surface water quality issues, specifically that no "green" infrastructures or techniques are mentioned. His concern was runoff into the Still River and nearby lakes. (Green infrastructure utilizes natural processes (ex. evapo-transpiration, rain gardens, bio-swales) that are engineered to address runoff from impervious surfaces). K. Daniel felt it would be an "excellent" item for consideration within this document.

Hal Kurfehs noted that on p. 53, the wording "*Sites should have no more than one curb-cut onto Federal Road with shared access among adjoining parcels; alternate or primary access to Station Road is encouraged.*" Concerned that this may not work well for retail: needs clarification. A. Kerley concurred that the term "site" needs to be clarified.

Zoning does address a Sidewalk Plan which is aligned with curb cut management plan, according to Ms. Daniel. She further added that these "Guiding Design Principles" are just guidelines.

When asked to elaborate on a potential Metro North railroad expansion, Ms. Daniel stated that she did not know anything further than the Governor's objective of improving transportation in the State. It was also noted that western Massachusetts has invested a lot in studying transportation to that area of the state, and is interested in rail service there and perhaps to points south that may include this corridor. Chairman Van Hise added that there are efforts to encourage Town leaders and people like our new State Representative, Steve Harding, Jr., to keep bringing that message to Hartford. (*Later in the meeting, Commissioner D. Frankel added that he felt it is critical to have Metro North added here.*)

G. Dembowski, Vice Chairman of the EDC provided the following recommendations:

-Document should have a Table of Contents;

-Section VII: Achieving the Vision: 71 page section with 110 action items: very comprehensive.

Not clear what the priority or timing is for any of the 110, so when the "leader" of that section is identified, it would be ideal for key milestones and completion dates for each item.

All Action Items should be grouped together to allow the leader to see the scope more clearly. This would also allow the leader to give a quarterly update to track the progress and see how well-aligned to the goal each item is.

H. Kurfehs pointed out p. 63's reference to new library, adding that the preference would be to have it in the Four Corners to engender community involvement.

He also cited the Town's Tax Assessment Deferral Program as a "good" program but not as good as Danbury's (7 years). With regard to his experience in attracting business to the Four Corners, financing is difficult to secure. He suggests making the Assessment Deferral Program "stronger." (*Later in the meeting, EDC Vice Chairman G. Dembowski added the recommendation that the Tax Assessment Deferral Program: should match language with that of the Town Ordinance*).

On the topic of Economic Development, he recommended that the Town itself concentrate on the retention and expansion of what we have already.

A discussion ensued over a possible second large supermarket in town, with A. Kerley noting that Shoprite is the only large store of this type, and is always crowded, apparently creating the need for a second supermarket (which the Town used to have (Waldbaum's) until that company went out of business). Todd Poole gave reasons for the reluctance of another supermarket chain to compete with Shoprite. The nearby Danbury locations of other chains were also cited as a possible reason.

Resident Betsy McIlvaine, of the Library Committee, shed light on the efforts underway for a new library. She stated that the existing one is only 1/3 size of what it should be for a Town this size. A new Library Committee is evaluating possible new locations within town. (p. 74). Chairman Van Hise asked what would happen to the existing (9,600 sq. ft) Library. Ms. McIlvaine said it is Town-owned, so it would be up to the Town for such uses as Parks and Recreation offices, or Board of Education offices.

D. Frankel asked about enlarging the existing facility. Ms. McIlvaine said three architects have evaluated the site and said that another story could not be added. Even if it was possible, it would not provide enough additional space. In addition, parking is very limited.

Nancy Tolmoff suggested that it possibly become a nice restaurant. Chairman Van Hise proposed instead that it be for small meeting locales, which could take some of the footprint need away from the new Library.

K. Daniel noted that HVCEO presently occupies the former Town Hall location (at the intersection of Whisconier and Silvermine Roads), and they will be leaving there within a year. That may free up some Town-owned space for smaller meetings.

Irv Agard noted that there is presently underway an evaluation of school facilities, which may also be a possible use. Art Kerley asked about fund-raising for the Library, especially since there is no Town-owned land in the Four Corners. Ms. McIlvaine said they forecast the need for \$10 million and will try to raise money privately, as well as asking for bonding money through the Town. Todd Poole mentioned that his local library has a revenue generating coffee shop, something else to consider to offset costs. Mr. Ripple mentioned that the current library location has a number of rock outcroppings, and also noted that additional "stories" can be below ground, rather than above.

Ms. McIlvaine, speaking as Chairman of Commission on Aging, mentioned that a few years ago, her agency did a survey of people aged 55+, and their preference was to be able to stay in their own homes. However, here in Brookfield, if you don't drive, you can't go anywhere. She called this a "tough" problem in an area designed for driving.

K. Daniel solicited comments from J. Purcell, who has been involved in Route 202 study, as well as improvements in Four Corners, who noted the "dearth" of public parking at the Four Corners. He also clarified the reasoning behind the recommendation for backing in to the proposed diagonal parking, likening it to part of the mechanics involved in parallel parking.

Regarding lower Federal Road, he noted that they're seeing more pedestrian traffic, noting the near completion of an apartment building at the intersection of Routes 133 and 202, which may generate more pedestrian traffic. There may be a need for wider road shoulders for biking, and to address more pedestrian traffic. The updated POCD should "work hand-in-hand" with the study currently underway on this matter.

Katherine Daniel concluded the discussion by inviting comments to her via her Town email, and noted that the POCD is

on-line and the updated versions will be posted on the Planning Commission website, and on EnvisionBrookfield.com.

Chairman Van Hise thanked the audience for its participation.

*Later in the meeting, the following Motions were made:*

**A motion was made by A. Kerley to return to item 3, Informal Discussion. D. Frankel seconded the motion which carried unanimously.**

**3. Informal Discussion:**

**a. Plan of Conservation and Development**

On the matter of the items listed on charts in the POCD which do not have assigned leaders, the Chairman noted that it may be worthwhile to set a Special Meeting at which the Commission could go through all assignments and try to figure out potential leaders and reach out to them.

**A motion was made by I. Agard to set a Special Meeting for Thursday, March 26, 2015, at 7:30 p.m. Motion seconded by A. Kerley and carried unanimously.**

**4) Old Business**

**1. Mountain Road Hollow**

**• Memo from Ralph Tedesco PE/Town Engineer to the Commission re:**

**Request for sight line diagram by licensed registered engineer of State of Connecticut dated 03/11/2015**

The text of the memo reads: *"I have reviewed the plans for the above and I do not see a need for a traffic study. I do see a need for a sight line diagram to be prepared by a licensed registered professional engineer of the State of Connecticut to be made part of the plans. The diagram should demonstrate that there is adequate line of sight in both directions as specified in the Subdivision Regulations Section 234-503. North Mountain Road is a designated 25 m.p.h. road. Therefore the proper sight distance for this road is 300 feet in both directions."*

The Commission will keep this recommendation in the file for if/when this application becomes active.

**5) New Business**

There was none at this meeting.

**6) Minutes of Other Boards & Commissions**

The Commissioners discussed the following minutes:

- **Board of Selectmen:03/12/2015:** Regular business;
- **Zoning Commission: 02/26/2015, 03/12/2015:** Had held several public hearings on which this Commission had opined: some closed and some are continued;
- **Zoning Board of Appeals: 03/02/2015:** Business as usual and one request with solar arrays which still needs to be presented to the Historic Commission;
- **Inland Wetlands Commission: 03/09/2015:** Closed the hearing on 101-103-105 Laurel Hill Road: no decision yet; other items regular business.

**7) Correspondence**

The Commissioners reviewed the following item of Correspondence:

a. **Letter from Western Connecticut Council of Governments to Municipal Zoning and Planning Commissions re: change to agency reporting statutes and new Agencies for referrals along municipal boundaries dated 02/26/2015.**

Talking about end of HVCEO and beginning of Southwestern Regional Planning Agency.  
Chairman Van Hise noted Item 3: Plan of Conservation and Development: At least 65 days prior to the public hearing on adoption, they must receive a copy for review.

**8) Tabled Items**

There were none at this meeting.

**9) Adjourn**

**A motion was made by A. Kerley to adjourn the meeting at 9:33 p.m. Motion seconded by I. Agard and carried unanimously.**