

RESIDENTIAL PROJECT COMMITTEE of the PLANNING BOARD
31 October 2012 at 1:30 PM
TOWN HALL, 41 SOUTH MAIN STREET

In attendance:

Members: Kate Connolly, Judith Esmay (Chair), Joan Garipay

Alternates: Bill Dietrich, Mike Hingston, Iain Sim

Staff: Vicki Smith, Jonathan Edwards, Judith Brotman

Others: Jim Reynolds, Bruce Sacerdote, Nancy Russell, Susan Boyle, Carol Weingeist, Martha Solow, Anne Morris, Ed Chamberlain, Hilary Pridgen, Lisa Coyle, Barbara McIlroy, Ann Adams, Ed Grampp, Sarah Brubeck

1. Discuss Next Steps for the Residential Zoning Project and Devise a Concise Problem Statement, Process and Timetable and Frame the Work into Larger Planning Context

Judith Esmay read from a document she had prepared for discussion and which had been distributed to the Committee, staff and members of the public.

There were a few amendments suggested and made and the deletion of paragraph 4 under the heading, The Plan.

During the discussion, comments included:

VHB be asked to review and reorganize Article II as well as Articles III- XI.

Form-based zoning may not be useful in primarily residential settings. Others disagreed.

Work on the technical re-codification of the Zoning Ordinance, updating Master Plan statistics and meeting with individual neighborhoods can occur concurrently.

Neighbors should identify their neighborhood boundaries.

Deadlines should not be a factor in getting the neighborhood work done. This is a long-term project that should be done well, not tomorrow.

The Planning Board is trying to be transparent in its work and thus many written and mapped materials are “works in process” and not final.

Concern was expressed that there will be too many neighborhoods in which to work which will affect the length and arduousness of the project.

There are likely to be common themes in different neighborhoods so different neighborhoods will have similar zoning provisions.

The October 13th forum suggested that the Planning Board “do nothing”.

There is worry that the Zoning Ordinance does not describe the Town except in the Goose Pond district.

The West End overlay district is not comprehensive and only deals with certain aspects of new construction.

There is lack of clarity about the Compendium’s purpose and content.

There is a need to define which aspects of land use are “off the table” such as the case of year round housing at Goose Pond.

Is hiring a consultant to re-organize the Zoning Ordinance the best use of tax payer money?

The Zoning Ordinance is confusing, obscure, contradictory, disorganized, inconsistent and legally lapsed to the point that many landowners must hire a lawyer to navigate it. Others disagreed.

Parts of the current contract with VHB should be completed as written and include the technical re-organization envisioned.

Policy and content decisions may be part of the zoning ordinance re-organization as inconsistencies are addressed. These decisions will be made by the Planning Board and not the consultant.

The re-organization task is a big one and may well use up available hours in the VHB contract. The mission assigned to the consultant should be well-defined and manageable. The re-drafted zoning ordinance should be a “product”.

The Planning Board works well with neighborhoods and should do that work, instead of the consultant.

Land uses may be considered in the neighborhood work.

Zoning Board cases may help inform the consultant about problems with the Zoning Ordinance. Former and present Zoning Board members and the Zoning Administrator can help flag these sections.

A summary of the Compendium is needed that very clearly states to what purpose it should be put.

It was the consensus of the Committee was that:

- a full Master Plan revision would not be undertaken before the Zoning Ordinance or neighborhood work, though amendments to the Master Plan might be initiated as a result of the work in each neighborhood.
- Judith's draft be discussed at the Planning Board meeting on November 13th and be made available as a public document as soon as it is revised.
- a disclaimer should be put prominently on the maps and Compendium.
- a summary of the Compendium will be made available for Committee comment next week.
- VHB will be asked to disclose the number of hours spent on the project and when the summary from the October 13th workshop will be available.
- VHB will be asked whether they can provide a few examples of neighborhood discussion guides.
- a subcommittee will be convened to work with the consultant on technical, re-organization of the Zoning Ordinance, to include Hingston, Dietrich, Connolly and Brotman.
- a subcommittee will be convened to work on the neighborhood discussion guide, to include Smith.

2. ADJOURN: The meeting adjourned at 4 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Vicki Smith, Scribe