

**WETHERSFIELD PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING AND MEETING**

May 15, 2012

The Wethersfield Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing and meeting on Tuesday, May 15, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the Wethersfield Town Council Chambers located at Town Hall, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, Connecticut.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Harley called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

1.1 ROLL CALL & SEATING OF ALTERNATES (5 members required for a quorum):

Clerk Roberts called the roll as follows:

Member Name	Present	Absent	Excused
Thomas Harley, Chairman	✓		
Joseph Hammer, Vice Chairman	✓		
Richard Roberts, Clerk	✓		
Earl Munroe			✓
George Oickle	✓		
Anthony Homicki			✓
James Hughes	✓		
Antonio Margiotta	✓		
Dave Edwards			✓
Thomas Dean (alternate)	✓		
Angelo Robert Fazzina (alternate)	✓		
Alex Vasel (alternate)	✓		

Also present: Peter Gillespie, Town Planner/Economic Development Manager;
Denise Bradley, Assistant Planner

Chairman Harley noted that there were 6 full members and 3 alternate members in attendance at the time of roll call. All members present to participate.

Members of the Public were present.

2. OLD BUSINESS:

There was no old business discussed during this meeting.

3. NEW BUSINESS:

There was no new business discussed during this meeting.

4. OTHER BUSINESS:

4.1 Discussion regarding the Updating of the 2000 Plan of Conservation and Development.

There was a presentation and discussion led by Glenn Chalder, AICP, Planimetrics, regarding the Updating of the 2000 Plan of Conservation and Development (hereinafter referred to as POCD). Mr. Chalder prepared an outline of major topics and strategies. Mr. Chalder's presentation at this meeting is based on feedback provided by the Commission, Mr. Gillespie, Commissioner Brent Owen of the Wethersfield Inland, Wetlands and Watercourses Commission (WIWWC) and Bruce Bockstael of the Design Review Advisory Committee in response to what was learned from the public meeting forum (held Tuesday, January 31, 2012, 7:00 p.m. at the Wethersfield Community Center) where the public engaged in discussion about the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development (refer to website: PlanWethersfield.com) as well as further discussions regarding the POCD at the February 22, 2012 and March 20, 2012, and April 17, 2012 Planning and Zoning Commission Public Hearings and Meetings.

Mr. Chalder will provide a draft POCD for Commission review in July 2012. At this time, he is looking for approval from the Commission to survey the public by telephone and on-line. The survey would be conducted by an independent firm.

It was recommended by Planimetrics that the 2013 Wethersfield POCD be organized primarily on a thematic basis because the Town is doing many things well in terms of management and administration of the day-to-day operations. A thematic organization to the POCD is one way to clearly and concisely state the key issues for Wethersfield to focus on during planning period 2013-2023.

Mr. Chalder indicated that work to date suggests that the POCD may contain the following three (3) main strategies:

I. Support Vibrant Places and Neighborhoods

A. Silas Deane Highway:

1. Promote redevelopment/improvement of business sites;
2. Advocate for a walkable "town center type" area on the Silas Deane Highway
3. Consider allowing for higher density housing

B. Other Business Strategies:

1. Support local businesses
2. Promote redevelopment/improvement of business area on the Berlin Turnpike
3. Maintain/enhance Old Wethersfield

C. Residential Neighborhoods:

1. Protect the integrity of residential neighborhoods;
2. Consider ways for zoning to allow housing to adapt to changing lifestyles/needs
 - Porches/insulation
 - Kitchens/bathrooms/closets
 - Garages
3. Seek opportunities to create "green streets" and enhance "curb appeal:
 - Narrow street pavement
 - Add street trees
 - Expand sidewalks
 - Add bike lanes
 - Add LID

II. Enhance Physical Character

A. Protect/Enhance:

1. Protect natural resources/open space
2. Protect historical resources
3. Promote agriculture
4. Enhance our “brand”/image

B. Guide/Change:

1. Encourage/require good design of buildings and sites
Design guidelines (new)
Façade improvements (existing)
Street trees/curb cuts
2. Enhance “curb appeal” and streetscapes

III. Enhance Quality of Life

A. Town Facilities/Events:

1. Maintain community facilities
2. Continue to promote community events/activities

B. Other Strategies:

1. Seek to address housing needs of an age-diverse population
Size/cost/services
Transit/mobility
Social needs
2. Promote sustainable development practices
3. Expand pedestrian/bicycle accommodations
4. Provide for recreational trails
Meadows
Rail trail/Beaver Brook

The Commissioners and members of the public commented on the three (3) strategies. Feedback was also provided in response to the draft Telephone Survey shown to the Commissioners and audience members.

Mr. Chalder will work with Mr. Gillespie and Ms. Bradley to get a press release out to the public about the telephone survey being conducted from a professional polling firm (The Center for Research) on behalf of the Town of Wethersfield to obtain ideas and opinions of adult citizens from Wethersfield for purposes of the Town’s preparation of a long-range plan for the community. More information regarding the survey can be found at www.planwethersfield.com. Mr. Chalder will return to the Commission in July 2012 with the survey results.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Leigh Standish, 278 Hartford Avenue, commented on the narrowing of streets and its adverse effects on parking in the community and suggested areas in Town, such as Main Street (where the street has been narrowed) as a reference in this regard. He noted that the narrowing of Main Street did not include modifications to the sidewalks and the result is that pedestrians cross where the sidewalks end rather

than at the point where the crosswalks are located. In terms of the survey, he noted that asking Question number 6 only once in the survey will keep the question open ended. He indicated that the ultimate Plan being made is to conserve what is appreciated and to develop what needs to be developed.

Ellyn Laramie, 65 Nott Street, inquired and Mr. Chalder indicated that for purposes of age verification of the respondent, it is necessary for the respondent to answer the age question at the beginning, as well as again at the end of the survey. She suggested Connect-Ed for on-line survey usage and mentioned the phone survey's number of questions (55) may be tedious for respondents.

DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Oickle commented on the narrowing of streets and its impact on the snow shelf/parking in areas of Town. He also noted that despite the existence of sidewalks, joggers continue to run in the street. He concurred with the comments made by Mr. Standish regarding the complexities of parking on narrow streets where no double driveways exist.

In terms of the survey, Commissioner Oickle suggested that a survey respondent be informed as to how long the survey may take. He also inquired and Mr. Chalder suggested (after some additional discussion with the Commission) that in Question 33 of the survey proposed, the word "guidelines" should be substituted for "standards" and that in proposed Question number 34, "Town Center" should be changed to "pedestrian".

Mr. Chalder indicated that he and Staff have discussed the possibility of introducing some criteria in determining streets that are prime candidates for narrowing/bike lane addition, etc., as those areas may be able to provide a certain amenity to a neighborhood.

Clerk Roberts suggested that coordination with the regular Road Maintenance Plan should occur when considering narrowing of pavement, streetscape improvements, and implementation of recreation trails, etc. He suggested Collier Road be reviewed as a possibility, as driveways tend to be longer and there are no sidewalks.

Clerk Roberts inquired and Mr. Chalder indicated that the phone survey will call land line telephone numbers rather than cell numbers, as land lines are grounded in the community

Chairman Harley inquired and Mr. Chalder indicated the telephone survey will take approximately fifteen (15) minutes to complete. The survey will be completed by one hundred (100) randomly-selected households.

Mr. Chalder indicated specific targets of age and neighborhood will be made as to avoid over sampling in those demographics.

Commissioner Dean mentioned Question number 6 on the telephone survey proposed as a complex, open-ended question to answer, and Mr. Chalder indicated that the intent of this question is to obtain the answers to that question, classify and group the information learned and to use that information going forward. He suggested the possibility of having Question number 6 posed at the end of the survey if a response of "don't know/refused (response 02) is made. He mentioned that the survey questions are carefully crafted as not to lead and that a respondent, in going through the survey, may have their thought patterns stimulated in many ways.

Vice Chairman Hammer and Mr. Chalder indicated Question 7 can ask a respondent if there are any other issues. (Question 7 would follow Question 6 (most important issue question)].

Commissioner Hughes indicated that identifying three (3) key intersections in Town to complete some physical character enhancements such as architecturally pleasing street signs, paver walkway areas may be a good way to begin a process. He suggested the possibility of adding a paver/paved ring around the green for pedestrian use.

Commissioner Hughes indicated that phone survey respondents should understand at the onset of the call that the survey pertains to Wethersfield. He also indicated that age, gender, and how long a respondent has resided in Town are matters that are not as important because respondents as residents in Town have a stake in the community. He noted that Question 6 is posed to learn a respondent's measure of this community.

Commissioner Fazzina mentioned that tax increase information would have to be explicit in a question on the survey, and Mr. Chalder indicated that the questions posed in the panel are designed to learn a respondent's measure of this issue.

Commissioner Vassel noted that in questions 7, 8 and 11, for example, more community area specificity would stimulate more input regarding specific areas of Town. Mr. Chalder indicated that these series of questions are to learn if a respondent is satisfied with the level of effort the Town is making in this regard. Mr. Chalder suggested that an additional question be added elsewhere in the survey if community area specificity information is desired from the survey.

Commissioner Margiotta suggested the survey to include whether the respondent wishes for enhancing/celebrating Old Wethersfield and making changes/improvements. He suggested a possible long-term opportunity ("out-of-the-box" idea) for Wethersfield to consider looking at the Department of Motor Vehicle building on State Street and have it serve as a site similar to that of Faneuil Hall in Boston, MA. He noted such a plan could enhance Wethersfield Cove. He noted that the DMV building has been identified in previous plans for Town operations.

5. MINUTES – May 1, 2012 meeting minutes.

The Minutes for the Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting of May 1, 2012, will be reviewed at the next meeting.

6. STAFF REPORTS:

Mr. Gillespie mentioned that renovations to the former site of Porter & Chester Institute are ongoing and an Application is anticipated from CREC for its Discovery Academy Magnet School pertaining to the property located at 176 Cumberland Avenue. He also noted that one (1) or two (2) referrals from the Town Council may be on the Agenda for the next meeting of the Planning & Zoning Commission.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON GENERAL MATTERS OF PLANNING AND ZONING:

There were no public comments made at this meeting relative to general matters of planning and zoning.

8. CORRESPONDENCE:

There were no items of correspondence discussed during this meeting.

9. PENDING APPLICATIONS TO BE HEARD AT FUTURE MEETINGS:

9.1 PUBLIC HEARING APPLICATION NO. 1762-12-Z: RJD Development, LLC Seeking Re-subdivision approval for the creation of five (5) new lots at 214 Goff Road.

9.2 PUBLIC HEARING APPLICATION NO. 1760-12-Z: Town of Wethersfield Seeking Subdivision Regulation Amendments.

9.3 PUBLIC HEARING APPLICATION NO. 1764-12-Z: Southern Comfort Fireworks Seeking a Special Permit for an outdoor retail fireworks display at 1267-1309 Silas Deane Highway (Goff Brook Shops).

10. ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: Commissioner Oickle motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 PM.

Second: Commissioner Dean seconded the motion.

Aye: Harley, Hammer, Roberts, Oickle, Hughes, Margiotta, Dean, Fazzina, Vasel;

Nay: None;

Vote: 9 – 0;

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Ellen Goslicki, Recording Secretary