TOWN OF STONINGTON

Economic Development Commission
152 Elm Street
Stonington, Connecticut 06378

February 23, 2015

To: Stonington Board of Selectmen,

EDC has reviewed the POCD (PZC's final draft 2/6/2015). Contained herein are its findings and recommendations for your consideration. EDC requests that the Selectmen place as an agenda item for a March meeting "review of the POCD." EDC would attend that meeting to answer your questions.

Reprinted in the Appendix is CGS 8-23 titled: Preparation, Amendment or Adoption of Plan of Conservation and Development. It reads "the Board of Selectmen may hold one or more public hearings on the plan and shall endorse or reject such plan or *part thereof* or amendment and *may submit comments and recommended changes* to the Planning and Zoning Commission."

The Board of Selectmen have the opportunity to "line item review and comment" on the POCD before it goes to public hearing for adoption in April. As indicated from the recommendations below EDC believes the Board of Selectmen should make full use of that opportunity.

<u>POCD Initial Task #5.3.4</u> (page 44) **"Develop and adopt Buildable Land Regulations to reduce development pressure on sensitive areas."**

EDC calls the Selectmen's attention to the POCD guidance language of *develop and adopt* and the capitalized letters indicating that Buildable Land Regulations is a defined term (has not been defined or explained in the POCD).

Buildable Land Regulations would represent a significant departure from the way Stonington has historically measured Lot Area. Currently, Lot Area is defined on a "modified net" basis (see Zoning regulations Definitions 1.2.2) starting from total square feet, less a proration for Wetlands, less 100% of land below the Coastal Jurisdiction Line (map elevation 2'). After a change to Buildable Land Regulations, Lot Area would be calculated on a "full net" basis, starting from total square fee less all *unbuildable* land area.

The method of determining unbuildable land is not discussed in the POCD (to be determined at a later date?). EDC notes that in other towns it is defined as 100% of flood zones, 100% of wetlands plus 100% of slopes above a certain angle.

Consider a currently legal, undeveloped 2.2 acre lot in Stonington, zoned RR-80 (minimum 80,000 sf, 1.84 acres) that has 0.5 acres in flood zone A and 0.5 acres of slope (leading down to a stream). Upon adoption of Buildable Land Regulations this lot would no longer be a legal and buildable lot (2.2 acres minus 0.5 acres of flood zone, minus 0.5 acres of slope = 1.20 acres of buildable area)

Buildable Land Regulations would significantly change the way Lot Area is determined. Property owners have made decisions relying upon the current system. The implementation of Buildable Land Regulations would result in some currently legal lots becoming unbuildable and would also reduce the number of currently feasible lots on larger parcels. The outcome, lower property values, would be unfair to the owners of those properties.

EDC Recommendation: Eliminate consideration of Buildable Land Regulations from the POCD. The current system for determining legal building lots in Stonington is not broken.

POCD Initial Task #6.1.7 (page 54) **"Consider increasing the open space set-aside requirement in the subdivision regulations."**

EDC calls the Selectmen's attention to Stonington's existing open space set-aside requirement of 15% of land area (Subdivision regulations 8.1.1) or a fee of 10% of land market value (Subdivision regulations 8.2.1).

Towns are permitted to establish their own open space set-asides and or fees as a condition of subdivision approval. Open space set-asides vary by town, for example in both Madison and Guilford the open space set-asides are 10%, North Stonington requires 15% and Groton requires 20%.

EDC notes that 15% appears reasonable. Especially when considering that Open Space, as defined by the POCD (page 49) is currently at 20% (Committed Open Space 14%, plus Managed Open Space 6%).

EDC Recommendation: Eliminate consideration of increasing the Open Space set-aside requirement from the POCD. Increasing the set-aside above 15% would represent a "taking without compensation."

POCD Initial Task #6.1.13 (page 54) **"Establish a Municipal Land Acquisition and Development Authority under CT General Statutes 7-131p"**

EDC calls the Selectmen's attention to the POCD guidance language of *establish*.

See Appendix for a reprint of CGS 7-131p. This statute contemplates the Town establishing a separate Authority/Affiliate that would take title to real estate and development rights in the Town's name. This new affiliate would require a Board for oversight, a municipal funding source and a budget for administrative expenses.

EDC notes there are well managed local land trusts that can perform the same task at no cost to the Town. It is not in the best interest of the Town to expend time and resources to fund and administer a new Authority.

EDC Recommendation: Eliminate establishment of Municipal Land Acquisition Authority from the POCD.

POCD Initial Task #8.2.5 (page 72) **Consider establishing village districts (based on CGS 8-2j) in Mystic and Pawcatuck.** Possible district boundaries are shown in the POCD on street maps, pages 68 and 69.

EDC calls the Selectmen's attention to the phrase village districts. After reading CGS 8-2j the Selectmen will note that "village districts" is a stealth phrase for Historic Districts (see Appendix for reprint of statute).

The POCD makes a significant error in not indicating to readers that Village Districts would be Historic Districts. The Selectmen are undoubtedly familiar with the problems on the Groton side of Mystic. The POCD, on pages 60 and 71, indicates the new Districts could be overseen by either the Planning and Zoning Commission or Architectural Design Review Board.

Note CGS 8-2j covers *all* development and *all* applications for new construction plus substantial reconstruction. Before starting work, property owners would be required to go through a hearing

process to obtain permits/approvals for decisions on building color, size, height, location, proportion of openings, roof treatments, building materials and landscaping for *all* property within the proposed Village Districts. Denials would halt progress.

Currently Stonington's zoning regulations require only new commercial construction to go through a hearing process critiquing exterior appearance and the results are only advisory (entire town, Zoning regulations 2.15.2, Architectural Design Review Board). Residential construction is not currently subject to hearings by the Architectural Design Review Board (Zoning regulations 2.15.4).

The *consideration* of Village (Historic) Districts represents a dramatic and substantial departure from the status quo. EDC presumes, from the absence of property owner comments (from within the proposed Districts) that they are unaware their rights are under review.

The implementation of Village Districts would not achieve the POCD's policy goal of "seek to attract a mix of residential, retail and service uses" (POCD 8.1.1 page 71).

EDC Recommendation: the establishment of Village Districts (under CGS 8-2j) be eliminated from the POCD.

POCD Initial Task #8.2.6 NDD and IHRD Master Planning tools. Reconciliation of PZC Final Draft dated February 6, 2015 to recommendations in the POCD Subcommittee's Final Draft dated October 22, 2014.

Subcommittee's Final Draft page 70 – "Review the NDD and IHRD zoning requirements for potential updates and *encourage greater use of these types of tools*."

PZC Final Draft page 72– "Review the NDD and IHRD zoning requirements for potential updates."

EDC calls the Selectmen's attention to PZC's removal of the Subcommittee's guidance calling for *greater use of NDD and IHRD tools (master planning tools).* PZC also removed recommendations for greater use of master planning tools appearing elsewhere in the Subcommittee's version dated October 22, 2014.

Master Planning differs substantially from the traditional planning process by beginning from a "blank slate." Entrepreneurs are free to propose (master plan) any use that is in harmony with existing neighborhoods. The opposite occurs with traditional planning which requires entrepreneurs select uses from a predetermined list developed by PZC. The Master Planning process creates opportunities for innovation, ultimately benefiting the entire town.

Master Planning is subject to more PZC scrutiny and public comment than a traditional application. The process begins with the entrepreneur presenting a simplified site plan at a PZC public hearing, not for approval, but for an indication of interest by PZC. If the idea is well received the entrepreneur moves ahead with the much more costly and highly detailed site plans for presentation at additional PZC public hearings where approvals could be granted.

Stonington adopted master planning in 2004 and 2005 (Zoning regulations 7.21.3.1. NDD Neighborhood Development District and 7.19.3 IHRD Industrial Heritage Reuse District). After adoption an uptick in activity occurred. NDD and IHRD projects approved to date include:

(1) NDD - Mechanic and Prospect Street, Pawcatuck. Conversion of *vacant* land zoned M-1 (former Harris Graphics overflow parking, outdoor storage) to residential use. About 60% of the proposed units have been built.

(2) IHRD – Allen Spool Building, Mystic. Conversion of *vacant* manufacturing building zoned MC-80 to office and residential use. Project is 100% completed.

(3) IHRD - Mystic Color Lab, Mystic. Approved conversion of *vacant* mill building zoned M-1 to residential use. Environmental clean-up completed, construction has not started.

(4) IHRD – Pawcatuck Thread Mill. Approved conversion of a deteriorating, *largely vacant* mill building zoned M-1 to residential and commercial use. Construction and environmental clean-up has recently commenced.

(5) IHRD – Connecticut Castings Mill, Pawcatuck. Approved conversion of a *vacant* mill building zoned M-1 to residential use. No work has started but approvals remain valid.

Master Planning tools have a track record of providing solutions. The POCD's removal of all references to greater use is not in the best interest of Stonington. Master Planning tools provide a way forward for stalled projects such as Liberty Crossing.

EDC Recommendation: the Subcommittee's guidance on NDD and IHRD master planning tools should be put back into the POCD. To grow the Grand List in meaningful ways, innovative ideas for large, high value sites are best proposed by entrepreneurs. It is not reasonable to expect that new ideas for these properties will come from the Planning and Zoning Commission.

In conclusion, on Page 1, Purpose of the Plan 1.1, it is stated the Plan "serves as a guide for elected officials, boards and commissions, town employees and residents..." However, it is important to note the missing audience of real estate and manufacturing entrepreneurs who will read the POCD and hopefully request meetings with Stonington officials to discuss investment and development opportunities. What impression do we wish to make on that critical audience?

Regarding the overall tenor of the POCD. EDC respectfully submits, that while there are some good polices and recommendations, the overwhelming tenor of the POCD is one to discourage growth and economic progress. The table of contents shows five chapters devoted to "what we want to protect" and three to "how we want to grow," (one of which is devoted to the establishment of historic districts). The closing remark at the end of Chapter 10 - Commercial and Industrial Development, "The Town should promote agriculture as an important and growing part of the local economy," shows a lack of understanding of the need for economic growth.

The POCD does not properly address how Stonington will increase its Taxable Grand List to pay for the improvements to education, services and infrastructure that residents expect. The unwelcome nickname of "Zonington" has cropped up again on the heels of the recent denial of the previously approved IHRD Mystic Color Lab. That project could have delivered over $350,000 in new annual tax revenue.

EDC fully supports the principle of preserving the character of the Town through preservation of agriculture, the coast, and open space. At the same time, EDC reminds the Selectmen that the Town's well-being and civic success is also served by promoting Stonington as a prime location for investment.

According to the Existing Land Use Summary (POCD page 16) Committed Open Space is 14%, Managed Open Space is 6%, Agriculture is 10% and Vacant is 14%. Open lands total 44%, well in excess of the 21% goal established by the Conservation Commission.

Stonington's population growth for the next 10 years is projected to be flat (POCD page 12).

Ten years ago when the last POCD was completed (FYE 6/2005) Stonington's budget was $44,807,000. This year's budget (FYE 6/2015) is $58,521,000; a compound annual growth rate of 2.7%.

The POCD planning horizon is 10 years, if the budget compounds annually at 3.0% then in 2025 it will be $78,647,000.

For the budget year ending 6/2015 the Taxable Grand List grew by only 0.3% ($11,875,000); the slowest rate of growth in the last 10 years. List growth has declined every year since 2006 when it grew by 3.1%. In that year Stonington increased its budget by 7.4%.

It is in the best interest of Stonington that the Taxable Grand List increase by a reasonable amount each year so that budget growth does not fall entirely on current taxpayers.

In summary, the POCD requires additional editing to provide more balance. Additionally certain key issues must be addressed (1) Taxable Grand List Growth, (2) the addition of tools to encourage proposals by real estate and manufacturing entrepreneurs, such as increased use of NDD and IHRD Master Planning tools, (3) the elimination Village Districts under CGS 8-2j, (4) the elimination of Buildable Land Regulations and (5) the elimination of increasing Open Space set-asides.

EDC respectfully requests the Board of Selectmen submit recommendations for changes to the POCD, and that they be submitted to PZC prior to the public hearing for POCD adoption.

Sincerely,
Stonington Economic Development Commission

Blunt White
Chairman

Sec. 8-23. Preparation, amendment or adoption of plan of conservation and development. (a)(1) At least once every ten years, the commission shall prepare or amend and shall adopt a plan of conservation and development for the municipality. Following adoption, the commission shall regularly review and maintain such plan. The commission may adopt such geographical, functional or other amendments to the plan or parts of the plan, in accordance with the provisions of this section, as it deems necessary. The commission may, at any time, prepare, amend and adopt plans for the redevelopment and improvement of districts or neighborhoods which, in its judgment, contain special problems or opportunities or show a trend toward lower land values.

(2) If a plan is not amended decennially, the chief elected official of the municipality shall submit a letter to the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management and the Commissioners of Transportation, Environmental Protection and Economic and Community Development that explains why such plan was not amended. A copy of such letter shall be included in each application by the municipality for discretionary state funding submitted to any state agency.

(3) Notwithstanding any provision of subdivisions (1) and (2) of this subsection, no commission shall be obligated to prepare or amend a plan of conservation and development for such municipality from July 1, 2010, to June 30, 2013, inclusive.

(b) On and after the first day of July following the adoption of the state Conservation and Development Policies Plan 2013-2018, in accordance with section 16a-30, a municipality that fails to comply with the requirements of subdivisions (1) and (2) of subsection (a) of this section shall be ineligible for discretionary state funding unless such prohibition is expressly waived by the secretary, except that any municipality that does not prepare or amend a plan of conservation and development pursuant to subdivision (3) of subsection (a) of this section shall continue to be eligible for discretionary state funding unless such municipality fails to comply with the requirements of said subdivisions (1) and (2) on or after July 1, 2014.

(c) In the preparation of such plan, the commission may appoint one or more special committees to develop and make recommendations for the plan. The membership of any special committee may include: Residents of the municipality and representatives of local boards dealing with zoning, inland wetlands, conservation, recreation, education, public works, finance, redevelopment, general government and other municipal functions. In performing its duties under this section, the commission or any special committee may accept information from any source or solicit input from any organization or individual. The commission or any special committee may hold public informational meetings or organize other activities to inform residents about the process of preparing the plan.

(d) In preparing such plan, the commission or any special committee shall consider the following: (1) The community development action plan of the municipality, if any, (2) the need for affordable housing, (3) the need for protection of existing and potential public surface and ground drinking water supplies, (4) the use of cluster development and other development patterns to the extent consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity within the municipality, (5) the state plan of conservation and development adopted pursuant to chapter 297, (6) the regional plan of conservation and development adopted pursuant to section 8-35a, (7) physical, social, economic and governmental conditions and trends, (8) the needs of the municipality including, but not limited to, human resources, education, health, housing, recreation, social services, public utilities, public protection, transportation and circulation and cultural and interpersonal communications, (9) the objectives of energy-efficient patterns of development, the

use of solar and other renewable forms of energy and energy conservation, and (10) protection and preservation of agriculture.

(e) (1) Such plan of conservation and development shall (A) be a statement of policies, goals and standards for the physical and economic development of the municipality, (B) provide for a system of principal thoroughfares, parkways, bridges, streets, sidewalks, multipurpose trails and other public ways as appropriate, (C) be designed to promote, with the greatest efficiency and economy, the coordinated development of the municipality and the general welfare and prosperity of its people and identify areas where it is feasible and prudent (i) to have compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns and land reuse, and (ii) to promote such development patterns and land reuse, (D) recommend the most desirable use of land within the municipality for residential, recreational, commercial, industrial, conservation, agricultural and other purposes and include a map showing such proposed land uses, (E) recommend the most desirable density of population in the several parts of the municipality, (F) note any inconsistencies with the following growth management principles: (i) Redevelopment and revitalization of commercial centers and areas of mixed land uses with existing or planned physical infrastructure; (ii) expansion of housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs; (iii) concentration of development around transportation nodes and along major transportation corridors to support the viability of transportation options and land reuse; (iv) conservation and restoration of the natural environment, cultural and historical resources and existing farmlands; (v) protection of environmental assets critical to public health and safety; and (vi) integration of planning across all levels of government to address issues on a local, regional and state-wide basis, (G) make provision for the development of housing opportunities, including opportunities for multifamily dwellings, consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity, for all residents of the municipality and the planning region in which the municipality is located, as designated by the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management under section 16a-4a, (H) promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low and moderate income households, and encourage the development of housing which will meet the housing needs identified in the state's consolidated plan for housing and community development prepared pursuant to section 8-37t and in the housing component and the other components of the state plan of conservation and development prepared pursuant to chapter 297. In preparing such plan the commission shall consider focusing development and revitalization in areas with existing or planned physical infrastructure.

(2) For any municipality that is contiguous to Long Island Sound, such plan shall be (A) consistent with the municipal coastal program requirements of sections 22a-101 to 22a-104, inclusive, (B) made with reasonable consideration for restoration and protection of the ecosystem and habitat of Long Island Sound, and (C) designed to reduce hypoxia, pathogens, toxic contaminants and floatable debris in Long Island Sound.

(f) Such plan may show the commission's and any special committee's recommendation for (1) conservation and preservation of traprock and other ridgelines, (2) airports, parks, playgrounds and other public grounds, (3) the general location, relocation and improvement of schools and other public buildings, (4) the general location and extent of public utilities and terminals, whether publicly or privately owned, for water, sewerage, light, power, transit and other purposes, (5) the extent and location of public housing projects, (6) programs for the implementation of the plan, including (A) a schedule, (B) a budget for public capital projects, (C) a program for enactment and enforcement of zoning and subdivision controls, building and housing codes and safety regulations, (D) plans for implementation of affordable housing, (E) plans for open space acquisition and greenways protection and development, and (F) plans for corridor management areas along limited access highways or rail lines, designated under section 16a-27, (7) proposed

priority funding areas, and (8) any other recommendations as will, in the commission's or any special committee's judgment, be beneficial to the municipality. The plan may include any necessary and related maps, explanatory material, photographs, charts or other pertinent data and information relative to the past, present and future trends of the municipality.

(g) (1) A plan of conservation and development or any part thereof or amendment thereto prepared by the commission or any special committee shall be reviewed, and may be amended, by the commission prior to scheduling at least one public hearing on adoption.

(2) At least sixty-five days prior to the public hearing on adoption, the commission shall submit a copy of such plan or part thereof or amendment thereto for review and comment to the legislative body or, in the case of a municipality for which the legislative body of the municipality is a town meeting or representative town meeting, to the board of selectmen. The legislative body or board of selectmen, as the case may be, may hold one or more public hearings on the plan and shall endorse or reject such entire plan or part thereof or amendment and may submit comments and recommended changes to the commission. The commission may render a decision on the plan without the report of such body or board.

(3) At least thirty-five days prior to the public hearing on adoption, the commission shall post the plan on the Internet web site of the municipality, if any.

(4) At least sixty-five days prior to the public hearing on adoption, the commission shall submit a copy of such plan or part thereof or amendment thereto to the regional planning agency for review and comment. The regional planning agency shall submit an advisory report along with its comments to the commission at or before the hearing. Such comments shall include a finding on the consistency of the plan with (A) the regional plan of conservation and development, adopted under section 8-35a, (B) the state plan of conservation and development, adopted pursuant to chapter 297, and (C) the plans of conservation and development of other municipalities in the area of operation of the regional planning agency. The commission may render a decision on the plan without the report of the regional planning agency.

(5) At least thirty-five days prior to the public hearing on adoption, the commission shall file in the office of the town clerk a copy of such plan or part thereof or amendment thereto but, in the case of a district commission, such commission shall file such information in the offices of both the district clerk and the town clerk.

(6) The commission shall cause to be published in a newspaper having a general circulation in the municipality, at least twice at intervals of not less than two days, the first not more than fifteen days, or less than ten days, and the last not less than two days prior to the date of each such hearing, notice of the time and place of any such public hearing. Such notice shall make reference to the filing of such draft plan in the office of the town clerk, or both the district clerk and the town clerk, as the case may be.

(h) (1) After completion of the public hearing, the commission may revise the plan and may adopt the plan or any part thereof or amendment thereto by a single resolution or may, by successive resolutions, adopt parts of the plan and amendments thereto.

(2) Any plan, section of a plan or recommendation in the plan that is not endorsed in the report of the legislative body or, in the case of a municipality for which the legislative body is a town meeting or representative town meeting, by the board of selectmen, of the municipality may only

be adopted by the commission by a vote of not less than two-thirds of all the members of the commission.

(3) Upon adoption by the commission, any plan or part thereof or amendment thereto shall become effective at a time established by the commission, provided notice thereof shall be published in a newspaper having a general circulation in the municipality prior to such effective date.

(4) Not more than thirty days after adoption, any plan or part thereof or amendment thereto shall be posted on the Internet web site of the municipality, if any, and shall be filed in the office of the town clerk, except that, if it is a district plan or amendment, it shall be filed in the offices of both the district and town clerks.

(5) Not more than sixty days after adoption of the plan, the commission shall submit a copy of the plan to the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management and shall include with such copy a description of any inconsistency between the plan adopted by the commission and the state plan of conservation and development and the reasons therefor.

(i) Any owner or tenant, or authorized agent of such owner or tenant, of real property or buildings thereon located in the municipality may submit a proposal to the commission requesting a change to the plan of conservation and development. Such proposal shall be submitted in writing and on a form prescribed by the commission. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of section 8-7d, the commission shall review and may approve, modify and approve or reject the proposal in accordance with the provisions of subsection (g) of this section.

Sec. 8-2j. Village districts. Compatibility objectives with other uses in immediate neighborhood. Applications. Village district consultant. (a) The zoning commission of each municipality may establish village districts as part of the zoning regulations adopted under section 8-2 or under any special act. Such districts shall be located in areas of distinctive character, landscape or historic value that are specifically identified in the plan of conservation and development of the municipality.

(b) The regulations establishing village districts shall protect the distinctive character, landscape and historic structures within such districts and may regulate, on and after the effective date of such regulations, new construction, substantial reconstruction and rehabilitation of properties within such districts and in view from public roadways, including, but not limited to, (1) the design and placement of buildings, (2) the maintenance of public views, (3) the design, paving materials and placement of public roadways, and (4) other elements that the commission deems appropriate to maintain and protect the character of the village district. In adopting the regulations, the commission shall consider the design, relationship and compatibility of structures, plantings, signs, roadways, street hardware and other objects in public view. The regulations shall establish criteria from which a property owner and the commission may make a reasonable determination of what is permitted within such district. The regulations shall encourage the conversion, conservation and preservation of existing buildings and sites in a manner that maintains the historic or distinctive character of the district. The regulations concerning the exterior of structures or sites shall be consistent with: (A) The "Connecticut Historical Commission - The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings", revised through 1990, as amended; or (B) the distinctive characteristics of the district identified in the municipal plan of conservation and development. The regulations shall provide (i) that proposed buildings or modifications to existing buildings be harmoniously related to their surroundings, and the terrain in the district and to the use, scale and architecture of existing buildings in the district that have a functional or visual relationship to a proposed building or modification, (ii) that all spaces, structures and related site improvements visible from public roadways be designed to be compatible with the elements of the area of the village district in and around the proposed building or modification, (iii) that the color, size, height, location, proportion of openings, roof treatments, building materials and landscaping of commercial or residential property and any proposed signs and lighting be evaluated for compatibility with the local architectural motif and the maintenance of views, historic buildings, monuments and landscaping, and (iv) that the removal or disruption of historic traditional or significant structures or architectural elements shall be minimized.

(c) All development in the village district shall be designed to achieve the following compatibility objectives: (1) The building and layout of buildings and included site improvements shall reinforce existing buildings and streetscape patterns and the placement of buildings and included site improvements shall assure there is no adverse impact on the district; (2) proposed streets shall be connected to the existing district road network, wherever possible; (3) open spaces within the proposed development shall reinforce open space patterns of the district, in form and siting; (4) locally significant features of the site such as distinctive buildings or sight lines of vistas from within the district, shall be integrated into the site design; (5) the landscape design shall complement the district's landscape patterns; (6) the exterior signs, site lighting and accessory structures shall support a uniform architectural theme if such a theme exists and be compatible with their surroundings; and (7) the scale, proportions, massing and detailing of any proposed building shall be in proportion to the scale, proportion, massing and detailing in the district.

(d) All applications for new construction and substantial reconstruction within the district and in view from public roadways shall be subject to review and recommendation by an architect or architectural firm, landscape architect, or planner who is a member of the American Institute of

Certified Planners selected and contracted by the commission and designated as the village district consultant for such application. Alternatively, the commission may designate as the village district consultant for such application an architectural review board whose members shall include at least one architect, landscape architect or planner who is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners. The village district consultant shall review an application and report to the commission within thirty-five days of receipt of the application. Such report and recommendation shall be entered into the public hearing record and considered by the commission in making its decision. Failure of the village district consultant to report within the specified time shall not alter or delay any other time limit imposed by the regulations.

(e) The commission may seek the recommendations of any town or regional agency or outside specialist with which it consults, including, but not limited to, the regional planning agency, the municipality's historical society, the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and The University of Connecticut College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Any reports or recommendations from such agencies or organizations shall be entered into the public hearing record.

(f) If a commission grants or denies an application, it shall state upon the record the reasons for its decision. If a commission denies an application, the reason for the denial shall cite the specific regulations under which the application was denied. Notice of the decision shall be published in a newspaper having a substantial circulation in the municipality. An approval shall become effective in accordance with subsection (b) of section 8-3c.

(g) No approval of a commission under this section shall be effective until a copy thereof, certified by the commission, containing the name of the owner of record, a description of the premises to which it relates and specifying the reasons for its decision, is recorded in the land records of the town in which such premises are located. The town clerk shall index the same in the grantor's index under the name of the then record owner and the record owner shall pay for such recording.

Sec. 7-131p. Establishment of municipal land acquisition and development authority. Any municipality may, by vote of its legislative body, establish a land acquisition and development authority to assist the municipality to acquire or develop any agricultural, recreational or open space land or to assist the municipality to acquire any easements, interest or rights therein and to enter into covenants and agreements with owners of such land or interests therein to acquire, maintain, improve, protect, limit the future use of or otherwise conserve such land.