

Special Meeting

The 1541st meeting of the Town of Stonington's Planning and Zoning Commission was held Tuesday, April 28, 2015 at the Mystic Middle School, 204 Mistuxet Avenue, Mystic, CT. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Ben Tamsky at 7:00pm. Also present for the meeting were Commissioners Frances Hoffman, Bob Mercer, John Prue, and Curtis Lynch; Alternate Gardner Young, and Town Planner Keith Brynes. Alternates Shaun Savoie and David Rathbun were absent.

Seated for the meeting were Frances Hoffman, Ben Tamsky, Bob Mercer, John Prue, and Curtis Lynch.

Public Hearing: 7:00pm

Per CT General Statutes Section 8-23(g)(5), Public Hearing for the adoption of the Town of Stonington's 2015 Plan of Conservation and Development Final Draft.

2015 Plan of Conservation and Development. The Planning & Zoning Commission will consider adoption of the 2015 Plan of Conservation and Development. The Plan represents over two years of work by Town agencies and residents and will help guide conservation and development efforts for the next decade and beyond.

Public Comment

Rob Simmons, Town of Stonington Second Selectman, thanked the commission for their work thus far as well as the subcommittee. Mr. Simmons spoke about the public hearings held as well as the timeline for the plan of conservation and development. The board of selectman has chosen to forward recommendations to the commission. Mr. Simmons expressed that the fisherman and lobsterman should be considered in the plan. Mr. Simmons mentioned boat building and craftsmanship be considered in the plan as well. Mr. Simmons mentioned factories and their impact on the community and to be creative going forward. There are twenty recommendations that have been given to the commission by the selectmen.

Curtis Brockway, President of the Lords Point Association, spoke regarding cottages being converted to year round homes in flood hazard zones (3.2.8), stating this would have an adverse effect on the community. The association believes that it would not be fair to those who have not yet converted their homes. Mr. Brockway also spoke regarding the five year substantial improvement look back triggering the requirement to raise the home to 100 year base flood elevation due to FEMA requirements. Mr. Prue explained that the commission brought their regulations in line with the federal guidance.

Andrew Worthington, resident of Latimer Point, owner of a seasonal cottage, raised the concern with 3.2.8 as well which concerns the conversion of seasonal cottages to year round properties. Mr. Worthington wishes to bring the property to code and wishes to make Stonington his home year round in the future.

Bob Tabor, resident of Lords Point, spoke regarding 3.2.8 as well. He expressed opposition to this item stating that this would restrict property rights of the owners of these properties. Mr. Tabor expressed that he would have hoped there would have been better communication with homeowners prior to drafting this item on the plan. Mr. Prue clarified that this document will be an advisory document and would require zoning regulation changes in order to implement this statutes. Ms. Hoffman also stated that this is just a beginning document to begin discussion in the future.

Tricia Walsh, President of the Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce, expressed that their organization would like to remove all references to village districts believing this would negatively impact commerce in the Town of Stonington. They would also like to see additions regarding the promotion of economic development in the town. Mr. Lynch explained the purpose of exploring village districts to facilitate owners restoring their properties to their historical status.

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Lisa Konicki, Executive Director of the Greater Westerly Pawcatuck Area Chamber of Commerce, spoke regarding the business community's fear of village districts. Ms. Konicki stated that although it is well intentioned, it is poorly worded. Ms. Konicki also stated issues with sandwich boards across both sides of the river.

Ed Hart, a resident of Taugwonk Road, expressed that he believes the board of selectmen should be tasked with the plan of conservation and development and is disappointed with the amount of time it has taken to develop the plan. Mr. Lynch responded that there will be an implementation committee so that this will continue to be an ongoing dialogue going forward.

Rod Desmarais, chair of the Downtown Mystic Merchants Association, reiterated the comments of Tricia Walsh and Lisa Konicki. Mr. Desmarais expressed the effects of these regulations on small business. Mr. Desmarais expressed concern with the document being used to sway developers since it does come into play in applications. Mr. Desmarais brought forward concern that there are many restrictions within the POCD for development which will make the town undesirable for developers.

Harry Boardsen, Seaport Marine, spoke regarding the marine commercial zone MC-80 and the desire to change regulations regarding the size of buildings for marinas for commercial marinas compared to marinas in a residential neighborhood. Mr. Lynch requested some suggested language regarding this. Mr. Boardsen also supports streamlining the permit process and support a director of planning to give greater guidance to those going through the application process.

Jeffrey Morrow, member of the executive board of the Latimer Point Condo Association, reiterated concern of 3.2.8 and expressed the benefit of a year round conversion. He also expressed issue regarding the substantial improvements look back due the low value of homes in comparison to land value.

Carlene Donnarummo, spoke in support of the current plan with recommendations, agreed with the elimination of village districts, she also supports 3.2.8 to protect homes, as well as changes supporting streamlining the permit process. Ms. Donnarummo also believes master planning should be left to property owners. Ms. Donnarummo also spoke against three of the recommendations from the board of selectmen. Ms. Donnarummo presented a document to the commission regarding her comments on specific chapters in the plan of conservation and development.

Chris Freeman, speaking on behalf of CUSH, endorses the plan and specifically commends efforts regarding water quality and environmental impacts.

Steve Coan, president of Mystic Aquarium, spoke regarding zoning regulations regarding the aquarium. Mr. Coan supports the board of selectmen's recommendation for the aquarium to have a zone to exist by right rather than special use permit to allow for easier improvements and development. Mr. Coan also requested the consideration of a new zoning district for Maritime Drive going forward to explore more uses of the area. Mr. Tamsky spoke regarding communication as well.

George Crouse, Stonington First Selectman, thanked the commission and reiterated that the board would like to see the plan adopted with the recommendations rather than rejecting the plan. He also hopes this will continue to be a living document that is further worked on in the future. Mr. Crouse also reiterated that this document will be advisory and legislation will be vetted prior to implementation.

Blunt White, Chair of the Economic Development Commission, presented a document that summarizes the recommendations from the EDC, highlighting the recommendations backed by the board of selectmen as well. Mr. White began with recommended eliminations. Mr. Prue spoke regarding the Storm Water Committee and Utility

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speaking to the fact there will be a large cost associated moving forward. Ms. Hoffman also stated that this would be worth considering due to the rising costs and need. Mr. White expressed concern with lack of knowledge in a volunteer committee. Mr. White continued with recommended modifications. Mr. White finished with recommended additions.

The meeting recessed at 9:17 and reconvened at 9:23pm.

Sheila Lyons, spoke on behalf of the conservation commission, spoke regarding the history of the town and plan moving forward regarding growth. Ms. Lyons expressed concern with the implementation commission and their abilities going forward. Ms. Lyons reiterated support for the removal of village districts. She also expressed concern for increasing the open space set aside. The commission supports many of the recommendations from the selectmen. They do not support the specific wording regarding having a 100 plus employer develop in Stonington. They do not support language regarding issues with the selectmen and planning department. They recommended the elimination of Planimetrics in the plan. Ms. Lyons expressed desire for growth while still retaining the essence of the town.

Walter Grant, member of the POCD subcommittee, expressed desire for economic development. Mr. Grant expressed that he believes Stonington is large enough to handle the six percent growth in the open space set aside.

Rick Newton, expressed concern for town owned open space, stating that the town does not currently have a large amount of open space, the open space set aside increase would allow for this. Mr. Newtown expressed concern in investment in open space. Mr. Newtown also expressed concern with sea level rise as well as the effects on coastal homes. Mr. Newton stated that there are current exceptions to PA 490 that allow for smaller lot sizes. Mr. Newton expressed concern with allowing the open space to be up to the land trust.

Mr. Lynch moved to close the public hearing, seconded by Mr. Prue, all in favor 5-0, motion approved.

The commission discussed a special meeting in May to discuss the plan changes.

Mr. Prue moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Hoffman, all in favor 5-0, meeting adjourned at 9:59pm.



Frances Hoffman, Secretary