

Town of Stonington
Economic Development Commission
Minutes for Regular Meeting on April 15th, 2015
Human Services Building- 7:00pm

Present: Blunt White, Amy Arruda, Suzanne Lane, Ed Planeta, and Joel Valenti

Absent: Rich Balestracci, David Hammond, Danielle Chesebrough

Town Guests: Rob Simmons, Mike Spellman

Call to Order: 7:05pm

Approval of March 18th, 2015 Minutes

Motion: Blunt White

Second: Amy Arruda

Passed: 5-0

Business:

POCD report review- The meeting focus was on the POCD report and EDC's recommendations to Selectmen for draft POCD dated 2/6/2015.

1. Public Comments from Rob Simmons and Mike Spellman concerning the POCD report.
2. Discussion of Recommendations Document

"Approval of the draft document dated April 15, Recommendations to Selectman for Draft POCD Dated 2/6/2015" Copy of document attached.

Motion: Blunt White, Second: Ed Planeta, Passed 5-0

"Add the following subjects/policies/tasks to the draft document dated April 15, Recommendations to Selectmen for Draft POCD Dated 2/6/2015"

- Aquaculture
- Local Fishing Fleet
- PA 490 reduction from 25 acre to 15 acre
- Center of Excellence/Wooden boat restoration and construction
- Town owned open space should be available for reasonable recreational use
- Use preamble/mission statement to link 2004 POCD to 2015 POCD report
- Recommend re-open of the POCD after the Director of Planning is hired

Motion: Blunt White, Second: Joel Valenti, Passed 5-0

"Give Chairman Blunt White the authority to editorialize recommendations in the final document for clarity"

Motion: Ed Planeta, Second: Joel Valenti, Passed 5-0

3. Discussion of Signage Regulations

"Motion for EDC to support application PZ1509RA (farm produce signs) and make general comments in support of sandwich boards/temporary signage in LS-5 and DB zones at the public hearing"

Motion: Blunt White, Second: Joel Valenti, Passed 5-0

Adjournment 9:15pm

Respectfully Submitted by Joel Valenti, Acting Secretary

*Minutes of Meeting held on April 15, 2015 Approved
at meeting of May 20, 2015.*

*Blunt White
Chair*

Economic Development Commission
TOWN OF STONINGTON
152 Elm Street
Stonington, Connecticut 06378



CYNTHIA LADWIG
TOWN CLERK

15 APR 17 AM 9:35

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
STONINGTON, CT

DRAFT - April 15, 2015

RECOMMENATIONS TO SELECTMEN FOR DRAFT POCD DATED 2/6/2015

Italics below are existing text in the Draft POCD dated 2/6/2015.

Recommended deletions:

- 1) Eliminate Initial Task 3.2.8 (page 30) *"Amend regulations to restrict conversion of cottages, or summer dwellings to year round occupancies in coastal flood hazard zones."* Consider that preventing owners from improving existing properties (for example, preventing them from being brought up to current FEMA code) would reduce property values and deprive individuals of property rights they currently enjoy.
- 2) Eliminate Policy 3.3.2 (page 30) *"Discourage new public infrastructure or development in flood prone areas."* Consider that in preserving existing neighborhoods new public infrastructure will likely become necessary. Much of downtown Mystic and Pawcatuck is flood prone. Policy 3.3.2 conflicts with Policy 3.3.5 (page 30) *"Identify possible modifications to public infrastructure to account for increases in sea level."*
- 3) Eliminate Policy 5.1.6 (page 43) *"Resurrect and maintain an active Town Storm Water Committee."* Consider layman do not have the technical background necessary to decide storm water design, drainage issues and property line matters. Use staff civil engineers such as the Town Engineer, Public Works Director and WPCA resources.
- 4) Eliminate Initial Task 5.1.14 (page 44) *"Consider formation of a Storm Water Utility."* A storm water utility is a special assessment district that generates funding specifically for storm water management through the imposition of user fees, on top of sewer use fees and on top of property taxes. Implicit in the Utility concept are new measurement schemes such as the amount of Impervious Areas to drive new fee schemes.
- 5) Eliminate Initial Task 5.3.4 (page 44) *"Develop and Adopt Buildable Land Regulations to reduce development pressure on sensitive areas."* Consider that Buildable Land Regulations would result in larger lot sizes thereby limiting ownership opportunity/upward mobility of individuals and families. Existing land owners would experience a reduction in value. The Conservation Commission, in testimony at the March 25 Selectmen's hearing, did not support this task.
- 6) Eliminate Initial Task 6.1.7 (page 54) *"Consider increasing the open space set aside requirement in the Subdivision Regulations."* Stonington's existing requirement of 15% is reasonable when compared to other towns. An increase would result in a loss of value to current landowners and would result in higher lot costs as fixed infrastructure costs are spread over fewer lots. Consider the Conservation Commission, in testimony at the March 25 Selectmen's hearing, did not support this task.

- 7) Eliminate Initial Task 6.1.13 (page 54) *"Establish a Municipal Land Acquisition and Development Authority under CGS 7-131p."* Consider the Conservation Commission, in testimony at the March 25 Selectmen's hearing, did not support this task, stating that existing private land trusts can address the needs of the Town for the next 10 years. EDC notes that a separate Authority would require municipal funding and expenditures for management oversight in a time of tight budgets.
- 8) Eliminate Policy 8.1.2 (page 71) *"Use Village Districts and or the Architectural Design Review Board to guide development in the villages."* Consider that throughout all of Stonington (including the villages) all commercially zoned properties are currently subject to ADRB review (at an advisory level). Village Districts per CGS 8-2] would extend the present level of aesthetics regulation (advisory) to a mandatory level covering both residential and commercial property.
- 9) Eliminate initial Task 8.2.5 (page 72) *"Consider establishing Village Districts,"* eliminate maps of potential Village District boundaries on pages 67, 68 and 69. Eliminate reference to Village Districts on page 66 and elsewhere in the POCD.

Recommended Modifications:

- 1) Modify the text of 1.1 Purpose of This Plan (page 1). It should be noted that while the 2015 POCD supersedes and controls, it is also a continuation of the 2004 POCD. The information, policies and tasks from 2004 should not be discarded, as they continue to be relevant today (but are junior to the 2015 POCD), just as policies and tasks of the 2015 POCD will be relevant but junior to the 2025 POCD.
- 2) Modify the text of 1.5 Use and Maintenance of the Plan. Include the following sentence. "In consideration that the Town has been without a Director of Planning for over 2 years, after the position is filled, the Planning and Zoning Commission will work with the Planning Director to review the POCD for possible updates and additions.
- 3) Modify the text of 2.1 Community Survey (page 10). All references to a "Community Survey" should be changed to "Community Questionnaire," to avoid misleading the reader that professional sampling and analysis methodology was used.
- 4) Modify Policy title 4.1 (page 35) *"Support Farms and Farmers."* Change to "Support Farmers, Fishermen, Lobstermen and Aquaculture."
- 5) Modify Task 4.1.2 (page 35) *"Establish a town Agricultural Commission."* Change to "Establish a town Agricultural and Aquaculture Commission."
- 6) Modify Initial Task 4.1.5 (page 35) *"Convene local farmers and produce groups to identify business needs and opportunities."* Change to "Convene local Farmers, produce groups, Fishermen, Lobstermen (Southern New England Fisherman's and Lobsterman's Association) and Aquaculture groups to identify ways to improve Town policies towards their businesses and to encourage business opportunities between groups."
- 7) Modify Initial Task 6.1.6 (page 54) *"Add a line item in the budget and make an appropriation each year for a fund to purchase open space."* Remove "make an appropriation each year."

- 8) Modify Policy 6.2.1 (page 55) "Limit improvements to Town owned open space to those that are consistent with long term preservation and appropriate public enjoyment of the natural resources and open space value of the site." Change to "Allow improvements to Town owned open space that are consistent with reasonable public recreational use."
- 9) Modify Initial Task 8.2.6 (page 72) "Review the NDD and IHRD zoning requirements for potential updates." Change to "Review the NDD and IHRD zoning requirements for potential updates and encourage greater use of these types of tools." All references to greater use of master planning tools throughout the POCD should reflect the Subcommittee version dated 10/22/2014.
- 10) Modify Policy 10.1.2 (page 92) "Strive to diversify and increase the tax base annually." Add the phase "with the goal to grow the Net Taxable Grand List by at least 1% per year."
- 11) Modify Policy title 10.3 (page 93) "Retain and Support Existing Businesses." Change title to "Encourage Business Development."
- 12) Modify text of 16.3 (page 138) Implementation Committee. *The Draft POCD states that the Implementation Committee shall determine the priority of addressing the Initial Tasks.* Modify the POCD document to include a priority scale similar to the 2004 POCD which rated the importance of Tasks on a scale from 1 High Priority to 3 Low Priority.

Recommended Additions:

- 1) New Initial Task 6.1.13 (page 54) "Consider a recommendation to local legislators that PA-490 be modified to a lower minimum acreage requirement, from 25 acres to 15 acres." Consider the effect of "fractionalization" as land passes through generations. For example, a large PA-490 tract over time becomes multiple smaller tracts through family transactions. What was once 45 acres under one owner may now be three 15 acre undeveloped parcels with 3 sibling owners, all who want to keep the PA 490 designation. However because none of the parcels is over 25 acres, none would be eligible for the PA-490 program. This could be addressed at the State level upon a recommendation from the Town.
- 2) New Initial Task 10.3.2 (page 92) "Planning Department shall prepare Concept Memos regarding possible Master Planned development scenarios for key properties such as Liberty Crossing (High Priority), Mystic Color Lab, Seaport Marine, the Mechanic Street Mills, Perkins Farm, the former CT Castings Mill and Campbell Grain."
- 3) New Initial Task 10.3.3 (page 93) "Consider changing the current definition in our zoning regulations of *Substantial Improvement* (page I-28) back to 1 year from the current 5 years adopted in June 2013." This Task would support Policy 10.2.2 which encourages flexibility in addressing flood requirements. Much of downtown Pawcatuck and Mystic are in flood zones. At the present time any improvements made over a 5 year period that cost 50% or more (of the preconstruction value, excluding land) trigger raising the base elevation of the structure to 1' above the Base Flood Elevation (BFE is 11' plus 1'). The 5 year look back, for many properties, makes it problematic to make *substantial* improvements without raising the entire building. The FEMA definition for Substantial Improvement is only 1 year. In June 2013 Stonington adopted a harder definition than FEMA."
- 4) New Initial Task 10.3.4 (page 93) "Consider broadening allowed uses in M-1 manufacturing zones. Begin from Planimetrics recommendations detailed in their memo to the Town dated

10/16/2012 M-1 Zoning Strategies. The memo contains highly detailed sample text amendments that could be adopted by PZC. The memo is the basis for Policy 10.2.1 "Encourage re-use of the mills and other underutilized commercial and industrial sites;" and Initial Task 10.2.10 "Create a Heritage Mill District (HM) zone for historic mill sites," which is a Velvet Mill business model for vacant Mechanic Street mills.

- 5) New Initial Task 10.3.5 (page 93) "Streamline the permitting process for existing businesses to make it simpler (less costly) for them to substantially improve their buildings, change uses and increase the scale of their operations. This should be a High Priority and outside of Initial Tasks 9.3.4 (page 79) and 10.2.5 (page 92) which read "review and modernize zoning regulations."
- 6) New Initial Task 10.3.6 (page 93) "Consider new Master Planning tools that will cause a 100+ employee company to build in Stonington within the next 10 years. EDC believes land, served by water and sewer, will need to be identified and rezoned (Master Planned) for this purpose."
- 7) New Initial Task 10.3.7 (page 93) "Consider a new zoning district for the present site of Mystic Aquarium that makes its current use a Permitted Use while also meeting the Aquarium's need for flexibility in implementing new uses in the future. A Master Planned zone similar to the Mystic Seaport's special MHD zone (High Priority)."
- 8) New Initial Task 10.3.9 (page 94) "Consider creating a new zoning district for Maritime Drive that allows a broader range of manufacturing and other commercial uses."
- 9) New Initial Task 10.3.10 (page 95) "Consider changes to MC-80 marina zoning regulations to address the continued success of small and large marinas."
- 10) New Initial Task 10.3.11 (page 95) "Consider changes to 7.12 Sign Regulations, specifically addressing the business community's needs. For example, changes that would allow A-frame type sandwich boards and Special Wall Signs advertising daily specials in DB-5 and LS-5 zones."
- 11) New Initial Task 10.4.5 (page 93) "Encourage a closer working relationship between PZC/Planning Department and the Mystic Seaport, the Mystic Aquarium and the Town's other major economic drivers."
- 12) New Initial Task 10.4.6 (page 93) "Consider policies and tasks to encourage the creation of spin off business and or increased economic activity between local businesses and the larger local economic drivers. For example, wooden boat builders and the Mystic Seaport; new medical care offices and or lab facilities for Stoneridge and Masonicare."