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To: SimsburyCT_PlanMin
Cc:

ADOPTED

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
October 14, 2008
REGULAR MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman John Loomis called the regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 7:05 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. The following members were present: Ferguson Jansen, Gerald Post, Charles Houlihan, Julie Meyer, Carol Cole and Susan Bednarczyk. Also in attendance were Hiram Peck, Director of Planning, as well as other interested parties.

II. SEATING OF ALTERNATES

Chairman Loomis appointed Commissioner Cole to serve for Susan Bednarczyk only for the purpose of approving the minutes.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES of September 23, 2008

The Commission made several edits to the minutes.

Commissioner Post made a motion to approve the September 23, 2008 minutes as amended. Commissioner Houlihan seconded the motion, which was approved.

IV. CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUES 8-24 REFERRAL on proposed donation of 7 acres of property for open space located at 1609 Hopmeadow Street (rear).

Chairman Loomis read Connecticut General Statute 8-24 aloud to the Commission. He stated that the role of the Planning Commission is to make a recommendation of approval, denial or to take no action regarding the Town's acquisition of this property.

Mr. Peck stated that the owner of the property, Marianne Reifenheiser,

would like to donate this 7 acres of land, which is undeveloped, to the Town as open space. He stated that the address of 1609 Hopmeadow Street is not correct; there is not a number for this parcel. Unfortunately, the attorney for Ms. Reifenheiser did not initially have a map. When he acquired a map, it was incorrect. The correct map that was finally submitted showed the proper parcel, although the agenda does not reflect the correct street number.

The Commission members were shown pictures of this property. Mr. Peck stated that this is a great piece of undeveloped land. There is nice vegetation on the property, with some informal trails on it; there is no proposal to put any formal trails on the property.

Mr. Peck stated that Town staff recommends approval of this donation because this parcel is directly under the wildlife corridor that is proposed in the POCD. Acquisition of this land will be at no cost to the Town. He stated that this property has excellent soils and it also connects to other open space.

Commissioner Meyer questioned if the Town approached this owner and asked them to donate this land. Mr. Peck stated that there was some discussion with the Assessor regarding why the parcel was being assessed the way it was. After some discussion, the owners decided to donate the property.

Commissioner Bednarczyk made a motion to amend this agenda item to state, "Connecticut General Statutes 8-24 Referral on proposed donation of 7 acres of property for open space known as the Reifenheiser property". Commissioner Jansen seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved. Commissioner Houlihan stated that several neighbors in this area of Town have had their well water monitored. He questioned if there was a concern that there might be a problem under the land. Mr. Peck stated that if the Town was going to put in wells and use it for a drinking water supply, it might be a concern, although they are not. If the Commission were to recommend acquisition of this land, they might want to recommend that if, in the future, wells were built on this property this should be taken into account. They could also state that the Planning Commission is aware that some well monitoring has taken place in this area in the past and if the Town decides to drill wells for drinking water in the future, that this issue be taken into account at that time. Chairman Loomis stated that they should also take into account the impact on existing wells.

Commissioner Bednarczyk made a motion that the Planning Commission make a positive referral to accept the Reifenheiser open space property known as Assessor Map H02/Block 403/Lot 006, 7.8 Acres. She stated that accepting this property follows the 2007 POCD. In the event that the Town desires to establish water wells on this property, it should receive sufficient

testing and on further determination that it does not adversely impact the existing wells of nearby residents. Commissioner Meyer seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

V. STATUS OF CHARRETTE INITIATIVE

Mr. Peck stated that the Charrette Sub-Committee met last night to discuss the 3 proposals regarding the interviews that were conducted. The members discussed the pros and cons of each consultant and who they would recommend as their first choice. Mr. Peck stated that there were 2 firms that the Sub-Committee members felt most comfortable with and would like to pursue. He stated that they now needed to know the cost for the proposals and what these prices reflect. They have asked Mr. Peck to find out if the consultants would reduce these numbers and if the principles of these consultants would be involved in the Charrette process. After these questions are answered, the Sub-Committee can then decide which one consultant to continue discussions with and hopefully enter into a contract. He stated that although there were some initial misgivings about the Charrette process, the Sub-Committee members are now more united in this process going forward. Mr. Henault, Chairman of the Finance Committee had stated at last night's meeting that he felt that the process should go through the public hearing process which was through the budgetary process.

Mr. Thomas Frank, Chairman of the Economic Development Commission, stated that the other issue that was discussed at this Charrette Sub-committee meeting was the timing. The initial timetable was for the Charrette process to be completed by the end of this year. As time passed, the timing was pushed back to the beginning of next year. He stated that now, if the Charrette is pushed into the next normal budget cycle, this would bring the end of the process to the fall of 2009. Mr. Frank feels that a one year delay is a significant delay in the process.

Mr. Peck stated that he has been asked if new applications were being held up because of the Charrette process. He stated that they were not; applications continue to come in to the Town. The Commission discussed the Giorgio application. Mr. Peck stated that they are putting together their conceptual plans; they would like to submit something prior to the end of the year. They are also interested in pursuing what could be mixed income housing under the Home Connecticut Legislation, which was recently passed.

Regarding the Charrette Sub-Committee meeting, Commissioner Meyer stated that she felt this was a very informative meeting. The members gave very good opinions of why they picked a certain consultant. She stated that she agreed with the Land Use Commission Chairmen and Emil Dahlquist, the Chairman of the Design Review Board, who preferred Dover Kohl, although she did not feel that they gave the best presentation. She stated that Victor

Dover was the only consultant that emphasized the built environment and its relationship to the natural environment; Code Studio did not. She stated that initially, she liked the other presenter, although that was not the code that the experts in the room wanted. And because she was not impressed with the person Dover Kohl would assign to the Charrette process, she feels strongly that it would need to be Victor Dover who runs the Charrette.

Regarding the Charrette Sub-Committee meeting, Commissioner Cole stated that she was impressed with the level of conversation. If the Charrette goes forward, she feels that the Town would need to be willing to come up with some of the money in terms of grants or fundraising.

Commissioner Houlihan stated that there is a \$150,000 difference between the 2 proposals. He questioned what accounted for this difference. Mr. Peck stated that he will need to do a line item budget for the 2 proposals, which will be a difficult process. He will then talk to each consultant to make sure he is accurately reflecting what the consultants are proposing. He will then see how the consultants can lower the numbers.

Commissioner Cole stated that several years ago, the Chamber organized a newsletter that went out periodically to all households regarding taxes and economic development. She feels that there is a real need for something like this again. Mr. Peck stated that some of the answers to these questions will be gotten from the public opinion poll.

Regarding educating the public, Commissioner Bednarczyk stated that this needs to be done. She suggested that a postcard be sent to residents regarding a detailed analysis of the Charrette. Chairman Loomis stated that Dover Kohl had 9 standard methods of approaching this issue. Commissioner Meyer suggested a power point presentation that could be part of a Board of Selectmen meeting that gives an overview of what a Charrette is. Mr. Peck stated that they did do that at the Board of Selectmen's February 20, 2008 meeting. He stated that this presentation could be re-played.

Commissioner Jansen questioned if the consultant's end product would be a form-based code. Mr. Peck stated that the Town will end up with a form-based code for the Center of Town and possible templates for the north and south ends, potentially adaptable to other areas in the community as the Town ultimately sees fit. He stated that they will also end up with the remainder of the Zoning Regulations being essentially the Euclidean type zoning regulations that Simsbury currently has. He stated that this is referred to as a hybrid code. Mr. Peck stated that the Zoning Commission will continue to do the revisions on the normal Euclidean zoning regulations and the Charrette will be "plug-in modules" in various areas.

Regarding the public opinion poll status, Mr. Peck stated that the survey has been completed. The consultant is putting together the report. The First Selectman will be deciding how to distribute that information.

VI. STAFF REPORT

Simsbury Airport feasibility study - Mr. Peck stated that the report has been submitted by the consultant and the findings will be presented at a meeting on October 23rd. There will be 2 meetings. One meeting will be at 12:30 at the Town Hall and the other meeting will be at 4:00 at the high school. The same information will be given out at both meetings. Mr. Peck stated that he will send out information regarding the times and dates to the Commission members.

Commissioner Jansen suggested that SCTV videotape this meeting.

Accessory structure, Cobtail Way - Mr. Peck stated that the Subdivision for 19 Cobtail Way was originally approved with some restrictions in place regarding tree cutting. Although trees were cut down that were not supposed to be cut down, this homeowner came back before the Commission and got a tree replanting plan approved. Mr. Peck stated that the homeowners would now like to build an accessory structure on their property to store pool furniture. He stated that the shed meets the required setbacks; they will not be taking down any trees. The neighbors are also aware of this and do not have any problems with the structure being constructed.

Regarding Meadowood, Mr. Peck stated that the status of the open space closing for the Meadowood Triangle and the parcel adjacent to the Triangle is scheduled for early November. He stated that the Town is still working with DEP to get the grant monies in place. They are also working to make sure the property is cleaned up; that the crops that were planted this year are properly plowed under and that the plastics are removed prior to that plowing under.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

CRCOG Map Update - Mr. Peck stated that CRCOG is updating their Regional Plan. They sent a copy of the Land Use Plan to the Town, which shows a variety of development intensities. He asked the Commission members to look this over and tell him if there are any revisions that would be appropriate. He stated that Mr. Beach, Lynn Charest and he will be working together on this project and their input would be helpful. Mr. Peck stated that he would get copies of this map for the members to review.

Minutes Posting Memo - Mr. Peck stated that because of the new Statute, the

Town needs to get minutes posted in draft form up on the Town's website within 7 days of a meeting. The draft minutes will stay on the website and the approved minutes will also be posted after they are approved. Mr. Peck stated that the initial minutes do not need to be a transcript of the meeting; a basic summary would be fine.

Commissioner Meyer questioned what the repercussions were if a Town does not post an agenda within 24 hours prior to a meeting. Commissioner Houlihan stated that the Commission would not be able to officially act at that meeting if their agenda was not posted properly.

Chairman Loomis stated that he has received a letter from the State which stated that the Planning Commission needs to do a Plan of Conservation and Development at least once every 10 years; Towns will be penalized if this is not done. Mr. Peck stated that this was a form letter that went out to all Planning Commissions in the State. The State will be sending out another letter to Chairman Loomis stated that the POCD has already been received from Simsbury.

Commissioner Post stated that they have staked out the one-way gravel access road at Simsbury Farms; they did receive approval from the Zoning Commission.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Jansen motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Houlihan and unanimously approved.

Gerry Post, Secretary