

From: Lois Laczko December 1, 2008 11:50:53 AM  
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Cc:

ADOPTED

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
October 28, 2008  
REGULAR MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman John Loomis called the regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 7:04 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. The following members were present: Ferguson Jansen, Charles Houlihan, Carol Cole, Mark Drake and Susan Bednarczyk. Gerald Post arrived at 7:20 p.m. and Julie Meyer arrived at 7:25 p.m. 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 in the absence of Commissioner Meyer.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES of October 14, 2008

The Commission made several edits to the minutes.

Commissioner Jansen made a motion to approve the October 14, 2008 minutes as amended. Commissioner Cole seconded the motion, which was approved.

The Commission discussed the new legislation that requires Towns to get draft minutes on their websites within 7 days of the meeting. Mr. Peck stated that Mary Glassman is looking into formatting the minutes so that every Board and Commission's minutes would be standardized. He stated that the Town Attorney is also looking into if the draft minutes need to stay on the website even after the approved minutes are posted.

Commissioner Bednarczyk feels that the minutes should be left the way they are; she feels that the Planning Commission's minutes need to be very detailed. The minutes are records that are kept forever for future applications; the recordings of the meetings are not. Chairman Loomis

stated that detailed minutes are good for long-term undertakings, such as the POCD.

#### IV. CRCOG REGIONAL MAPS UPDATES

Chairman Loomis stated that this mapping needs to be done correctly because this becomes a supplement to the POCD, which has implications, not only for Simsbury, but for the Region. Although this will not be resolved tonight, after some discussion, questions and comments, it will come back to the Planning Commission to be more refined.

Mr. Peck distributed the Capital Region Land Use Policy Map to the Commission members. He stated that these maps came out of the Regional Plan. This map needs to be reviewed to make sure that it is accurate and to see whether there are any changes that have been made since the Plan was created. Mr. Peck stated that he would appreciate the Commission member's comments or questions regarding the map. This same information will also be sent to the Conservation Commission, the Economic Development Commission and the Zoning Commission for their input as well. He stated that a second level of review might be done by the Simsbury Land Trust.

Some areas on the map have already been reviewed. Mr. Peck stated that some areas in Meadowood are not labeled correctly, which will need to get straightened out. He stated that he would also like to get the Reifenheiser and Gersten properties included on this map.

Regarding the wildlife and open space corridors that are in the POCD, Mr. Peck stated that these areas connect with other Towns. He feels that this is important and should be shown on the map. He also feels that looking at the agricultural component of the map in terms of soils and current agricultural uses is also important. Chairman Loomis stated that this should ultimately reconcile with Simsbury's natural resources map. He stated that there are several maps and there should not be any major inconsistencies between them. Mr. Peck stated that it is important that the local, regional and State plan of conservation be consistent. It will be more and more important going forward to receive grants.

Chairman Loomis stated that the map shows, regarding development, that there is higher intensity of development along Route 10. He questioned whether Sand Hill Road should be the highest intensity development areas relative to other higher intensity development areas. Commissioner Jansen stated that the word "residential" is never used. He feels that it would be easier to look at the map if it was labeled as residential. He also questioned how they decided what roads would go on the map and which would not.

Commissioner Houlihan stated that the areas labeled as medium intensity do not tell very much. He stated that in the area of Blue Ridge and Red Stone, the intensity does not seem to be that different from the area of Long View because they are all one-acre lots. He stated that he is unsure of what the map is trying to convey. He questioned what the purpose of the map was and how they should incorporate this map into Simsbury's planning. Mr. Peck stated that this map is more helpful on the regional level.

Chairman Loomis read the purpose of the Regional plan, which was stated in a letter from Emily Moos of CRCOG. It stated that the plan serves primarily as a guide for conservation and development in the region and is a reflection of the overall vision. The plan also establishes regional goals and policies similar to those in municipal plans of conservation and development. Chairman Loomis questioned what the vision was and also stated that he did not think there was much of a correlation between this map and the POCD.

Commissioner Post stated that the map also does not reflect the new Wolcott Road.

Chairman Loomis stated that there are many issues that need to be addressed; CROCG is working with an old map. Also, regarding the southwest corner of the map, he feels that this should be a higher intensity development area. He stated that the agricultural land is also an important omission on the map.

Mr. Peck stated that Town staff will continue to work on reviewing this map. He will also get the answers to the Commissioner's questions that were raised tonight. He stated that they want to get this mapping right; there is no time pressure.

## V. STATUS OF CHARRETTE INITIATIVE

### Public Opinion Survey

Mr. Peck stated that the public opinion poll is posted on the Town's website. He felt that Mr. Barnes did a great job in presenting the results of the survey. He feels that the survey had a positive result, although not unexpected. Mr. Peck stated that there had been some discussion regarding if the word Charrette should be used in the survey because many people did not understand the term. He stated that it is important to realize that this survey provides a framework for decision making. The Town now needs to decide how best to go forward. Although 44% of the people gave a high response regarding moving forward with the Charrette, the Town should not assume that they should proceed with the Charrette. Mr. Peck stated that other high results from the survey included not

widening Route 10 and not wanting large format retailers. He stated that the public opinion survey is important; the Town will take a close look at the answers and decide how to move forward.

Mr. Peck stated that the Charrette Sub-Committee is trying to refine the proposals. He stated that this survey will dovetail nicely into the Charrette process and will also help the consultants a great deal in going forward.

Commissioner Jansen stated that he would have liked to have seen the comprehensive planning study be a part of the, "How much are you willing to pay", part of the survey. He thought these answers would have been interesting. The results would have shown how interested taxpayers are depending on things costing a certain amount of money.

Regarding costs, Commissioner Cole stated that the residents of Simsbury need to be educated in terms of what is involved in the Charrette process and what they will get out of that process. She feels that more people may be willing to go forward with a Charrette if they knew more about it; they might also be willing to pay more if they were more educated.

Mr. Peck stated that it is up to the people who want to go forward with the Charrette to make the case for it. The Town will take the results from the survey to figure out how to instruct people and go forward in the most cost effective way.

Commissioner Cole stated that she was surprised with the result regarding spending money for open space; this did not get a good response. She feels that this is because a lot of money has already been spent, although she feels that people might change their minds if there is a certain property that is in danger of not being preserved.

Commissioner Meyer stated that the survey reflects that 75% of the households have children in schools and yet 50% of the people are willing to pay more property taxes to preserve open space; they did not all go for education. Although education is a top priority for many, they still want to preserve open space and provide for services in Town. She feels that educating people regarding where their dollars are going is very important.

Mr. Peck stated that 68% of the time, the female of the household will answer the phone. To balance this, they will ask to speak to the oldest male in the household. He stated that doing it this way gets balanced results. Mr. Peck stated that there was only one recorded complaint throughout the survey, which was because the phone was not working properly.

Commissioner Meyer stated, that at his presentation Mr. Barnes stated that he did not feel the collection of the data during such an economically volatile period of time would affect the outcome because taxes and other concerns has been a subject of concern to people prior to the survey. He felt that this information from the survey would not change in six months even with the shaky economy.

Commissioner Drake stated that he feels this survey reaffirms what the Town already knew. He feels that Simsbury is on the right track.

Commissioner Cole stated that she was surprised regarding the Simsbury Airport question. There were as many people against this as were in favor of it.

Commissioner Bednarczyk questioned how the random dialing was done. Mr. Peck stated that the computer generated 6,000 phone numbers based upon the area code and the first three digits. The computer dials until it gets a real phone number. This provides an even distribution of numbers within the Town. Mr. Peck stated that the public opinion poll provided accurate balanced results.

## VI. STAFF REPORTS

Mr. Peck stated that the Charrette Sub-Committee asked him to go back to the consultants to get more information regarding their pricing and if costs could be lowered, and if the principals would be directly involved in the process. They also wanted to know what the tasks would be for each phase and what the responsibility of the Town would be for each phase. They would also like the consultant to explain what the economic benefits for the Town would be going forward. Mr. Peck stated that these questions have been sent to the consultants. When he gets the responses, the Charrette Sub-Committee will have another meeting to discuss this information.

Commissioner Houlihan questioned what the timeline was regarding the Charrette. Mr. Peck stated that most of the members of the Charrette Sub-Committee would like the process to go forward as soon as possible, although there are 1 or 2 members who would like to wait until the next budget cycle. Mr. Peck stated that consensus within the group is important. Commissioner Houlihan stated that it might make more sense to split the cost over several budget cycles. Mr. Peck stated that if this was done, the Charrette might lose momentum.

Commissioner Post questioned if it was feasible to do the Town Center first, then the south end in year two and the north end and the airport in year three. Mr. Peck stated that he has posed this question to the

consultants to see if this would be a more cost effective way, but they should also look at what the advantages and disadvantages of doing it this way would be.

Commissioner Meyer questioned if the Board of Selectmen would have a final firm selected by the end of the year so they could then go to the Board of Finance. Mr. Peck stated that they would probably pick a consultant by then. He stated that after going over and comparing the two proposals more carefully, he feels that the costs of the two consultants are not very far apart.

Regarding the Meadowood closing, Mr. Peck stated that this is set for November 13, 2008. He stated that there has been a lot of discussion regarding the fact that the Trust of Public Land will be serving as escrow agent for the Town of Simsbury. They will take title to the property so the Town can still receive the grant money that was applied for. Mr. Peck stated that the Town has already received \$350,000 in grants so far, although they are applying for another \$500,000. He stated that the Town cannot receive the grant money if they already have title to the property.

Mr. Peck stated that he has talked with Griffin Land regarding cleaning up the plastic that is on the property. The farmer has also stated that he would like to continue farming on the property. Commissioner Post stated that the Town needs to make sure that the plastics are removed from the field prior to the closing, unless the Board of Selectmen decides to keep the plastic there for weed control. Commissioner Post stated that the Town should make sure the plastic is removed; it has already started blowing around because of the windy conditions. He also stated that the Town should not allow that particular farmer to continue to farm the land. He stated that there have been several complaints about the farmer.

Regarding the airport feasibility study, Mr. Peck stated that the consultant made his presentation to the public. He stated that the report is fairly neutral. It depends on what information is looked at as to whether the Town will make any money or lose money if they purchase the airport. He stated that the owner of the airport has not yet indicated that this property will be going up for sale. There are still many questions that need to be answered. The Commission continued their discussion regarding the runway, what kinds of aircraft might be able to land at the airport and the FAA requirements.

Mr. Peck stated that if the Town decides to go forward with Phase II, it will look at each of the alternatives in more detail to find out what it would cost to: extend the runway; for hanger purchase, location, relocation; taxiway relocation; road relocations, etc. Phase II would look more closely to what is needed in order to go forward.

Chairman Loomis stated that regarding the ground related issues, i.e. road relocation, runway extension, new taxi runways, the Town could receive a lot of Federal assistance.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

There were none.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Jansen motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Meyer and unanimously approved.

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Gerry Post, Secretary