

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hadley Rose called the Special Meeting of the Simsbury Charter Revision Commission to order at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 29, 2015. The meeting was held in the Board of Education Conference Room of the Simsbury Town Offices located at 933 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT. In attendance were the following commission members: Jeff Tindall, Anita L. Mielert, Mary Glassman, Melissa Osborne, Robert Crowther, Thomas Benneche, Paul W. Henault, James Ray, and Edward Pabich. Staff included Director of Administrative Services Thomas Cooke, Town Attorney Robert DeCrescenzo, and Deputy Director of Administrative Services Sean Kimball.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC Audience

Ms. Joan Coe of 26 Whitcomb Drive recommended that Planning and Zoning Commissions remain separate. Ms. Coe also suggested having representatives from Conservation, Planning, Park and Recreation and Board of Selectmen serve on the Open Space Commission. Ms. Coe also recommended that the Commission speaks with Mr. Phil Schenk who was the Avon Town Manager for many years and is currently in Bloomfield.

ACTION ITEMS

a. Approval of Minutes – Special Meeting of October 15, 2015.

The Minutes were unanimously approved as submitted.

b. Discussion and possible action on Charge related to Potential Combination of Planning Commission and the Zoning Commission

Mr. Robert Pomeroy, Chairman of the Zoning Commission, said that the Zoning Commission constantly refers to the POCD but rarely meets with the Planning Commission because projects are reviewed in succession. He added that the Zoning Commission would benefit from the Planning Commission’s input since the approval process has become more complex. Mr. Pomeroy added that although developers gain some benefits from streamlining the process, he doesn’t see an overwhelming need for the change.

Mr. Ferg Jansen, Chairman of the Planning Commission, recommended keeping the two Commissions separate since the current process is operating smoother than in the past. He added that the work involved in developing a new POCD is extensive. As a result, it would be overwhelming for the Zoning Commission to be involved with the POCD in addition to their regular duties.

Mr. Bill Ethier of 20 Surry Circle stated that he is a member of the Economic Development Task Force, a Land Use Lawyer, Executive Director of Home Builders Association and a lobbyist. Mr.

Ethier stated that the Economic Development Task Force unanimously recommended combining the Zoning and Planning Commissions. He said that Simsbury is competing with other towns and it's very important to simplify the application process in order to meet the expectations of investors. Mr. Ethier stated that 146 towns in Connecticut have Planning and Zoning Commissions combined. Of the 29 towns in Hartford County, 25 or 26 have combined Commissions, three or four remain separate. Mr. Ethier added that the duties of Planning and Zoning are the same -- to follow legal statutes and processes. Therefore, the Commissions should be combined and represent one approach for the Town.

The Commission members continued to ask Mr. Ethier questions pertaining to the positives and negatives of combining the Commissions as well as other recommendations suggested by the Economic Task Force. Also discussed among the Commission members was the workload of town staff and committee volunteers.

The Commission requested to see the report Bill Ethier referenced. Commissioner Hadley requested Tom Cooke to invite members of combined Commissions from other towns to speak at future meetings.

c. Discussion and possible action on Charge related to Composition of Open Space Committee

Mr. David Bush, Chairman of the Culture Parks and Recreation Commission, recommended that a representative of his Commission become a standing member on the Open Space Committee. Mr. Bush said that he worked with the Open Space Committee on a few presentations which resulted in improved communication and thorough questioning.

Mr. Ferg Jansen agrees with Mr. Bush and added that some topics overlap, such as the Wetlands and Conservation Committee.

Commissioner Mielert made a motion for the Chairman of Culture Parks and Recreation to be appointed as a member to the Open Space Committee. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Crowther and was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Glassman stated that she believes other boards and commissions ought to be considered for inclusion on the Open Space Committee and noted that she supported the motion on the condition that the other additions be considered on a future agenda.

d. Discussion and possible action on Suggestions Received from the Public

The Commission members discussed at length items listed in Thomas Cooke’s Memorandum dated October 29, 2015. The members unanimously agreed on topics that will be pursued by the Charter Revision Commission.

e. Agenda Items for Next Scheduled Meeting

Commissioner Hadley said he will work on the agenda for the next Regular Meeting.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Irene Muench