

PLANNING COMMISSION – REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, June 27, 2023, at 7:00 P.M.
Public Meeting was held in the FSPL Room – Simsbury Public Library
725 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070

I. CALL TO ORDER – Secretary Rice called the meeting to order at 7:01 P.M.

ROLL CALL

Present: Town Planner, George McGregor; Assistant Town Planner, Brittany MacGilpin; Planning Consultant, Glenn Chalder; Chair, Erin Leavitt-Smith; Secretary, William Rice; Holly Beum, Joseph Campolietta, Donald Colantonio, Julie Eaton, Marcus Furze, and Craig MacCormac.

Commissioner Furze was appointed as a regular member for tonight’s meeting.

II. PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

POCD Draft Public Information Session

Mr. Chalder presented the community with an overview of the POCD.

- **Over-Arching Principles:** Livability; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; and Sustainability and Resiliency
- **The Plan’s Organization:** Simsbury’s current status, Conservation, Development, Infrastructure, and looking ahead in terms of land use and implementation strategies.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

S. Masino, 41 Madison Lane, West Simsbury, stated that we are still in a transition from the pandemic and making plans based on what we did during that time might not be effective. She discussed a need of making our lifestyles more local and making sure that Simsbury has what it needs for its residents to accomplish that. She encouraged the commission to examine the town’s values instead of appearance when planning for ambience. She made a call for ecological integrity being a cornerstone of Simsbury’s longevity. She stated that specificity is needed for certain aspects. She brought up 8-30g, plans, and rental assistance.

K. Barnett, 15 Ox Yoke Drive, Simsbury, stated there appears to be lack of communication and knowledge between the commissions involved in building developments. She discussed the affordable housing plan and 8-30g having flaws, senior residents having affordable housing that meets their needs, the decline in children, traffic, and open space.

48 D. Nash, 5 Merrywood, Simsbury, stated she is concerned about being able to
49 afford to live in town. She discussed how the large apartment complexes are affecting
50 taxes. She also stated that there is an inconsistency between the ambience that the
51 community loves and the building developments. She suggested having deed restricted
52 properties in lieu of them paying taxes, or repurposing empty office spaces.
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54 L. Hamel, 97 East Weatogue Street, Simsbury, urged the commission to explore
55 business synergy and the preservation of current businesses.
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57 T. Salls, 11 Tunxis Place, Tariffville, stated that the cost of living, preserving open
58 space, and supportability will be compromised. He mentioned transit wiring
59 development is something to strive for because the cars are taking up a lot of space and
60 are expensive. He encouraged making the center of town accessible to non-drivers
61 such as seniors, those with disabilities, and students. He discussed that building taller
62 buildings, that take up less space while still maintaining open spaces is important.
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64 M. Scully, 29 Notch Road, West Simsbury, stated that specificity is vital when we
65 have developers interested in building in our town because the ecological and
66 sustainable consequences are long lasting.
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68 W. Coste, 6 White Water Turn, Tariffville, discussed that the Proposal Alternative
69 #2 for the Greenway in the Tariffville area seems to be the least impactful
70 on the community and provides the connectivity that is sought from Bloomfield to the
71 Farmington Valley Greenway and other surrounding areas while avoiding CT-315.
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73 S. Van Kleef, 6 Mallard Circle, Tariffville, stated the importance of ecological and
74 open space preservation and protection. She agreed with other residents that strong
75 directive language was helpful for developers to understand our values. She discussed
76 inconsistencies between different commissions and various documents about affordable
77 housing. She expressed concern about the fast rate of building and the lack of direction.
78 She also advocated for more transparency for the residents and more accessibility to
79 documents.
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81 H. Gilbert, 126 Hopmeadow Street Unit #3E, Simsbury, stated the need for
82 affordable housing, how mortgages are cheaper than rents, and the desire to age in place.
83 She expressed concern for certain buildings in town being torn down for future
84 development. She stated her dissatisfaction for existing apartment complexes not
85 offering affordable housing and the rapid new developments that will not offer any or
86 very little affordable housing. She called for preservation of nature and open spaces.
87 She also advocated for more public transportation and the continued use of gas heating.
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89 H. Peterson, 20 Longview Drive, Simsbury, expressed appreciation on invisible
90 divisibility being included and hopes that steps are carried out to assist in it. She stated
91 that people who are hearing compromised especially need to be able to see who is
92 speaking, but that everyone can benefit from being able to see the expressions of the
93 speaker and read lips.

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J. Lintner, 22 Massasco Street, Simsbury, stated that the people who have built the community are being moved out by the economics. He mentioned that the town cannot afford to maintain the small spaces of open space that are sporadic around town. He proposed that the those lots be turned into affordable housing.

M. Jenks, 23 Brook Drive, Simsbury, stated that when sustainability is mentioned all that it encompasses should be clearly defined so that the public knows. At previous public events where community input was encouraged, she felt that the lack of understanding impacted responses. She also advocated for better cell phone coverage, so that she can communicate regardless of where she is town. She also discussed how invasive plants, specifically Japanese Knotweed, and wanted the POCD to address it.

K. Rothfuss, stated that there are too many apartment buildings that are not providing affordable housing, and that the predatorial development companies are invading the town at a rapid rate. She discussed that the idea to build in the parking lot behind Fitzgerald's would compromise the parking available for the events at the Performing Arts Center.

J. Coleman, 4 Phelpscoft Road, Simsbury, stated that it is not possible to achieve sustainability and open space while constantly developing. With all of the apartments being built the increase in traffic on Hopmeadow is going to be higher. He is concerned about local businesses not being able to survive with national chains coming in, and how the traffic will be impacted by any businesses with a drive thru.

A. McDonald, stated that there is a need for affordable housing but instead of apartment buildings where the rent is more expensive than a mortgage, with people who are not really involved in the town, there could be deed restricted houses for families or people just starting out who plan on being here for a while. She is concerned that she will not be able to live here as she gets older.

L. Nelson, stated that she would like to see action steps on transportation and open spaces. She advocated for someone take responsibility in overseeing the POCD and reporting back to the community on the progress.

I. Scully, 29 Notch Road, Simsbury, stated that affordability needs subsidizing. The percentage of affordable housing with the new developments is not sufficient. She reiterated that Japanese Knotweed is taking over. She explained that going electric in sustainability means using efficient heat and not electric baseboards. She also encouraged stronger verbiage in the POCD.

B. Latimer, 5 Spruce Lane, Weatogue, stated that the predatorial developers are using language with green spaces, being set back, and community building to get us to buy in but are not really encompassing our values.

CLOSING REMARKS

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Mr. Chalder explained that the public’s comments are being taken into consideration the commission will discuss them and revisions will be made to the POCD. Eventually there will be another public hearing to consider adoption and will continue to make revisions. The goal is for adoption to start in the fall.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Secretary Smith adjourned the meeting without objection at 8:53 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amanda Blaze
Commission Clerk

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