



ESSEX PLANNING COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, January 8, 2015

7:30 p.m.

Essex Town Hall – Meeting Room A

DRAFT MINUTES

1. **Call to Order and Seating of Members**

Chairman Tom Danyliw called the hearing to order at 7:30 p.m. Seated for the meeting were Vice Chairman Linda Herman and Alan Kerr. Seated for member Carla Feroni was Claire Tiernan, and seated for member Ralph Monaco was John Ackermann. Also in attendance were Town Planner John Guskowski, and several members of the public, including representatives from the Essex Zoning Commission

2. **Approval of Minutes:** Planning Commission Meeting, December 11, 2014

Motion to approve Minutes December 11, 2014 by Linda Herman, seconded by Alan Kerr. Motion carried unanimously.

3. **New Business**

a. **Public Forum on Plan of Conservation & Development Update – Discussion with Zoning Commission**

Chairman Danyliw introduced the topic and welcomed the representatives of the Zoning Commission to the discussion. John Guskowski stated that while the statutory structure of the PoCD meant that generally, the Planning Commission established the broad policy goals and then the Zoning Commission enacted them through regulation, this discussion in advance of drafting the PoCD meant that Zoning Commissioners would have input into the shape of the Plan. Chairman Danyliw asked for thoughts and comments from the Zoning Commission. Al Wolfgram pointed out that the Zoning Commissioners were there as individual citizens and did not represent the formal opinion of the full Commission.

Larry Shipman asked the Planning Commission to clarify its overall goals. Chairman Danyliw and John Ackermann discussed increasing density in the Village centers, increasing mix of uses, and increasing affordable housing availability. John Guskowski read the five guiding principles of the draft PoCD and discussed how the Commission wished to revitalize the development nodes and then connect them with strong transportation (including pedestrian and bicycle) links. This also included natural resource protection as well as design standards in the villages. Chairman Danyliw discussed the traffic conditions in Centerbrook, and Al Wolfgram pointed out that it

was actually a condition of the Transfer Station's special exception permit that no trucks should be using local roadways. Larry Shipman discussed the mixed use interests and asked what uses along Plains Road, Westbrook Road, and other areas were missing and should be encouraged or added. John Ackermann discussed the interest in having livable villages that were friendlier to live, walk, and shop in, recognizing that the economic conditions have changed. A few specific items were discussed, including the Essex Island Marina and land uses in the waterfront area, accessory apartments, building height and design, and traffic.

Al Wolfgram stated that the Zoning Commission wished to have strong, clear support in the PoCD for potential Zoning changes, particularly in dealing with controversial issues and a skeptical public. Chairman Danyliw asked whether the Zoning members agreed with the broad vision presented by Planning, and Larry Shipman concurred, but stated that there was a limited amount of sway that regulations held over the broader marketplace. Al Wolfgram sought specific guidance, but not too many complicated or internally inconsistent policy recommendations.

Larry Shipman led a discussion about the need to consider a complete re-write of the zoning regulations, which are several decades old and have become cumbersome to interpret and enforce. He stated that a simplified, streamlined regulation would help the review and approval process; he also added that public sewer lines would also facilitate development in Town. John Guskowski talked about the different directions and thematic approaches a new set of regulations could take. Another member of the Zoning Commission noted that it was important for the regulations and the Commission be responsive to the needs of property owners and applicants.

There was a general discussion of the wisdom of having separate vs. combined Planning and Zoning Commissions, and how the statutory authority of the two Commissions differ. Al Wolfgram argued that it was an important check and balance of responsibility.

Chairman Danyliw thanked the Zoning Commissioners for their valuable input.

b. Proposed FY 2015-16 Planning Commission Budget

Chairman Danyliw and John Guskowski reviewed the proposed budget with the Commission, and noted that the proposed consulting fees for CME Associates were increased by 3.8% to \$48,000. The advertising line item was proposed to be reduced to \$100, but other line items were unchanged. Linda Herman asked about fees collected, and John Guskowski reviewed the fee structure for subdivision review. The Commission discussed how the 2013-14 budget was unusual because of two subdivision lawsuits.

Motion to recommend proposed FY 2015-16 Budget by Claire Tiernan, **seconded** by Alan Kerr. **Motion carried unanimously**

4. Old Business

a. PoCD Updates and Next Steps

John Guskowski reintroduced the proposed policy statement relative to Open Space Tax Abatements that would be included as part of the 2015 Plan of Conservation & Development. Alan Kerr clarified the purpose and procedure that needed to occur for

this policy, and noted that the word “in” should be removed from the third line of the document, the word “contiguous” should be replaced by “continuous,” and the spelling of “preceding” was incorrect in the draft policy.

Motion to approve Policy Statement Regarding Open Space Tax Abatements per CGS Section 12-107e as amended by John Ackermann, **seconded** by Claire Tiernan. **Motion carried unanimously.**

John Guskowski stated that the series of public discussions the Commission had established was now completed, and the Commission should determine its path for additional public input at this time, perhaps via survey, or to continue drafting the document in earnest. The Commission discussed the issue of public opinion survey and their utility within a PoCD document, and decided at this time to proceed with drafting. John Guskowski stated that he would bring in examples of PoCDs from other communities so the Commission could see the different approaches to formatting and content.

b. Ivoryton MSIF Grant Update

John Guskowski stated that the preliminary plan had been finalized and was being developed as full engineering plans, which should be complete in February, with a goal of going out to bid in March.

c. Centerbrook Village & STEAP Grant

John Guskowski stated that the STEAP grant was submitted and is pending decision by the State.

5. Report of Committees and Officers

a. Report from Inland Wetlands Representative

The Commission does not currently have a representative to the Wetlands Commission, and John Guskowski stated that he had sent an email requesting an opinion from Attorney Royston about the appropriateness of having a member of Planning serve as a voting member on the Wetlands Commission, but had not heard back.

b. Report from RiverCOG Representative

Alan Kerr had been unable to attend the prior RiverCOG meeting.

c. Report from Economic Development Commission Representative

Bob Laundry was absent, so there was no report from EDC.

d. Chairman's Report

Chairman Danyliw had no further report

e. Planner's Report

John Guskowski reported that he would be working with WPCA on seeking an update to the Wastewater Facilities Management Plan, which both the Town and the State will contribute funds toward completing. He also noted that, upon request from RiverCOG, he worked with Dave Caroline and Norm Needleman on compiling a list of transportation priorities to be added to the Regional Plan.

6. **Correspondence & Invoices**

Chairman Danyliw noted the land use law training seminar upcoming and invited Commissioners to participate. There were no invoices.

7. **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn by Claire Tiernan, seconded by John Ackermann. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 9:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John Guskowski
Town Planner (Consulting)

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01/12 2015 at 9:05 AM.
Urban Road
ESSEX, CT TOWN CLERK *mist*