

NOTES FROM THE CHESHIRE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT MEETING, HELD ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2014 AT 7:30 P.M. IN ROOM 207-209 TOWN HALL, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410

Present

Lou Todisco, Gil Linder, Vincent Lentini

Absent: Earl Kurtz, Sean Strollo, Lelah Campo, S. Woody Dawson, Edward Gaudio, John Kardaras and Alternates Jon Fischer, Leslie Marinaro, Diane Visconti

Staff Present: William Voelker, Town Planner

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

The roll was called.

III. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Following roll call it was determined that a quorum of the Commission was not present to conduct business.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The group Pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES, JULY 9, 2014

Postponed to next meeting.

VI. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

1. Review of final draft – Plan of Conservation and Development Survey

This survey will be an agenda item of the PZC meeting of September 8, 2014. Once approved the survey will be activated and available on the web site, at Town Hall and Cheshire Library.

2. Discussion of draft Policy Overview

Mr. Voelker explained that he drafted the overview as a framework for the “Commercial Chapter” of the Plan. There will also be maps included in this section of the Plan from the regional agencies. Mr. Voelker noted that the regional agencies will be helpful to the Commission to insure the Town POCD is not in conflict with the State Plan. After PZC approval of the Commercial section of the Plan, the maps and comments from former Commissioner Cobern will be included.

Town Center Focus Area - According to Mr. Voelker each focus area is unique, has its own challenges, and the Town Center area has large scale use. With regard to future development in the center there is little land left to allow any development. Mr. Voelker commented on the theater and former service station property, which is 2 acres in size

under the same ownership. The owner (Wesson) will not offer these 2 parcels individually; the site is in the aquifer; and testing is still ongoing at the former service station area of the parcel. If this parcel of land was to be developed the access is difficult for left and right hand turns out of the site. The possibility of a right of way crossing in the rear is being looked into, and language to this effect will be forthcoming for Commission review. This is a C-2 zone, and changing it to R-20A would diminish the use of the property. If there was an application before PZC the curb cuts and parking would be of significant importance, and future development might be a 15,000 sq. ft. footprint.

It was stated by Mr. Linder that a service road would require every property owner to give an easement, and this raises a question for property owners with vehicles using their easement.

With an easement, Mr. Voelker said traffic would speed up on RT 10, with people have more access to businesses from the rear. A service road would have access and exit with a traffic light.

About 20 years ago there was a Route 10 Study Committee which looked at the traffic issues on this State road. This committee issued a report which Mr. Voelker will try to find and provide to the Commission.

Mr. Voelker informed the Commissioners that he will be providing focus reports on industrial, residential, and municipal facilities/areas of Cheshire for their review.

Main Street Focus Area – This area is a connector to Town Center, and maps of the area will be included for the POCD. The area has historic homes, professional offices, bank, restaurants, retail uses, churches, a school, library, post office, senior center, and CFD headquarters. This area is framed by two busy intersections at RT 10 and Main Street, and Main Street and West Main Street, RT 68.

West Main Street Focus Area – There is a distinct mixture of neighborhood scale commercial land (restaurants, convenience retail, motor vehicle repair, etc.) surrounded by older, well maintained single two and three family homes, multi family developments. This area has a strong sense of community pride. Zoning includes C-2, I-1, R20 and R-20A. There have been recent inquiries about property purchases/demolish buildings, and rebuild on West Main Street. Mr. Voelker said this cannot be done because of the C-3 zoning in place and the 50 foot setback. The PZC could develop special district zoning or flexible zoning for West Main Street. Due to modern code requirements conversion of older buildings is difficult, with more specifications for development and mixed use to make this happen.

Mr. Voelker advised that the Town has spent \$1 million on the West Main Street redevelopment. PZC can initiate a Special Design District without an active application, and it could be S.D.D. or flexible zoning. This would encourage investment in the properties, and S.D.D. can include a residential component. To pursue an S.D.D. the

PZC and staff would meet with residents/business owners, and work in collaboration with businesses and residents. An updated POCD is not necessary for the Commission to consider a new S.D.D. regulation, and looking at the possibility of this new regulation would be encouraged by staff.

South Main Street Focus Area – This area of Town is a more commercial area, with Bovano Industries at the north end, historic stone houses, the historic district, R-20A zoning which staff would recommend for re-zoning. With regard to the historic district, this was formed by property owners who voted on its formation. The Historic District Commission is a separate entity, selects its own members, and conducts its own business.

The Bovano area is zoned commercial. It is hoped there could be more adaptive reuse of this area of Town, i.e. mixed use project. Mr. Voelker pointed out that Cheshire Nursery on South Main Street is in business since 1910, is zoned R-20, and its primary use has always been a nursery.

The issue of “traffic calming” (HAWK light) was raised by Mr. Linder who asked if it should be included in the Plan.

Stating this is very specific, Mr. Voelker said the elimination of curb cuts is included in the focus information. He noted that the roads with higher volume traffic are State roads, and it is not expected that anything could calm down RT 10 traffic. One of the traffic issues on RT 10 is the delays at the high school in the morning and afternoon as students cross the State highway to and from Bartlem Park to their cars. Mr. Voelker informed the Commission that there is the possibility of moving the CHS tennis courts to Bartlem Park, thus moving the student parking lot to the high school tennis court area of the campus.

Mr. Todisco asked about West Main Street, the 50 foot setback, and not being able to tear down a building and rebuild because the building(s) do not conform.

In response, Mr. Voelker said it cannot be done. He explained there was an inquiry about a restaurant on West Main Street, at the site of a former package store, and this significant change in use cannot be approved by town administration. PZC would have to review this; safety issues are involved; and there is not enough parking. On West Main Street, Mr. Voelker said we do not want to demolish by neglect.

Regarding West Main Street, Mr. Linder asked about expansion in this area of town. He commented on the lack of parking at the post office and library. He cited the possibility of moving the library to another location with more parking, and moving the post office. Also, the plaza by the library is not mentioned in the Plan, and Mr. Linder asked about a S.D.D. in this area of Town.

Mr. Voelker noted that anything addressed should have a solution, to be cited in the public facilities section of the POCD. He also said the post office is going nowhere.

With regard to zoning, Mr. Voelker advised that one property should not be rezoned S.D.D. The property abutting the library is private, has no access from the library, and is not visible from the road.

The issue of aesthetics and building materials being harmonious was mentioned by Mr. Linder, who asked about the Town having strict regulations in this regard. He noted the Town of Canton has regulations about aesthetics.

Some towns have design review boards, and Mr. Voelker has experienced dealing with such a board in the past. He said the Commission must be careful about putting design criteria in the zoning regulations...as they could be too specific, discourage good design, and must be flexible. Mr. Voelker would not recommend a design review board for Cheshire. His recommendation would be to adopt regulations whereby an applicant demonstrates to the Commission that a design is harmonious.

Section 40.4.7 excerpt was read into the record by Mr. Linder, who asked how it is upheld.

Mr. Voelker stated that when the regulation was written for West Main Street there was a statement of intent included, i.e. village setting. This will clarify Section 40.4.7.

Mr. Linder cited McDonald's restaurant next to Bovano Industries, and not being in character with the surrounding area.

The Commission was informed by Mr. Lentini that the original McDonald's was more in character with the colonial aesthetics of the area. Over the years, the restaurant has been redesigned and remodeled and has lost this character.

Before closing the meeting Mr. Voelker advised that he will have the industrial area focus information to the Commissioners upon completion. He commented on looking at building coverages, encouraging more investment in industrial properties, loosening up building coverages, being aware of the aquifer. Mr. Voelker will be researching neighboring communities for competition with industrial development and use.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk