

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF CHESHIRE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 2015, AT 7:30 P.M. IN ROOM 115, TOWN HALL,
84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410**

Present

PZC Commissioners: Earl J. Kurtz, Chairman; Edward Gaudio, Gil Linder, John Kardaras.

Alternates: Diane Visconti.

Staff: William Voelker, Town Planner

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Kurtz called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

The clerk called the roll and a quorum was determined to be present.

III. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Following roll call a quorum was determined to be present.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The group Pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - March 11, 2015

Approval of minutes was postponed to the next meeting.

VI. DISCUSSION

a. Environmental Resource Section

The Commissioners present began a review of this section of the Plan. Ms. Visconti recommended the Plan include a section on "Barite Mines" and maps of locations of mines in Cheshire.

Mr. Voelker explained that barite mines are a litigious issue and should not be included in the POCD. Also, barite mines are not tied to any specific PZC policy or regulation. There is a binder on barite mines in the Planning Department, and it is open to the public, but the issue is not discussed with the public due to the legal issues.

Mr. Todisco commented on the fact that barite mines are a Town Council issue because the Council is the legislative body of the Town, and anything with liability comes before the legislative body. Information on the mines is available to the public. The POCD has specific land use policies, and it would be an error to put barite mines into the plan. He said the mines do not affect what the PZC does regarding regulations or approvals. There is material in the Planning office for a developer to look at before a property is developed.

It was pointed out by Mr. Kardaras that if someone comes before the PZC and everything meets the regulations the Commission is required to grant an approval of the application.

Mr. Kurtz left the meeting at 8 p.m.

Mr. Kardaras questioned inclusion of the "uniqueness" to Cheshire of the natural farming areas of the Town, i.e. turkeys, bears, other animals, which is not seen in residential areas. He commented on how the agricultural sector connects to the farming and natural beauty of the Town; doing things to encourage maintenance and existence of farms; and note their benefit to the community.

Community Farming - Mr. Voelker stated there are community farms at the former Lassen and Boulder Knoll farm locations. Property is leased to the people/share holders who lease the property to organize, grow, and sell produce. Much of the produce and food grown at these farms is donated to the Cheshire Community Food Pantry, and if State money has funded the community farm, the produce/food cannot be sold. The preservation of farming is growing and preservation of farm land is important and needed for the community.

Open space purchases can be considered for farming, community gardens and passive and active recreation purposes; they must be handicapped accessible; and can be part agriculture and part recreation. Acquisition of open space requires an 8-24 review by the PZC, can be tied to community farming, and is part of the POCD.

The Commissioners discussed a strong statement in the POCD to encourage maintenance of farms in the community. Mr. Voelker explained that the Council would support this, and he would work into the Plan preservation of agricultural land, where appropriate. The 8-24 review and approval by the PZC is required when there is modification, improvement, sale or use of public money to improve property. Mr. Voelker cited Ives Farm as an example of community agriculture.

In the first paragraph, last line of the Environmental Resources section, "Design choices..." Mr. Voelker said that this does not mean design of houses within a subdivision. There could be better choices made with good results within a subdivision.

b. Community Facilities Section

Community Service Facilities - the Commissioners reviewed this section of the Plan. There are 8 community service facilities cited, and Mr. Voelker will include a paragraph about recognition of the quality of the Cheshire School System, support of community values etc. The PZC has supported BOE facilities under Section 8-24.

With regard to location of sewerage areas in the community, Mr. Voelker said this is all in the WPCA Facilities Plan, and he will discuss this matter with the WPCA Chairman.

Climate Control - Ms. Visconti suggested a section in the Plan on climate control. Following a brief discussion, it was determined that this does not belong in the Plan.

Trees - Ms. Visconti wants a paragraph on the importance of trees in the community, and will draft a paragraph for Mr. Voelker's consideration and possible inclusion in the Plan.

Parks and Recreation Facilities - a question was raised by Mr. Linder about "walkable areas within the parks" and Cheshire having a park where people just walk, sit on benches and listen to the birds. He wants this to be encouraged, and stated the Town should fund these types of facilities.

Mr. Voelker pointed out that the Town has the Linear Trail for a passive recreation facility and walking area.

There will be a rough draft of the last sections of the Plan by Mr. Voelker to the Commissioners. He expects there will be "edits" from the regional planning agencies and maps are forthcoming from COG. Mr. Linder is working on the survey summary. The PZC public hearing on the Plan could be held at the 2nd meeting of the Commission in June. The final draft of the Plan will be on the Town web site and available for public review at the Cheshire Library.

VII. DISCUSSION

a. Schedule for Plan Adoption

Mr. Voelker reviewed the POCD schedule with the Commissioners. Statute requires adoption of the Plan by July 1st. Prior to adoption, the Plan must be referred to the Town Council for review; the Council has 65 days to review the Plan; and then the Plan comes back to PZC for adoption. Mr. Voelker noted that the draft of the Plan is in good shape with the major sections. Mr. Linder is working on the survey summary, and maps will be done by COG.

An extension beyond the July 1st deadline for submission of the Plan to the State OPM is recommended by Mr. Voelker. This extension would provide time for the Commission to have the draft reviewed by Council, and set a specific public hearing date. Following discussion on the extension date, the Commission agreed to request the date of January 1, 2016 as the submission date of the Plan to the State. Council Chairman Tim Slocum would send the letter to OPM requesting the extension for Cheshire's submission of the Plan. The Plan would go to the Town Council on or about June 1, 2015. Mr. Voelker noted that the State Legislature wants local legislative bodies involved in the POCD process.

Public Hearing(s) - there was a discussion about how many public hearings should be held prior to adoption of the Plan by the Commission. Mr. Voelker advised that only one (1) public hearing of the PZC is required before adoption. However, the PZC could

hold more than one hearing, breaking out sections of the Plan for individual hearings. For the last POCD there was only one public hearing. It is expected the Council will review, and possibly edit the Plan document. If there are changes/edits to the Plan by the Council, the PZC super majority can override them. The Town Council can also hold a public hearing on the POCD. Final approval of the Plan is the responsibility of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

MOTION by Mr. Gaudio; seconded by Mr. Kardaras.

MOVED that the Planning and Zoning Commission request granting of an extension from the State OPM for submission of the Town of Cheshire Plan of Conservation and Development to January 1, 2016; and that Town Council Chairman Timothy Slocum, as head of the local legislative body, send a letter of request on behalf of the Town of Cheshire.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Kardaras; seconded by Mr. Linder.

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton