

MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT MEETING, HELD ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2014 AT 7:30 P.M. IN ROOM 207-209 TOWN HALL, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410

Present

Earl J. Kurtz, PZC Chairman; Gil Linder, John Kardaras, Edward Gaudio, Louis Todisco and Alternate Member Diane Visconti.

Guest: Martin Cobern

Absent: Sean Strollo, S. Woody Dawson, Vincent Lentini; Alternates Jon Fischer, Leslie Marinaro.

Staff Present: William Voelker, Town Planner

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ROLL CALL

The roll was called.

III. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Following roll call it was determined that a quorum of the Commission was present to conduct business.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The group Pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 3, 2014.

There were no minutes to be approved; the 9/3/14 meeting did not have a Quorum present; notes were taken and submitted to the Planning Department.

The Commissioners determined that the minutes of **July 9, 2014** must be approved at the next POCD meeting.

VI. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Draft Policy Overview for Industrial Areas.

Town Planner Voelker submitted a policy overview for Industrial Areas and informed the Commissioners that he looked at the 2002 Plan goals and read them into the record (paragraph #1 of the policy overview). He noted that the goals have not changed in any way, that they remain true, and his frame of discussion is to talk about the strengths of the industrial districts.

There are three classifications of industrial districts – I-1, I-2 and I-C (Interchange Zone), comprising a total industrial land area of 2500 acres, with the I-C Zone having about 400 acres. The industrial zones constitute 12% of the Cheshire Grand List, nearly \$272 million of real property assessment and \$51 million of personal property assessment. There is a wide range of uses and employment in the industrial categories

– manufacturing/assembly, agriculture, bio-technology, warehousing and distribution and professional office.

Mr. Voelker stated he would have maps of the industrial zones for the Commission, and distributed copies of the Commercial District maps.

Cheshire is part of the Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley Region. The COG completed an Economic Profile for this region that analyzed the regional economy and comparison of employment versus workforce within the region and each town. Employment is the measure of how many people are actually employed, and workforce is a measure of the people gainfully employed. Cheshire employs about 15,000 people, and has an exported workforce of about 14,000 people.

Mr. Cobern reported that the COG uses these numbers in looking at transportation policy, uses the active working people, bus routes (i.e. Waterbury and New Haven to Cheshire), distribution of workers compared to where they live and work. Over 10 years these numbers have not changed very much, and distribution is almost the same.

The regional agencies handle the money for state highway improvements, evaluating where to allocate these funds. Mr. Voelker noted it is important for Cheshire, from an economic development standpoint, to be a net employment importer.

On page 1 of the policy overview, Mr. Linder suggested there be a description of the zones for a better understanding of each industrial zone.

With regard to the industrial zones and areas, Mr. Kardaras said his perception is that the areas are moving away into a centralized area.

Mr. Voelker said the variety of industrial uses are spread out in the industrial districts. The I-1 and I-2 Zones were designated in 1959, with the I-C zone coming later. These zones have been established for decades, function well in the community, and it would be hard to give them up as they could never be re-established.

There was a discussion amongst the Commissioners about light industrial areas now surrounded by residential zones (Consolidated Industries, Dalton, Ball & Socket). Mr. Voelker noted two sites on West Main Street (Dalton and Strollo properties) that could be S.D.D. districts, not industrial. If a company goes out of business the area could be re-zoned. With “abandonment” State law says it is loss of use for one year; the owner of the property could sell or have another use; and to re-zone an area would require looking at the market. Mr. Voelker noted the language in the POCD is not enabling, and valid manufacturing uses are permitted under the regulations. He commented on the need to keep the Town’s economic base solid.

Mr. Cobern stated the primary audience for the POCD is PZC Commissioners who use it as a guide and plan in setting regulations, and applicants wanting to change regulations making sure the change is consistent with the POCD. He commented on

the Plan as a document to assist in the generation of appropriate regulations, with the description of zones detailed in the regulations. The POCD is a guideline for Commissioners and applicants, and it is up to the Commission to modify or create regulations to carry out the goals of the Plan. Mr. Cobern said we do not want too much detail in the Plan; it should state what is to be accomplished; with the Commission doing what is required to carry out the goals.

Distinction between light and heavy industrial was discussed. Mr. Voelker stated larger industrial type facilities need more acreage. The I-2 Zone requires 3 acres (reduced from 6 acres); with sanitary sewers the acreage requirement is reduced; and there is still diversity in this part of the economic base. The PZC may want to modify regulations because these distinctions are no longer there.

Sanitary Sewers – Most of Cheshire's industrial property has sanitary sewers available. The Commissioners discussed St. Joseph Street which is zoned I-2, noting that across I-691 there are a few industrial uses along with residential use. Without sewers there is no incentive in the industrial area for more industrial use, and the St. Joseph Street area is more valuable as an industrial zone. Mr. Voelker pointed out that W. S. Development will have sanitary sewers only for its property, and further enhancement of the sewers in this area would require WPCA approval.

Zoning Amendments – Mr. Voelker stated that amendments to the zoning regulations were looked at as they related to competition from abutting towns. The maximum lot coverage relates to the buildings on a property. Cheshire has a 25% lot coverage in I-1 and I-2 Zones, while abutting communities have larger lot coverage percentages. Southington has 35% to 50%; Wallingford has 35%; Meriden has 30% to 50%; Prospect has 35%; Hamden has 40%; Waterbury is 50%.

The Commissioners discussed increasing Cheshire's lot coverage percentage. Mr. Voelker cited his recommendation of amending the lot coverage to 35% as a potential starting point which can be accomplished without significant environmental consequences with "no net increase in runoff" remaining in effect. This was discussed with RWA and they were generally supportive of a constructive change. With a change in lot coverage there would be larger buildings on properties.

Mr. Cobern noted there are already setback requirements on where buildings can be placed. He advised that Alexion Pharmaceuticals is not leaving Cheshire, and will be using their current site for support services. With additional lot coverage in place, this company would have had more flexibility for more buildings on their property. Mr. Cobern said Cheshire must be competitive in the region, and 35 % is a conservative number by right and where Cheshire should be.

The Town of Cheshire competes with abutting/surrounding towns, and not towns like Avon and Simsbury.

I-1 and I-2 Zone Differences – this issue was discussed by the Commissioners. I-1 Zone requires 40,000 square feet; I-2 Zone requires 120,000 square feet. With changes in the market it is recommended that regulations be adjusted to accommodate smaller users. The I-2 zone permits fewer access points and linkage of the access points.

In 1988 there was a Route 10 study report which had a number of recommendations and Mr. Voelker read some of them into the record from page 3 of the policy review. It was noted that the principal difference in the two districts is that I-1 districts are reviewed by special permit and public hearing; I-2 districts are reviewed by a site plan. Mr. Cobern stated that I-2 has 3 acre zoning; 1 acre lots could be allowed by special permit with additional controls such as common parking and egress. The recommendation is a good compromise.

Mr. Voelker commented on future industrial being smaller scale industrial with varied use categories that should be supported – warehousing and distribution, with agriculture having its own life and market. He said Cheshire should support what it already has. The town is not getting much new development; there is some re-development; and changing lot coverage to 35% tells current business owners that the town wants them to stay.

It was noted by Mr. Cobern that the fastest growing uses are technology companies – I.T., biotechnical, media, and old manufacturing is not a growing industry. He said the town must be cognizant of what is going into the industrial zone, and the 35% lot coverage will be a benefit. Mr. Cobern stated that Cheshire's Planning and Zoning Commission is regarded as one of the most reasonable commissions in Connecticut. The 35% lot coverage is a good step forward for occupancy of our land, for businesses to grow and not have to move out of town. There is a need to strike a balance, not having plants right next to each other as is seen in North Haven CT. The change to 35% will score points with people, the Economic Development Commission, Chamber of Commerce and is a win-win for the town.

With regard to the percentage of undeveloped land in Cheshire, Mr. Cobern advised that the regional planning agency annual report has this information. He said Cheshire has little undeveloped land, and about 70% to 80% is already developed. More land is available in the I-2 zone.

Chairman Kurtz stated that the Commission wants to include former Commissioner Cobern as an official member of the POCD subcommittee.

MOTION by Ms. Visconti; seconded by Mr. Kardaras.

MOVED that Martin Cobern be appointed as a member of the POCD subcommittee.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

I-C Zone – this zone was developed in 1985 based upon a study from FIP and town officials for development of the area surrounding the I-691/Route 10 interchange, and most of the area was originally zoned for industrial purposes under the I-2 regulations.

It was suggested by Mr. Linder to add more language from the prior POCD into the proposed plan. He will review this issue with Mr. Voelker for discussion at the next subcommittee meeting.

Mr. Cobern commented on his meetings with Town Planner Voelker, and recommendations to change the lot coverage, along with the ability to put smaller cluster lots in the I-2 zone.

Survey – the survey will be on the town's web site, and copies will be available to the public at the Library and Senior Center.

Before adjournment, the Commissioners discussed changing the POCD meetings to the 2nd Wednesday of each month. This issue will be an agenda item for the PZC meeting of October 15th.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Cobern; seconded by Mr. Gaudio.

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk