

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF CHESHIRE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2015, AT 7:30 P.M. IN ROOM 207, TOWN  
HALL, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410**

Present

PZC Commissioners: Sean Stollo, Vice Chairman; Louis B. Todisco, Gil Linder, David Veleber, John Kardaras. Committee Member Martin Cobern. Alternates: Diane Visconti.

Absent: Earl J. Kurtz, S. Woody Dawson, Vincent Lentini, Edward Gaudio; Alternates Jon Fischer and Leslie Marinaro.

Staff: William Voelker, Town Planner

Guests: Elizabeth Pratt Fox, Jeanne Chesanow, Historic District Commission, and Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator; HDC Members Christine Pittsley, Breina Shain, and James Vibert.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Stollo 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 - January 14, 2015**

MOTION by Mr. Cobern; seconded by Mr. Veleber.

MOVED to approve and accept the minutes of January 14, 2015 subject to corrections, additions, deletions.

Corrections: page #2, change to 800,000 square feet; and correction to read "area".

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

**VI. SPEAKERS**

- 1. Elizabeth Pratt Fox, Chairperson, Historic District Commission  
Jeanne Chesanow, Vice Chairperson, Historic District Commission  
HDC Members: Christine Pittsley, Breina Shain, James Vibert.**

Mr. Sitko provided the PZC committee with background on the Historic District Commission (HDC) and stated he has been working with the HDC since it started in 2002. In January 2005 the Town Council approved the creation of an Historic District Commission for two historical districts in Cheshire, followed by approval of the State Preservation Office. It was noted by Mr. Sitko that the HDC provides value to the Town, improves the curb appeal of the Town, and helps the Economic Development Commission (EDC) in its efforts to bring businesses and residents to Cheshire.

Ms. Fox distributed HDC information to the Commission -- Historic Preservation in Connecticut 2000-2010 and the Historic Resources Chapter, POCD, 2014. The HDC received National Parks Service Certification in December 2013 which allows HDC to apply for grants for the Ball & Socket Arts Center, Alice Washburn houses, Marbridge Assisted Living, and the Bowman redevelopment project in the center of Town. In 2013 the HDC received 9 applications for Certificates of Appropriateness, with 3 approved, 5 exempt and 1 without consideration. In 2014, the HDC had 16 applications, 5 approved, 7 exempt, 1 denied. The HDC co-sponsored the "Trolley Tours" in 2014. In 2015 the HDC has set its goals to include final design and bids for an historical district in the North Brooksvale area, trolley tours, new design guidelines to property owners, historical inventory grant application, researching new incentives for historical house tax credit for up to 30% of repairs paid for historical structures.

Ms. Chesanow, Town Historian and HDC Vice Chairperson, highlighted the HDC Resources Chapter of the POCD for the Commissioners. She said the HDC has a proposal to apply for National Registry for the Ball & Socket building, and noted that the larger homes on West Main Street were residences of the company's executives. The smaller homes in the area were residences of the button factory workers. The Congregational Church and Farmington Canal are on the National Registry. With Ball & Socket on the registry, the HDC can conduct tours, provide heritage education, and travelers of the Linear Trail will be able to visit the redeveloped West Main Street area.

The Commissioners were informed by Ms. Chesanow about the sensitive areas in Cheshire, and some towns having programs to identify these areas. There are indications in Cheshire that Native Americans hunted and fished in town forests and streams, and artifacts have been found in these areas. The "Policies" outlined in the Historic Resources Chapter for the POCD were reviewed by Ms. Chesanow, including recommendations for amendments to existing zoning regulations or adoption of new regulations related to historic resources.

Town Planner Voelker informed the HDC and PZC members that, under State law, some of the concepts in the chapter are not possible to be included in the zoning and/or subdivision regulations. With regard to archeological resources, prehistoric sites, artifacts, etc. Mr. Voelker said if something is found it must be reported to the State Archeological Office, and this was done when artifacts were found in the north end of Town.

Policy #3, Objective A, #4 - the HDC would like interpretive signs along the Farmington Canal Trail, Jarvis Street to West Main Street.

With regard to PZC applications of historic interest, Mr. Sitko said the applicant could meet with the HDC for advice and recommendations on the application. He noted that for the Ball & Socket Arts Center application, three HDC members spoke in support of the project at the public hearings.

Policy #2, E - there can be establishment of local historic districts with people bringing forward a recommendation for the creation of the district.

Historical districts are created by residents with a proposed district, and Mr. Voelker said it requires a 66.23% approval vote of residents. In a district there can be a non-conforming house, and HDC can only regulate the exterior of a house.

In looking at the HDC goals, Mr. Veleber asked they are modeled after another town's POCD and goals.

According to Ms. Chesanow, 50 towns in Connecticut have federal designation, and money given to the State is passed to those towns, and it must be used for historical preservation. She cited Farmington, Simsbury, Wethersfield as towns with the designation, and will provide the PZC with a complete list of Connecticut towns.

Policy #3, Objective F - Ms. Visconti asked about towns that have a Design Review Board for the entire town, and how it works.

Mr. Voelker is familiar with Design Review Boards from his experience and work in Simsbury, and advised the PZC that there are some positives with such a board, and many challenges.

Ms. Chesanow explained this board would review applications and site design issues, i.e. roof line is not right for the area, and the board can suggest building in certain sections of a town.

Ms. Pittsley reviewed the "Cheshire Historic Inventory Map" and the legend for sites built in Cheshire.

Ms. Fox noted that driving through Cheshire you find many barns which are not on the tax list.

Regarding the map, Mr. Voelker said it will be a good resource for the Commission to review, and COG will be finishing maps for Cheshire as well.

Mr. Kardaras commented on limited resources and asked what the HDC should look at for historic preservation.

In response, Ms. Fox said the HDC wants to do an historical resource inventory for a better handle on what is "historical" in the Town.

Mr. Voelker reported that the Commission will hold public hearings on the POCD, and the public is invited to attend and express their views and recommendations for the Plan update.

HDC Member Mr. Vibert commented on the importance of preservation and taking care of Cheshire's historic resources.

Since the changes in this POCD are not as dramatic as 13 years ago, Mr. Cobern suggested grouping sections of the Plan together for the public hearings.

Mr. Strollo thanked the HDC members for attending the meeting and for their informative presentation to the Commission.

## **2. Discussion of POCD Residential Considerations Draft.**

Mr. Voelker and the Commissioners reviewed the POCD Residential Considerations draft document. In 2013-14 there were 9711 housing units within Cheshire; 82% were single detached homes; 1554 dwelling units could be constructed on remaining residentially zones properties; and 87% of Cheshire land is residential development. The forecast is for town population to decrease by 1% in 2025. The median age in Cheshire is 42.2 years in 2010; 45% of the population is over 45 years old; nearly 60% is older than 35 years; and the town population is getting more diverse each year.

25% of household occupancy is non-family -- people living alone or individuals sharing homes with non-related persons. Under the existing zoning regulations no more than 3 unrelated individuals can live in a dwelling. There is an older population living in town, in smaller houses. It was noted by Mr. Voelker that Cheshire does not have a problem with Quinnipiac University students living in town.

In the POCD the Commission can look at reconsideration of the definition of "family" or have no definition at all. With the aging population, people may have to rent part of their house in order to remain there, and there are varied situations for staying in a house. Non-traditional households have become more acceptable than in the past. It was suggested by Mr. Voelker that the Commission modify the definition of "family" which would not be detrimental to the town and the housing.

Mr. Voelker pointed out that the "Residential Chapter" of the POCD is a framework for the regulations, and does not preclude the Commission from changing or updating the existing zoning regulations. For the remaining land in Cheshire, with better cluster regulations, there could be preservation of more open space. The draft chapter lays out ideas for Commissioners to review and consider.

Mr. Veleber cited his concern that this POCD lays out recommendations which must be followed and pushes the PZC in a certain direction.

In response, Mr. Cobern stated that the POCD does not force the Commission to make any changes in regulations. If there is a design to change regulations an applicant/attorney will refer to the POCD, and moves the town in that direction, but there is no conflict with the Plan. If there is a zone regulation change, the PZC acts in a legislative capacity, and can approve or disapprove an application. The Plan is not binding the PZC; the Commission is setting out limits; and Mr. Cobern said the town made a wise choice in setting up the mechanism to meet affordable housing guidelines. He commented on there being a concern for towns to get affordable housing regulations modified, and the current regulations set a standard for the town to be done with consideration for the vision of the town.

Mr. Todisco commented on not pushing anything in the POCD, and the PZC can come out in support of affordable housing, and low income housing would not be bad either.

It was stated by Mr. Kardaras that the zoning regulations are rigid and should be modified.

The Commission was told by Mr. Voelker that Cheshire will never hit the 10% affordable housing requirement, but a tool is needed if someone wants to develop this housing model, under CGS Section 8-23.

## VII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Cobern; seconded by Mr. Veleber.

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:17 p.m.

VOTE           The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

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Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk