

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
TOLLAND, CONNECTICUT
SPECIAL MEETING/WORKSHOP MINUTES OF DECEMBER 20, 2010

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Cardin, Chair
Sue Errickson, Secretary
Dave Barrow, Regular
Jack Scavone, Regular
John Hughes, Alternate

MEMBERS ABSENT: Marilee Beebe, Vice Chair
Benjamin Stanford, Alternate

OTHERS PRESENT: Linda Farmer, AICP, Director of Planning & Community Development
Heidi Samokar, Planimetrics, LLC

1. Welcome. Michael Cardin, Chair called the meeting to order at 7:30p.m. in Council chambers. He turned the meeting over to Heidi Samokar of Planimetrics who he said would be reviewing the results of the Visual Preference Survey and discussing the Commission's next steps as they move forward.
2. Discuss results of the Public Workshop that was held on November 30. Ms. Samokar asked the Commission about their feelings on the Visual Preference Survey presentation. Mr. Cardin said he felt it went well and was not surprised by the results. He said he was pleased to see a more diverse crowd than normally attends the public forums. Ms. Errickson said she was confused by having so many visual choices as it made things less black and white. She thought more stark and fewer choices might have helped them get a better sense of direction. She added that she liked the enthusiasm of the group. Mr. Barrow noted that the survey did not ask people to indicate their age or age group and said he thought getting some demographic information might have been helpful.

Ms. Samokar reviewed the results in the Tolland Village Area #3 handout. She said in both the discussions at that workshop and in the written comments, some people responded based on whether they would want to live in the type of housing depicted, while others noted whether they thought particular housing might be attractive to other demographics. She said the results will help Planimetrics to create their 3-D computer model of a possible Tolland Village Area scenario and will help them create design guidelines.

She reviewed key findings in Main Street Streetscapes, which indicated pitched roofs and 2-1/2 story buildings resounded well with the public. They found that details—such as lampposts, store windows, and sidewalk texture—matter, and will play an important part in the streetscape. She added that there was not one sensibility about style that came through strongly. She also noted that they did not present tradeoffs in selections, where people could have one feature if they were willing to give up something else.

She also reviewed the Main Street Buildings. There were certain features that resonated with participants such as the need to break up facades on larger buildings with varied colors, materials, and architectural details. She said brick was not popular except as accent work, saying some people commented it made buildings look too institutional. Concrete facades also came through as undesirable. Ms. Errickson said

she liked such details as the 12-pane windows. Mr. Cardin liked the columned porticos and transom windows. He said the more developers can show an ability to intersperse architectural styles, the more desirable the buildings look.

On the choices of houses, front porches were popular and the inclusion of green area between house and road resonated with participants. Also garages should not dominate the front of houses. Housing that shared common elements but that were still different also resonated well. Many of the multifamily housing photos did not score well, and were described as bland or too uniform.

Ms. Samokar said all of the photographs received a score based on preferences of participants and she reviewed some of the buildings that received the highest scores, which will become part of the 3-D model. She said the most challenging piece to model will be the hotel. She said participants did not want a chain hotel and would prefer theirs to look more like an inn.

Ms. Errickson asked if they would need to have a trademark type hotel that would draw business travelers in off the highway. Ms. Samokar said they will need to allow some flexibility in the regulations to market the hotel. She said they are looking at both the Publick House in Sturbridge and the Litchfield Inn as possibilities for the model. Mr. Cardin asked if they will be able to tell a potential hotel developer the features they are looking for in a hotel without locking them in to a particular picture in the model. Ms. Farmer said the regulations will reduce a potential hotel to components such as pitched roofs and the number of stories. Mr. Scavone said they would need to be more lenient when it comes to the hotel as that will be bordering the highway and will need to advertise as a destination. He said they could say they don't want a standard Courtyard Marriott type hotel, but they could ask for features that will blend in with the village look. He said the highway side will need to be different than the village side.

Ms. Samokar said they will need to build a credible model and one component is underground parking, which would require that the building be wider. Ms. Errickson asked Ms. Farmer to email the Commission a picture of the Litchfield Inn. Mr. Barrow said he does not see underground parking happening. He said he could see it working in a more urban area, but not in Tolland. He added that it would be very costly. Ms. Samokar agreed that a developer would need to get something in exchange for taking on that cost.

Ms. Samokar displayed the latest concept plan, dated November 30. She showed Main Street shifting slightly south and the hotel moved somewhat to accommodate wetlands.

The Commission reviewed the variously rated photographs picking out which pictures should be used for the model in the various sections of the Tolland Village Area. There was consensus to model townhouses on the Michael Taylor property, with the Commission picking out the housing that rated 49 and 15. Mr. Cardin suggested sending the pictures to Mr. Taylor for his input. The Commission discussed whether the type of housing picked for the model would match the number of units that Mr. Taylor is eyeing for his property. Ms. Farmer noted that they will need to look at site design and slopes to determine how many units will ultimately work on his property.

The Commission considered single family homes near Woodfield, and they considered the photographs with the scores of 50 and 43 for that area. Ms. Errickson said these choices look modern and have interesting rooflines. She said it is the details on these homes that make them appealing. For the townhouses across the street, they selected the photographs from Middletown and Danbury for the model. For the horseshoe green area housing on the north side of Main Street, the Commission found consensus to go with duplex style housing, such as was depicted in the photographs that scored 42 and 11.

3. **Tolland Village Area** – Next Steps: Ms. Samokar said her firm will work on the model over the next month and that they have begun to look at design guidelines. She said their next major discussion will be about zoning and they will first sit down at the staff level to go over this. She said they will aim for the second week of January and consider looking at the first meeting in February for a workshop.

Ms. Farmer announced that the Town Council will be meeting next Tuesday to discuss the letter from George Mantak and Michael Cardin about town property. She said the PZC should have representation at this meeting. Mr. Cardin said he can attend.

4. Adjourn. Dave Barrow/Jack Scavone motion to adjourn the meeting and pay the clerk at 8:45p.m. Motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Annie Gentile
Clerk