

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
TOLLAND, CONNECTICUT
SPECIAL MEETING/WORKSHOP MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 7, 2011

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Cardin, Chair
Marilee Beebe, Vice Chair
Sue Errickson, Secretary
Jack Scavone, Regular
John Hughes, Alternate

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dave Barrow, Regular
Benjamin Stanford, Alternate

OTHERS PRESENT: Linda Farmer, AICP, Director of Planning & Community Development
Heidi Samokar and Glenn Chalder, Planimetrics, LLC
Ken Hankinson, resident

1. **Welcome:** Michael Cardin called the meeting to order at 7:30p.m. in the 2nd Floor Conference Room A. He seated John Hughes for Dave Barrow.
2. Tolland Village Area – workshop discussion with Planimetrics

Heidi Samokar began with a tour of the 3-D model which she said will help to better visualize a village scenario. She said the model was based on the November 2010 concept sketch and input from the November 30 visual preference survey. Adjustments were made to the model due to topography and other site factors. She said the model shows a variety of flexible options.

She started with an overview of the proposed housing near Cider Mill Road. The 3-D model included videos and still shots of the area approaching it from various directions. She then moved on to an overview of the Main Street area which includes such amenities as a fountain in front of the hotel at the end of the road. The model showed some variations in buildings, splitting buildings up to show some smaller configurations and showing a mix of large and small.

Commissioners asked to get an idea which properties the various sample developments would overlap onto—for example the Pachecho property, Steve Williams’ property, and town property. Ms. Errickson asked how it would be handled if a proposal for one building came in that doesn’t fit the visual design before them. Ms. Samokar said in the proposed regulations they will be later reviewing, there will be requirements for developers to show how their proposed buildings will orient to the overall goal of the development.

In the Main Street overview, Ms. Samokar noted that the width of the sidewalk varies from 10’ to 15’ and the design includes 6’ to 8’ green strips for LID purposes as well as bumpouts which could provide creative opportunities for plantings or outdoor seating. The design of the

buildings includes pitched roofs with varied angles. The design presented shows buildings placed 100' apart from one side of the street to the other with 60 degree on-street parking.

Glenn Chalder said the on-street parking creates a sense of protected pedestrian space, which is different than the typical suburban parking scenario. There is also a provision for underground parking and parking in back. The idea is to park once, and shop twice. Ms. Samokar said it is important to take into account all four sides of buildings as the backside will be visible from the highway.

Ms. Samokar reviewed the hotel area. She said the hotel was modeled after the Litchfield Inn with some variations. The design had to be wide enough to accommodate underground parking and this makes for a deeper hotel room than is normally typical. There are about 110 hotel rooms in this prototype. Mr. Chalder said the hotel could be realistically built in phases. Mr. Cardin asked if they had any sense of the elevation of the hotel from the highway. Mr. Chalder said it would be a two-story hotel on top of a parking deck. Ms. Samokar said she can get the elevation particulars.

Ms. Samokar moved on to the New Green Residences. In this model, they used some large townhouses to show something different than in the other residence area. The model shows some significant wooded buffer to the houses on Woodfield. In this model, she said they went with one-story homes with detached garages in back and shared driveways. Ms. Beebe asked how many acres are in this New Green Residence area. Ms. Farmer said it is about 12 or 13 acres. Ms. Samokar said the individual homes are modeled on ¼ to 1/3 acre lots with 1,700 to 2,000 square foot houses. Mr. Scavone said he liked that they used a wide variety of architectural styles that nevertheless all fit together. He said the model will go a long way in setting people's minds at ease about the vision for the Tolland Village Area.

Mr. Cardin asked Ms. Samokar if she might be able to put the New Green Residences slide on paper so property lines can be drawn in. Mr. Cardin discussed the possibility of a right turn in to a possible anchor building behind Pete Anderson's property. He asked how, if a pharmacy showed interest, might they integrate a drive-through into the design. Ms. Samokar said an under-the-building drive through might be a possibility. Mr. Chalder said the most important part of a Village concept is to maintain the integrity of the Main Street. He said if a drive through could be hidden and not negatively impact the flow of traffic, it could be a consideration. He said the idea would be to configure the building so the drive through is not visible, and it could possibly be hidden behind a landscaped wall.

Mr. Chalder said the Main Street as it was modeled would have a one- to two-percent grade, but other areas in the TVA have greater grades. The Commission discussed whether there is ample room for turnaround of public safety vehicles as well as for delivery trucks. The Commission also discussed the importance of green space as a means to accommodate low impact development (LID) regulations. Ms. Samokar said she has the latest information from Steve Trinkhaus on LID under this concept.

The Commission discussed the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) and finding consensus on the language to be added to it as the Town Council will need 65 days to review the proposed changes. Ms. Farmer noted they will need to have design guidelines first in order to know what needs to be added to the regulations. Ms. Samokar presented draft formatted text to be added to the POCD and noted they would need to add a conceptual use diagram. The draft shows added language that defines what a concept sketch is and is not, as well as general

concepts and main principles of the TVA such as walkability, connectivity, parking, and sustainable design among others.

The Commission discussed verbiage for the Actions to Create a Town Center, and Mr. Cardin suggested it should be reworded to “Actions to Create Village Nodes.” This lends the way for future discussion of a Technology node. There was consensus for Planimetrics to work with staff on getting the final wording for this section, which the Commission will vote on at their meeting next week. Ms. Farmer said this should work as they will remain on schedule to have the language to the Town Council by March 1.

Mr. Scavone asked what the process is once the Town Council gets the proposed changes. Ms. Farmer said they will review it and can make comments, can say whether they like it or don't like it, or could hold a Public Hearing. She said if the Town Council rejected the proposed amendments, the PZC could only adopt it with a 2/3 majority vote.

Ms. Samokar reviewed proposed draft zoning regulations which were highlighted with bullet points. She said right now the TVA zoning is an overlay in the Gateway Design District and with the new regulations it would become a new zoning district on its own. She said most new development would require the submittal of an Area Development Plan and Special Permit application. Key to the new regulations would be flexibility in lot sizes and other factors where the developer would propose their own standards. In return the Commission would be granted wide discretion in approvals. Workforce Housing would also be a requirement for any residential developments in the TVA. The proposed regulations would also call for detailed design guidelines and provisions for existing uses to make modifications. There will also be specific references to sustainability, LID, and green technology.

Ms. Samokar reviewed a summary of the process which would include updating the POCD, amending the zoning map, amending the zoning, and updating other sections of zoning as needed. She provided a breakdown on what the process involves for both existing uses and new development on vacant land.

Ms. Samokar reviewed the draft zoning regulations, which includes reference documents and general regulations. Ms. Farmer noted that once the regulations are fleshed out, she will have Rick Conti review them. Mr. Cardin asked for the reasoning behind requiring a Special Permit for a request for a reduction in lot size of more than 10 percent. The draft regulations note that the Commission shall determine that such a reduction in lot size advances the purpose of the TVA. He asked if this is overkill. Ms. Samokar said they want to find a way to manage getting property owners to work together and not sell property that will hurt the goals of the vision for the TVA. Mr. Cardin suggested that if the sale of property does not further the goals of the TVA, only then should the Commission review it. Ms. Beebe suggested that if there is no legally binding agreement between property owners that will forward the TVA, then it should come before the PZC. Ms. Samokar said she will look at reworking the language in this section.

Ms. Samokar reviewed permitted uses in the TVA, and the Commission discussed other possible uses such as for-profit educational uses such as a Sylvan Learning Center or a Tae Kwon Do studio. Mr. Cardin said they could add a catchall final use that gives the PZC some discretion in categorizing such uses. The Commission also discussed the potential of adding drive-throughs in specific zones as part of an Area Development Plan with stringent criteria, noting that drug store drive-throughs would be different than food service drive-throughs.

The Commission discussed Residential Areas in the zoning changes and whether they would state what residential type of development is most appropriate in different areas. They also discussed Workforce Housing, which would call for the pricing to be affordable to those earning up to 80 percent of the median income and deed restricting such residences for 40 years. Ms. Samokar proposed adding a waiver provision allowing less than the 20 percent criteria if the developer is willing to add specific special amenities.

Ms. Samokar reviewed the standards an Area Development Plan would be required to meet and the procedures to follow in an Area Development Plan. She said there would also need to be compliance to a Site Plan approval, and she noted in the proposed regulations that there is a provision for conflicting regulations in the TVA and what, in such cases, takes precedence.

Mr. Cardin asked if these proposed regulations will achieve getting abutting property owners to strive for cooperation while at the same time giving them more flexibility. He asked if these changes will motivate property owners to develop the TVA. He expressed concern that people often view government skeptically and if this plan will encourage people to move forward.

Mr. Chalder said he feels property owners will get significantly greater yields on their property with this plan. He said he expects that they will initially read the proposed regulations as cumbersome but that they need to convey the attitude that the changes are to property owners' advantage. He said, for example, that the Pacheco bowtie configuration of property was limited, but with this plan, it is a whole different ball game. Ms. Beebe agreed saying the Williams property was more constrained under the old regulations. She said it would be helpful to develop a chart that shows the difference in a numerical comparison between what could be developed on property under the old regulations, vs. what could be developed under the new ones. She said they need to quantify that for them.

Ms. Samokar reviewed the schedule. She said by this Friday, February 11, she will have the first draft of the design guidelines plus publicity materials for the upcoming public workshop. March 1 is the internal deadline for town staff to submit the POCD amendment to the Town Council at which point the 65 day review period begins. The Public Workshop on the 3-D model and overview of zoning regulations will be on March 7. On March 21 Planimetrics will meet with the PZC to review the public workshop meeting results. The expectation is that by April 11 they will approve zoning regulations and set the Public Hearing for May 9 on the POCD amendment and zoning. She said this schedule allows for some wiggle room to finish everything before the end of the fiscal year. The Commission also discussed the possibility of holding the March 7 public meeting at the Lodge.

3. Discuss remaining HOMEECT Grant funds. Mr. Cardin explained that they have some money left to engage the services of Steve O'Neill of VHB for a traffic study in the Tolland Village Area. Ms. Farmer said there is \$3,903 left in the HOMEECT Grant Fund that is not yet assigned. There was consensus to use \$1,000 of it for bridging any gaps with Planimetrics, which would leave about \$2,900. Ms. Farmer said Steve O'Neill can address the connection from the Cider Mill property to the Mike Taylor property and can also show how increased traffic from the village node could be accommodated on Route 195 without a negative impact to the community. She said they could also look at the potential for a traffic light at the new road. She said he has provided a proposal for a concept plan on the limits of the roadway for \$4,150.

Marilee Beebe/John Hughes motion to appropriate \$2,900 in funds for retaining VHB to do a Roadway Concept Plan for the Tolland Village Area and to ask Steve Werbner about the availability of making up the difference which is an additional \$1,150. Motion was unanimously approved.

4. Adjournment. Sue Errickson/Jack Scavone motion to adjourn the meeting and pay the clerk at 10:00p.m. Motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Annie Gentile
Clerk