

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION  
TOLLAND, CONNECTICUT  
SPECIAL MEETING/WORKSHOP MINUTES OF JUNE 7, 2010

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Cardin, Chair  
Marilee Beebe-Kostrun, Vice Chair  
Sue Errickson, Secretary  
Jack Scavone, Regular  
Dave Barrow, Regular (arrived 8:18p.m.)  
John Hughes, Alternate  
Benjamin Stanford, Alternate

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

1. **Call to Order.** Michael Cardin, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:33p.m. in Council Chambers.
2. Discussion with Planimetrics –Tolland Village Area – Mr. Cardin referred to the booklet prepared by Planimetrics, “Preliminary Evaluation #1.” He said he had the opportunity to walk some of the properties in the proposed Tolland Village Area (TVA) and then he and Linda Farmer and the new Town Engineer Jennifer Usher met with Glenn Chalder and Heidi Samokar about three weeks ago and the concept for the design of this booklet came out of that meeting.

Heidi Samokar said they first took a look at the area included in the TVA. Then they met with most of the property owners and many of the tenants and did some research on the opportunities and various challenges there. They broke the TVA up into six areas labeled A through F and labeled them as areas that might have the potential to be developed in the near, mid- and long-term future. After reviewing these opportunities and challenges, they would like the PZC to determine if they wish to **move forward** with detailed planning for the TVA, and, if so, determine which **vision** they should move forward with and what **approach** they should take.

Ms. Samokar first reviewed the two areas, A and F, that were labeled with the potential to be developed in the near future. This includes Mike Taylor’s property. She said there are no major environmental issues to contend with. A mid-term development area would be Area B, which is the area behind the Subway and the gas station, which is presently undeveloped. She said it appears that this area is largely fill and there would likely be some engineering questions that would need to be answered to see how it could support infrastructure. There is also the issue of noise levels from I-84 which might impact viable uses. Additionally, because this land is behind Route 195, there may be challenges for uses that need visibility.

Area E is land owned by Steve Williams and the Department of Transportation (commuter lot). This area has some steep slopes and a lot of bedrock. High costs and time factors to clear and grade this area would present a challenge. There is also noise from I-84 to consider.

Area C and D along Route 195 where there are already existing, mostly auto-oriented, businesses on smaller parcels with multiple owners will present the greatest challenge for incentivizing current owners to redevelop. This is the core area. Mr. Cardin said that those who have been on the PZC through the long-term discussion process recognize that this is a long term project that will likely not come to complete fruition for another generation or two. He asked how much a concern noise from I-84 will impact people’s decisions on whether to live or shop in the area. He asked if highway noise might discourage people who are attracted to a New

Urbanism model. Mr. Chalder said that accessibility is a huge asset, and while he feels noise will be an issue, he has found that other developments in the country that have built near highways and interchanges have not found noise to be a “make or break” issue. He said proximity to a highway or interchange does play a role in the type of residential development considered, as noise is more of a factor for single-family than it is for multi-family development.

Mr. Hughes noted that Section A is planned as a residential area in their design and if only this area gets developed in the beginning, what will be the purpose of walkability. Where will residents in the area walk to? Ms. Farmer explained that as a first step, they need to get a critical mass of people into the area to support businesses. Ms. Beebe-Kostrun said that sidewalks and pathways are a part of their regulations. She added that with LID regulations, this allows for smaller lots and denser development. The idea is that then business will take a look at those residential parcels to see how they can cater to them. The PZC will only be providing the framework for this type of development to happen.

Ms. Beebe-Kostrun asked where the fill area is located in Section B. Ms. Samokar showed on the drawing that it is largely the area in back, a fairly large area. Ms. Farmer said in their discussions, they felt that this area might be more suitable for larger structures as opposed to a series of smaller structures, but there is still a question when it comes to installing underground utilities. Mr. Chalder said, for example, that this area might be conducive to a multi-family development with a parking lot, but that a structural engineer would need to look at it. Mr. Hughes said he felt the booklet gives them a good overall view of the possibilities and challenges.

Ms. Samokar discussed Sections E and A where single family development has been considered. She said tiny lots with steep slopes don't generally have a lot of wiggle room when it comes to where they can locate the driveway and garage. Mr. Chalder said Section E would need to be blasted, scraped and crushed in order to clear the area for development. He said this area could offer some stunning views, but the lawns would need to be terraced. It would be economically challenging.

Ms. Beebe-Kostrun said she felt that in Section E and on adjacent properties, they probably could do some development with smaller roads with different setbacks. This would, however, require some good topographical mapping. She said what is presently shown in the design is not the way it could be built. She said she feels they need to define the concepts more than spatial orientation.

Mr. Chalder asked how specific they want the design to be. What level of detail are they looking for? He said they could sketch out something that they think might be well received by the Commission. Ms. Farmer said that one issue is that they are looking at affordable housing and still investigating an Incentive Housing Zone (IHZ). Mr. Chalder said that if they adopt an IHZ zone, that comes with the promise or at least the expectation of State dollars and that with an IHZ there are minimum required densities. He said, however, that affordable housing can still be done without adopting an IHZ.

Mr. Scavone asked that understanding the physical and topographical challenges they are looking at, what kind of units are they envisioning. Ms. Farmer said there are a few base criteria they are looking for, such as a linkage to Crandall Park. She said on Steve Tompkins property (Section F), they want residential development that would work as a gateway to the Green.

Mr. Chalder said he is hearing from the PZC that they need to refine the picture of what development will be, then define a regulatory scheme. There was consensus that the PZC would like to move forward with detailed planning for the TVA. There was also consensus that they continue with a town center approach, but revise the concept plan to address issues and concerns raised. There was an understanding that there may be a need to go more “light” on some components of the town center approach in some of the more challenging areas. Ms. Beebe-Kostrun said it might be helpful to compile a list of what they might want and not want in the TVA. Mr. Chalder said the concept of pedestrianism comes through loud and clear. This would include pathways and walkways as well as pedestrian-oriented streets. He said sidewalks are a prominent design feature element in pedestrianism.

Mr. Scavone said he would not want to see a cut-through from Crandall Park to Route 195 with multiple speed bumps to slow traffic, but he would want to see some other traffic slowing features such as a narrower road. There was some discussion about whether the connector road to Crandall Park would have residential or if there would be multiple streets off this road with residential development.

Ms. Samokar said she would expect the types of future uses in the TVA to steer away from auto-oriented businesses and more the type where you would park your car and go in a few different stores. Another main component, she said, is civic parks and gathering areas. She asked how important it is to have that type of component mixed throughout the TVA. Ms. Beebe-Kostrun said they would be important, but they don't need to be huge areas with a lot of features. Ms. Farmer said there is a wetland buffer in this area that has to be maintained and it presents an opportunity for a linear pathway and gathering areas.

John Hughes said he would like to be sure they can incorporate some public buildings in the TVA, such as a library.

Mr. Cardin said one of his concerns is that with multiple property owners and complex topography, how do they create enough flexibility for the entire zone. He asked if it is more realistic to create a set of regulations for areas A, B, and C and another for D, E, and F.

Mr. Chalder said Sections C and D, the commercial core, are more opportunistic in nature and seem like they go together. He said B and E go together as well, and A and F being areas that could be developed right away, could be paired together. He said they could put together zoning that would meet each of the challenges in those grouped areas. Ms. Samokar said they may need to redesign how proscriptive they are. She said they can put out general purposes that provide more flexibility for developers, but then the downside is that there is less predictability.

Ms. Beebe-Kostrun asked if they got any sense of how the land owners feel about the TVA development. Mr. Chalder said he explained that the good news is that the town wants to provide opportunities for development, but the bad news is that they are not yet sure about what those opportunities will look like. He said in general he is seeing that landowners are looking for quicker turnarounds with short-term benefits. Ms. Beebe-Kostrun asked how they might incentivize cross-property collaboration. Mr. Chalder said that will be one of their biggest challenges. He said quite possibly things will happen in phases that need to be coordinated. He said, for example, a parking structure built on Section E to support Section D would be very difficult to accomplish. Ms. Farmer said they will need to address the commuter lot, as it cannot go away until it can be put somewhere else.

Ms. Farmer said the Town Council is presently doing a municipal facilities study. Mr. Chalder said the original plan included civic or town uses. He said if the Town Council is looking at these uses, and there is a land swap opportunity for a library in the TVA, then this could be an anchor for the entire Village Area. Ms. Farmer suggested it might be beneficial to sit down with the D.O.T. to see what they might entertain for relocating the commuter lot. She said Rich Allen, the head of Right of Way lives in Tolland. Mr. Chalder suggested setting up a meeting with Rich Allen and possibly Tom Maziarz and report back to Fred Daniels on the Town Council on this. In the meantime, he and Ms. Samokar can go back and put together designs to recalibrate the TVA to the physical constraints of the land. He said a regulatory scheme could then come out of those findings. Ms. Beebe-Kostrun asked that they get an idea of what kinds of densities would make sense for the Area. Mr. Chalder said they have a budget for design-related services so they will work with Ms. Farmer on this to put together a preliminary schematic plan.

Ms. Samokar said she heard quite a bit from the land owners asking who is building the infrastructure and who is maintaining it. She and Mr. Chalder explained the process of TIF (tax increment financing). Ms. Beebe-Kostrun said her concern is how they can get people to work with them for the long term if they are getting hit hard with taxes on the short term.

Mr. Barrow said he expected to arrive late for the meeting and so had written down some of his concerns. He said the topography behind Dunkin Donuts is very rough with a lot of ledge. He said he

thinks this extends into the commuter parking lot as well. He said he doesn't see how anything could be put back there because it would be extremely costly to grade it, with extensive excavation and blasting. Mr. Chalder said they spent some time inspecting steep slopes in other parts of the State and they have similar concerns. He said density as depicted on Sections E and B on the December Concept Plan will not work. Ms. Samokar said Section E would be the most challenging.

Steve Williams, a landowner who attended the meeting, said he has some concerns about the Town's Low Impact Development (LID) regulations. He said the ledge in Sections B and E will prevent water from penetrating and so there will be runoff concerns. Additionally, he said terracing will be difficult to do with so much rock. He said this will be a complicated site to develop. He said he feels it will be necessary to do like was done at the Big Y, reducing the area down to a buildable grade.

Mr. Chalder said he and Ms. Samokar will work with Ms. Farmer to determine when they need to meet next. Ms. Farmer said she has put in a formal request for a one-year extension for completion of the grant.

On a separate matter, Ms. Farmer distributed copies of the 1991 to 1993 water testing results for the quarry for next Monday's PZC meeting, as well as copies of the Wastewater Facilities Planning Report for the Phase II area for their meeting with the WPCA next Tuesday.

3. Adjournment. Benjamin Stanford/Jack Scavone motion to adjourn the meeting and pay the clerk at 9:13p.m. Motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Annie Gentile  
Clerk