



**TOWN OF WINCHESTER  
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
Town of Winchester Town Hall  
338 Main Street - 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor – P. Francis Hicks Room  
January 27, 2020 – 7:00PM  
Regular Meeting Minutes**

**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman George Closson called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

**2. ROLL CALL:**

Mr. Closson conducted the roll call, noting that the following individuals were present: Craig Sanden, Peter Marchand, Jerry Martinez, and Alternates John Cooney and Will Platt.

Art Melycher was absent excused.

**3. PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP**

Mr. Closson invited attendees to introduce themselves. The following individuals were present:

- Beth Papermaster, President of the Highland Lake Watershed Association
- Jen Perga, Chairperson of the Conservation Commission and Winchester Land Trust
- Bob Geiger, Town Manager
- Kristin Peterson on behalf of the Board of Education
- Kurt Williams, Chairman of the Recreation Board
- Steve Sedlack, Board of Selectmen
- Jim Rollins, Director of Public Works
- Jennifer Kelly, Direction of the Senior Center

Mr. Closson explained that it is required by the State of Connecticut that the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) be updated every ten years. He noted that it needs to be in harmony with the state plan. POCD subcommittee Chair Craig Sanden reviewed the importance of implementation of the plan and how reviewing the current plan in terms of what has already been accomplished will help with the update.

Noting that he has been the Town Manager for four years, Mr. Geiger shared his view of the town's development areas in the town center. He explained how he sees Main Street as the town's marketing plan but noted it as only one mile long and a half block deep. Mr. Geiger spoke about the Whiting Street grant, the American Mural Project, and Whiting Mills on one end of town and the library and Dunkin' on the other end of town. Mr. Geiger noted how the State of Connecticut's Transfer Act impacts redevelopment of the old mill buildings. He discussed the blight efforts in town, noting that the population is not increasing. He also stressed that the town needs good schools and a great downtown. Mr. Geiger talked about demolishing the blight homes that are in disrepair.

Mr. Closson praised the DPW with efforts with Main Street, noting the median and the lighting that has been added. He also remarked on the opening up of the banks of the Mad River that has improved visibility. Mr. Geiger explained that this was not done merely for aesthetics as it was a needed safety improvement.

Mr. Geiger remarked about the importance of civic pride and how telling it is about a community when viewing how a town takes care of their old people and their young people.

Mr. Sanden questioned whether Mr. Geiger saw any impediments to good development coming out of the current POCD. He indicated that he did not and opined that it didn't need many adjustments. Mr. Closson agreed, noting that the statistics needed to be updated but the ideas and concepts were still applicable.

Mr. Williams questioned what metrics are used to measure how the goals in the POCD are being met. Mr. Closson explained that the greatest achievement coming out of the last POCD from 2011 was simplifying the Zoning Regulations. He noted that the 125 items included in the back of the POCD comprise the implementation plan.

Mr. Closson pointed out that the town's sewer plant has a lot of excess capacity which means that the user base could be expanded without affecting the cost of operations which would help to keep the rates down for the sewer and water customers.

Ms. Perga opined that the current POCD should be reviewed to find the most important items and then make sure they continue to be emphasized. She agreed that the implementation ought to be focused on those items.

Mr. Sedlack recalled the amount of effort that was put into the 2011 POCD. He praised this commission in that they refer back to it in their consideration of development applications.

Noting what an important asset Highland Lake is to the town, Ms. Papermaster suggested that protection of this valuable resource should really be considered. She noted that last year's diatom bloom was a scary event and that as people seek to make improvements at their lake homes, they should be made aware what could happen to their property values if water quality deteriorates. Ms. Papermaster explained what a green algae bloom does in that it could keep people off the lake for weeks and treatment for that type of bloom could cost millions of dollars. Ms. Papermaster explained that people do not realize that it is not in their best interest to do certain projects around the lake and that projects, such as installing pavers, should not be allowed. She opined that the five worse type of things should be identified and not allowed. Mr. Closson noted that this commission had attempted to address this type of concern through impervious surface coverage restrictions. He explained that this commission has recently been advised about the increase in patios and noted that they hadn't envisioned this type of development. He discussed low impact development.

Mr. Martinez questioned Mr. Geiger on whether the properties that are no longer available as potential homes for twenty and thirty-year-olds affects grand list growth and economic development in terms of having more from that demographic in the downtown area. Mr. Geiger agreed that there is indeed a balance point.

Ms. Perga recalled discussions from the last POCD regarding good locations for manufacturing to go into as well as future sewer expansion areas.

Ms. Peterson addressed attracting families with children to the town, recalling her own years of being raised in Winchester and the benefits derived from recreation and parks for families. She pointed out

that there are a lot of parents who work from home, online, noting that it may not be just the manufacturing that will drive employment for residents. Ms. Peterson opined that families will want to be living near the schools.

Mr. Williams addressed the concept of sustainability, questioning the efforts being undertaken with water conservation. Mr. Rollins reported that one overtone that was part of the last POCD was how the committees hadn't at that time worked well together. He opined that the town has turned that corner and people are really working well together to move the town forward. Mr. Rollins reported it being a significant theme at that time.

Mr. Closson remarked about how beneficial it is to the town to have a community college. He noted, too, that the town has many vital components including the addition of Hartford Hospital coming in on one end of Main Street yet the town still has the beauty that comes with lots of green space, with the rivers and open space that remain. He cited his own hometown of Berlin as a former beautiful town before the turnpike was so developed and built out. Mr. Marchand pointed out that some of the properties that are currently owned and retained by the town may be sold with carefully considered deed restrictions.

Ms. Peterson and Ms. Papermaster discussed the students from the community college, questioning what those younger people may be interested in and what might entice them to stay and settle in town. Mr. Geiger reported that the Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NWCOG) does extensive research, noting the initiative to get high speed internet in this area. Ms. Kelly reported what was currently trending among the seniors she serves, including growing fitness classes and technology classes.

Ms. Petersson remarked about the increasing number of out-of-town parking passes for the beaches at Highland Lake despite the significantly higher fee of \$225. Mr. Williams shared his board's frustration with the lack of enforcement to monitor the parking at the lake for these passes. Mr. Geiger noted that events held by the State, such as bass fishing competition, are unpredictable as the Town is uninformed about those contests. Mr. Williams and Mr. Geiger discussed why the public boat launch, owned and operated by the State of Connecticut, should be transferred to the Town. Ms. Papermaster reported that the HLWA supports the Town having that boat launch back from the state.

Mr. Martinez opined that energy management ought to be considered in the 2021 POCD. He reported that Governor Lamont has suggested that by 2040, there ought to be no more combustible motor engine vehicles on the road. He suggested that the Town review the handling of the distribution of electricity and how addressing it in the POCD may be considered with projects before the state's Siting Commission. Mr. Rollins and Mr. Williams agreed.

It was noted that the next meeting of the POCD subcommittee will be held on Monday, February 17, 2020 at 6PM in the Probate Conference Room.

#### **4. ADJOURNMENT:**

**MOTION:** Mr. Marchand, Mr. Martinez second, to adjourn at 8:30PM; unanimously approved.

**Respectfully submitted,**  
**Pamela A. Colombie,**  
**Recording Clerk**