

**TOWN OF COLUMBIA  
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**

Adella G. Urban Administrative Offices Conference Room  
323 Route 87, Columbia, CT  
Monday, June 13, 2016 – 7:00 p.m.  
Regular Meeting Minutes

**Members Present:** Chair Rick Nassiff, Don Schofield, Robert Powell, Ernest Jay Starkel, Tom Currier, Vera Englert, Larry Preston (Alternate), Walter Tabor (alternate)

**Members Excused:** Richard Napolitano

**Staff Present:** Town Planner Paula Stahl, Board Clerk Terri Ingersoll

**Others Present:** First Selectman Carmen Vance, Ernest Sharpe, Ann Dunnack, Paul A. Kubala, and Carol A. Kubala.

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – The meeting was called to order at 7:01pm
2. **ROLL CALL AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES** – Walter Tabor was seated for Richard Napolitano

**OPEN PUBLIC HEARING: Town of Columbia 2016 Plan of Conservation and Development**

The Regular Meeting was suspended at 7:03 pm for the **PUBLIC HEARING** for Adoption of the 2016 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).

P. Stahl showed a PowerPoint highlighting the draft 2016 POCD. She also stated for the record that Connecticut State Statutes were met for notification periods; both the BOS and Regional Counsel of Government were notified and have reviewed it. Legal notices were placed. CRCOG's response will be read later.

Carol Kubala of 37 Lake Road was concerned about how home businesses fit into the plan and how are they considered regarding taxes or if they pay a different tax rate.

R. Nassiff replied that home based business zoning regulations don't address tax issues, you can operate a business out of your home subject to real limitations vs. normal commercial approval so that you don't impact your neighbors negatively, as home office businesses are encouraged giving people the right to make use of their land. P. Stahl commented that home businesses are in the residential zone, and there are just under 100 home businesses registered. In terms of taxes, only a business that has a lot of equipment might have personal property tax assessments.

Carol Kubal also asked about the zoning definition of "mixed use" areas.

R. Nassiff responded that we don't really have a mixed use district in town, but felt that one might offer some flexibility by allowing small commercial businesses such as small offices, mixed into a mostly residential area. P. Stahl added that the regulations would be very specific and limit the size to businesses that would keep the same feel. Mixed use would also address the needs of seniors for a walkable area.

First Selectman Carmen Vance of 1 Beach Road was concerned with some specifics of wordage in the POCD on page 91 regarding specific additions to the Recreation Area. The point of a Master Plan is to determine by a formal process, what is still needed to meet current and future recreational needs.

C. Vance said that the POCD calls for more tennis courts and ball fields but it hasn't been determined if more are needed.

Ann Dunnack of 103 Lake Road addressed C. Vance's question noting that the numbers came from two places between 2006-2014 with three surveys of the town, the other source came from a state

document called SCORP (The State of Connecticut Outdoor Recreation Plan). Based on SCORP data, for a town the size of Columbia in a residential / rural area, four tennis courts would be recommended. One of the 2006 POCD goals was to create a recreation commission which the town has created.

C. Vance noted it was decided to go forward with a Recreation Park master plan and that needs to be an open free flowing process without preconceived direction.

P. Stahl agreed that the strategy in the POCD could be rephrased to state that the implementation of the master plan would follow the development of the plan.

R. Nassiff stated that the commission will decide whether or not to keep the Public Hearing opened past June 13<sup>th</sup>, but will take into account everyone's comments before finalizing the adoption of the Plan of Conservation and Development.

C. Vance commented regarding the concept of conservation subdivisions as opposed to a cookie cutter development concept, as a community we should require conservation subdivisions to preserve rural character.

R. Nassiff replied we wanted to be able to adopt regulations that favored or enhanced conservation subdivisions such as Island Woods. The reason for expanded reference in the POCD is because we want to explore that going forward; in terms of revision priority, there are higher priority regulation revisions that need to be addressed before we get to that.

C. Vance, as a representative of the Board of Selectman, thanked Paula Stahl for her time and effort committed to the POCD, the document was well put together and will enhance planning, "she has done a super job".

Ernest Sharpe of 11 West Street was concerned with how to determine how much open space was needed.

P. Stahl said that the state asks municipalities to protect 11% as open space. When the state talks about open space they are not including wetlands, they are referring to workable land such as farm land, trails, that provide recreational opportunities. The state's goal for open space is to preserve land that is susceptible to be developed. Robert Powell thought that the percentages required by the state for open space needs to be further studied and needs to be taken into consideration. P. Stahl said that the state's goal was to help fund the protection of municipal open space.

P. Stahl pointed out that the town is 94% residentially zoned, commercial and open space is needed to balance the land use and offset rising mill rates. Additional economical development will save tax dollars in the future.

Paul Kubala of 37 Lake Road wanted to know how many people responded to the survey. P. Stahl replied that the number was 231. Tom Currier agreed that it was a good sampling size of data as it was a cross section of Columbia.

C. Vance noted that the basis for the POCD is evolving but people consistently state that they want to save the rural character of the town.

P. Kubala asked about the interconnecting trails, and was concerned with the trails going through private property rather than government property. R. Nassiff responded that the POCD doesn't mandate any actions, but puts hooks in place to help justify a course of action at a later date if the opportunity arises and permission from the property owners would be obtained.

P. Kubala also commented about commercial property along route 6 leaving us with little developable land because of topography and wetlands. He believes all of Route 66 should be considered for mixed

use and sewers should be considered for the center of town in case there is sewage seeping into the lake and to promote the tax base.

A. Dunnack said there is a map in the POCD that identifies five priority areas for open space, each are a priority wetlands surrounded by at least 100 acres of forest to keep the water pure. She noted that we should avoid putting in sewers as it would cost the town millions of dollars.

A. Dunnack questioned the process for changing zones to a mixed use zone, R. Nassiff replied that the town is open to changing zoning if that is what the public wanted, by way of public hearings. A. Dunnack also asked about changing a priority zone to an Open Space Zone. P. Stahl commented that she had not seen Open Space Zones, but rather larger lot sizes to reduce density. She felt that a town could not prohibit development.

Carol Kubala requested using stronger language in the POCD regarding the needs of seniors due to the changing population age to help keep them in town. R. Nassiff agreed that it is something that is important to the town and strengthening the POCD was a good point as we don't want our seniors to have to move away.

C. Vance commented that these issues illustrate the importance of the POCD, including getting grants and resources from other organizations that would enhance, and help make life easier, for an aging population.

Robert Powell read the CROCG report on the POCD referral into the minutes.

R. Nassiff asked if the members felt the hearing could be closed. R. Powell **MOVED** to close the Public Hearing. T. Currier **SECONDED**. **MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0**

### **RESUME REGULAR MEETING**

**3. ADDITIONS/CHANGES TO AGENDA - None**

**4. APPROVAL OF PZC REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF May 23, 2016**

Ernest Jay Starkel **MOVED** to **APPROVE** the Regular Meeting Minutes of May 23, 2016 as written. Rick Nassiff **SECONDED**. **MOTION CARRIED 6-0-1** (Walter Tabor Abstained).

**5. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS - None**

**6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS (Discussion/Possible Action): None**

**7. NEW BUSINESS**

**7.1 Adoption of the 2016 Plan of Conservation and Development**

Rick Nassiff suggested that P. Stahl process the public comments and action taken at the next meeting on June 27, 2016.

**8. REGULATION REVISIONS**

**8.1 Updated Zone Change Priorities and status report - None**

**9. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS - None**

**10. COMMISSION OPEN DISCUSSION –** Rick Nassiff thanked the public for their comments and input.

**11. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS - None**

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

Rick Nassiff **MOVED** to **ADJOURN** at 8:33pm. Don Schofield **SECONDED**. **MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0.**

Respectfully submitted by Terri Ingersoll

Please see the minutes of subsequent meetings for the approval of these minutes and any corrections hereto.