

**PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING - MINUTES
AUGUST 25, 2015 – 7:30PM
GOSHEN TOWN HALL – 42 NORTH STREET**

PRESENT: Chairman Don Wilkes, Cynthia Barrett, Lu-Ann Zbinden; Alternate Garret Harlow; Town Planner and Zoning Enforcement Officer Martin Connor, AICP.
EXCUSED: Stephen Cooney, Russell Hurley; Alternate Mark Harris.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND DESIGNATION OF ALTERNATES.

Chairman Don Wilkes called the meeting to order at 7:30PM. All regular members present were seated for the evening. Alternate Garret Harlow was seated for Russell Hurley. The proceedings were recorded digitally, and copies are available in the Land Use Office.

MOTION Ms. Zbinden, second Mr. Harlow, to amend the agenda to discuss agenda item 8A first and then proceed with the agenda as written; unanimously approved.

8. OTHER BUSINESS PROPER TO COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION:

A. Discussion of 2015 Open Space Plan Prepared by the Town of Goshen Conservation Commission.

Members of the Conservation Commission including Chairman Andy Nygren, Barry Donaldson, Iain Kinsella, and Joan Lang, met with the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) in order to review the 2015 Open Space Plan document that they had prepared.

Mr. Connor explained that the Planning and Zoning Commission was required to update the Plan of Conservation and Development every 10 years, and the next update was due to occur for 2016. He said that the Open Space Plan is an important part of the POCD, and it was a part of the Conservation Commission's responsibilities to prepare this document. Mr. Nygren then stated that the document they had prepared was an update of the 2001 Open Space Plan. Mr. Nygren noted that maintaining rural character had been deemed a major goal for the Town; Mr. Connor concurred, noting that at the 2004 public meeting leading up to the previous POCD several residents had identified "preserving open space" as an important priority.

Mr. Nygren then reviewed with the Commission the Open Space Plan, explaining how they had defined open space using the definitions in the Connecticut General Statutes and the Town Subdivision Regulations. He then briefly reviewed the types of open space that were considered to be priority, such as land abutting protected land, stream corridors, land with scenic vistas, etc. Mr. Nygren explained that they considered land abutting the Great Mountain Forest in the northeast corner of the town to be a priority area. Connecting existing open space properties was also considered very important in order to build their trail network.

At this time, members of the Conservation Commission explained the importance of Public Act 490, which allows farmland, forestland, and other types of open space to be assessed at its use value rather than at its fair market value. Mr. Nygren explained that while it is meant to discourage land owners from selling their land due to high taxes, the Conservation Commission was recommending a change to how this was applied in the Town of Goshen. The Conservation Commission was suggesting that the eligibility requirements for this program should reflect the required building lot sizes in each zone such that the land proposed for tax reduction must meet or exceed the required minimum lot size for its zone. Right now, a 9-acre property in the RA-5 Zone would have 4 acres of land eligible for tax reduction; however, since the minimum lot size in the zone is 5 acres, these four acres could not have been sold anyway since it does not meet required lot size. Therefore, the Town had reduced tax income and was not actually realizing a benefit from it. If this was changed, the 9-acre parcel in the RA-5 Zone would no longer be eligible for the PA 490 tax reduction; however, lots of 10 acres or more in the RA-Zone would be.

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Mr. Connor explained that this was a possible recommendation for an action step to be included in the POCD. Mr. Wilkes asked whether this change would have an adverse impact on obtaining conservation easements. Mr. Connor stated that he believed it would actually encourage easements and permanent protection.

Conservation Commission members then reviewed with the P&Z the list of Goshen Open Space Areas as of November 2014. Mr. Connor questioned whether Town properties with buildings on them, such as the Town Hall, should be included in this list. Members of the Conservation Commission explained that locations such as Camp Cochepianee had buildings, however, they were considered recreational open space areas. Mr. Connor asked if the Conservation Commission felt that it would be beneficial to have a stated goal of increasing the percentage of permanently protected land. Mr. Wilkes concurred, noting that as goals are met, he would like to see the goal raised. He then noted that the percentage of open space in this document was listed as 76%; however, in the 2001 document, open space acres was listed as 77%. Mr. Wilkes questioned how that had decreased. Conservation Commission members explained that they had reviewed the calculations from the 2001 report and believed there had been some overestimation. Additional information resources were now available, and that helped improve the accuracy of this calculation.

Mr. Nygren then briefly reviewed the listing and descriptions of Goshen's natural resources, noting that much of this information had remained the same from the 2001 edition. He did say that as of 2010, 73% of Goshen was forested. The average for Litchfield County was 67% and 60% for the State as a whole. He also reviewed descriptions of farmland tracts, noting that the Conservation Commission had received a great deal of help from the Agricultural Council.

The Commission then reviewed the Action Proposals included in the Open Space Plan. Mr. Nygren stated that the Conservation Commission would like to see the Town fund the Agricultural Land Preservation Fund (Title 45). This ordinance was adopted in the 1980s; however, it had not yet been funded. This was largely because the State had funded preservation efforts; however, the Conservation Commission believed that the Town should also assist in the preservation of Goshen's rural character. They also recommended the adoption of an Open Space Use Policy for the Town of Goshen and the protection of wetlands. Establishing new and maintaining existing trails was also a priority. Mr. Connor suggested that protection of water resources should include a recommendation to adopt an ordinance requiring a regular clean-out schedule for septic tanks. He explained that this was particularly of importance around Tyler Lake.

Mr. Nygren then explained that they listed the ways in which an interested land owner could conserve and protect their land. Lastly, the Commission reviewed maps at the back of the document, including the Protected Property Map, Farmland Priority Map and Agricultural Tract Boundaries, Goshen Watersheds, and Trail Maps. Members discussed trying to get color features on the Farmland Priority Map and the Watersheds map in order to aid ease of reading. Mr. Harlow suggested an additional map showing the locations of the noted scenic features. He also suggested captions for the included pictures in order to let people know where they were taken. Ms. Lang suggested listing the Conservation Commission members that worked on the document, so that future commission members would know who to contact if they had questions. Mr. Connor recommended putting the date that the document was officially accepted by the P&Z; he would then be able to use this document for reference when applicants came before the Commission.

Mr. Nygren stated that Iain Kinsella had done the bulk of the work formatting the document and working with the maps. Members of the P&Z praised Mr. Kinsella's work formatting the document and putting it together so professionally. P&Z members thanked the Conservation Commission for their hard work updating the Open Space Plan.

MOTION Ms. Zbinden, second Ms. Barrett, to accept and receive the 2015 Open Space Plan prepared by the Town of Goshen Conservation Commission; unanimously approved.

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The members of the Conservation Commission exited the meeting at 8:20PM.

2. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

No business was discussed.

3. READING OF THE MINUTES:

A. May 26, 2015 regular meeting.

Mr. Wilkes requested a correction of the first sentence of the second paragraph on page 3. The sentence should read: "Mr. Wilkes questioned how the Commission would be able to ensure that applicants for contractor storage would not be storing hazardous materials onsite."

MOTION Mr. Harlow, second Ms. Barrett, to approve the minutes of the May 26, 2015 regular meeting as amended; unanimously approved.

4. OLD BUSINESS:

No business was discussed.

5. NEW BUSINESS:

No business was discussed.

6. ZONING ENFORCEMENT OFFICER'S REPORT:

The Commission reviewed the report of the Zoning Enforcement Officer's activities from May 24th through August 25th. Mr. Connor explained that he had requested a timetable for the completion of work at the gas station at 59 Torrington Road, and the property manager had submitted the schedule detailed in the report.

MOTION Ms. Zbinden, second Mr. Harlow, to accept the Zoning Enforcement Officer's Report for the period from May 24, 2015 to August 25, 2015; unanimously approved.

7. CORRESPONDENCE:

Members received copies of the Summer 2015 edition of the *Planning and Zoning Agencies Quarterly Newsletter*.

8. OTHER BUSINESS PROPER TO COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION:

B. Review and Update of 2006 Plan of Conservation and Development.

Mr. Connor distributed copies of the State statute pertaining to the Plan of Conservation and Development, explaining that some things had been added as required items since their last POCD update. He noted that the Sewer Service Area was now required to be included. Mr. Connor said that he recommended holding a community forum in early 2016, similar to that which had been done in 2004. He said that this information was very useful as a part of drafting the updated POCD.

9. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Ms. Zbinden, second Ms. Barrett, to adjourn at 8:44PM; unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Stacey M. Sefcik, Recording Secretary