

# TOWN OF SOUTH WINDSOR

## PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

**MINUTES**

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**MAY 16, 2023**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Robert Vetere, Kevin Foley, Stephen Wagner, Bart Pacekonis, Alan Cavagnaro, Michael LeBlanc

**ALTERNATES PRESENT:** Atif Quaraishi, Carolyn Carey

**STAFF PRESENT:** Jeff Folger, Senior Environmental Planner; Drew Guild, IT Support; Lisa Giroux, Recording Secretary

### **SPECIAL MEETING**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Pacekonis called the meeting to order at 7:02pm

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**NEW BUSINESS:** Discussion/Decision/Action regarding the following:

1. Meet with SLAM/Planimetrics to discuss the Plan of Conservation and Development

- a. Project Schedule

Pat Gallagher from SLAM reviewed the project timeline, stating they are still on track with the project Schedule. Mr. Gallagher commented that the community survey should be launched within the next couple weeks and that the first community workshop is scheduled for June 6<sup>th</sup>.

- b. Review/Discuss Draft Community Survey

Mr. Gallagher reviewed the draft community survey. Mr. Gallagher commented that the goal of the survey is to build off the Town Council Strategic Planning Survey as well as the Affordable Housing Survey. Some questions from the 2013 Community Survey were included in this current survey in effort to compare community sentiment through the years. The Commissioners posed questions and offered suggestions for the survey. The commissioners were asked to review the survey further and that additional questions/concerns could be emailed to Michele Lipe, Director of Planning by Friday.

- c. Review/Discuss Conservation Element

Glenn Chalder from SLAM reviewed the presentation for the Plan of Conservation and Development. Mr. Chalder began by outlining the contents of the presentation which focused on the element of conservation; specifically natural resources, open space, agricultural resources, and ambience/sense of place. Mr. Chalder discussed an inventory of South Windsor's natural resources which include flood zones, wetlands, natural diversity database (endangered/threatened species), critical habitats, and steep terrain. Mr. Chalder clarified that the map listed within the current Plan of Conservation- showing South Windsor's Natural Resources is informational and provided by the State of Connecticut DEEP. At this time the map is informational, but in the future the Town has the option to potentially include a signoff from the DEEP on its applications.

Mr. Chalder discussed current storm water runoff and drainage concerns due to weather pattern changes. Many drainage systems in place were designed for smaller, less frequent storms; so one management strategy is to promote "low impact development" or LID which is the drainage approach to treat rainfall as close to where the drainage falls as possible. Mr. Chalder explained that the Town is currently utilizing this approach and that the suggestion is to continue doing so. Jeff Folger, Senior Environmental Planner discussed past and present runoff issues and storm water management within the

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Town. Commissioner Wagner questioned the use of open space to help mitigate drainage issues. Mr. Chalder mentioned that going forward the focus will be on resolving current drainage concerns as well as encouraging the use of the LID approach in new developments or redevelopment.

Mr. Chalder defined open space as represented in the 2014 Plan of Conservation and Development and as proposed in the 2023 Open Space Plan, which includes a breakdown of open space (i.e.: Town-owned, State-owned, subdivision parcels). Mr. Chalder questioned how the Commissioners would describe South Windsor's vision for Open Space. Commissioner Wagner mentioned balance of open space and development should be considered. Commissioner Foley commented that having a town wide direction would be beneficial, while supporting the needs of the Board of Education.

Mr. Chalder discussed one approach to preserving open space within the Town using a cross town Greenway trail. Mr. Chalder added that the trail could begin in areas nearest to populations and destinations in Town, with the hope of eventually leading to the river area. Commissioner LeBlanc commented that maintenance of the trail would be a concern. Commissioner Wagner mentioned trails in surrounding towns as a comparison. Mr. Chalder remarked that the idea of the Greenway is not to compete with current open space efforts, rather work together with what has already been done in Town.

There was a discussion about coordinating open space efforts from all organizations held under the Town Council umbrella. Mr. Chalder stated that the idea is to have all the entities working together with the same end-goal in mind for the Town. There was a conversation about the Open Space fund possibly needing to be replenished within the next 5-10 years when more parcels could be made available for sale. Chairman Pacekonis mentioned a challenge the Town has been facing, being outbid by developers for land. Mr. Chalder mentioned a potential strategy of requiring a 50% offset for subdivisions which may assist in conserving more open space within the Town.

Mr. Chalder reviewed prospective strategies to protect the Town's agricultural resources, as farmland in Town is not as prevalent as it had been in 2014, or years prior. Commissioner Wagner suggested there could be opportunity in taking open space and turning it back into farmland. Commissioner Foley added that there would have to be guidelines set in place in order for farmland to be useable/tillable and that there are plenty of generational farmers in Town that need farmland. Mr. Chalder added that one strategy is to continue supporting farmers by making farmland accessible.

Mr. Chalder reviewed the next chapter within the presentation, Ambience/Sense of Place, which was formally titled Community Character in the 2014 Plan of Conservation. There was a discussion of historic resources in Town and strategies to help preserve Town history. Mr. Chalder commented that one strategy would be to encourage "sensitive ownership" meaning encouraging those who are passionate about historic homes to purchase/restore rather than developers who may only want to tear down and build new homes. Commissioner Foley added that the Town could possibly have an incentive or tax break for those restoring historic homes, which would aid in preserving Town history. Councilor Liason Kozikowski commented that a draft ordinance has been initiated to create a tax abatement program for the preservation of historic structures. The draft has been brought to the council's attention and was well received. The Historic District Commission has also reviewed it and will assist in identifying which structures could qualify for this type of program. Next step would be for the Economic Development Commission to review at their next meeting for additional feedback on the program.

Mr. Chalder discussed the next section of the presentation, which focused on Scenic Resources in Town. Mr. Chalder identified areas in Town with "scenic areas" and mentioned that Main Street is the only street currently identified as a "scenic road". There was a discussion about possible strategies to assist in the preservation of scenic resources which

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include designating additional scenic roads to help maintain their scenic aspects, and preparation of design guidelines to regulate lighting in scenic areas.

Mr. Chalder discussed the PA-490 designation for undeveloped lands. These must be applied for in the Assessor's office and offers a reduction in assessment of land. Currently, South Windsor has PA-490 Farm and Forest designations, but has not yet established the "local option" for open space, which must first be identified in the Plan of Conservation and Development as well as approved by legislative body.

Mr. Chalder touched upon the stone wall gateway features at Wapping Center and Ellington Road. His suggestion is to continue to maintain these and possibly add new gateway features in certain areas including Buckland Road (Manchester line), Deming Street/Oakland Road (Manchester line), Ellington Road (Ellington line), and Route 5 (East Windsor line).

Mr. Chalder culminated the presentation by recognizing South Windsor's community pride and spirit.

**d. Next Steps/Schedule**

Chairman Pacekonis reminded Commissioners that revisions/concerns regarding the Community Survey should be emailed to Michele Lipe. There was a discussion about question #28, potential uses for the 46-acre site located at 22 Wheeler Road. The site is currently zoned Designed Commercial, and the site as a whole should be regarded when considering potential uses.

Pat Gallagher reviewed the next steps on the project schedule. The tentative launch date for the community survey is May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023, prior to Memorial Day Weekend, and will be kept open for at least one month. There was a discussion about distribution of the survey in order to include all demographics. Chairman Pacekonis shared that Planning and Zoning will have a booth at the Strawberry Festival in June and Apple Fest in September. The Community Visioning Workshop is scheduled for June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023. There was a discussion about posting flyers for the Workshop in order to best reach the community.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Commissioner Foley motioned to adjourned.  
Commissioner Cavagnaro seconded the motion.  
Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Giroux, Recording Secretary