

**ROXBURY PLANNING COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING
NOVEMBER 12 2009
MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER

Robert Munson, Chairman, determined a quorum and called the Public Hearing to order at 7:15 PM.

IDENTIFICATION OF MEMBERS

The members of the Planning Commission present identified themselves for the record: Robert Munson and Arlene Kershner, Regular Members; Joseph Famighette, Harry Ong and Steve Zaleta, Alternate Members.

Motion by Arlene Kershner to move Joseph Famighette up to be seated for Ralph Wescott. The motion was seconded by Robert Munson and carried unanimously.

Motion by Arlene Kershner to move Harry Ong up to be seated for Mark Lowe. The motion was seconded by Robert Munson and carried unanimously.

Motion by Arlene Kershner to move Steve Zaleta up to be seated for Damien St. James. The motion was seconded by Robert Munson and carried unanimously.

LEGAL NOTICE

Arlene Kershner read the Legal Notice for the Public Hearing for the record: "The Roxbury Planning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on November 12, 2009 at 7:00 PM at Roxbury Town Hall on the 2009 Plan of Conservation and Development for the Town of Roxbury. Interested persons are invited to attend and be heard and written communication will be accepted. A copy of the proposed 2009 Plan of Conservation and Development is on file in the office of the Town Clerk, Roxbury, CT. Robert Munson, Planning Commission, 10/13/2009"

PRESENTATION OF THE 2009 UPDATE TO THE PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Robert Munson introduced Chris Wood, Wood Planning, who has served as consultant to the Roxbury Planning Commission during the process of updating the 1999 Plan of Conservation and Development(PLOCD). Mr.Wood explained that the 1999 PLOCD remains a strong document. The Planning Commission determined that it would adopt amendments in order to update the existing Plan. What is stated in the current Plan will remain effect.

Mr. Wood told the audience that a report on conditions and trends in Roxbury was also prepared during the process and will become part of the updated plan. As part of the task of gathering information, a questionnaire was circulated to Town officials and agencies. Also, a Community Opinion Survey was listed on-line to be completed by

residents. Results were tabulated although Mr. Wood said that the statistics are not necessarily valid but did confirm general opinions. In addition, three focus group sessions were held on Development, Conservation, and Municipal Facilities.

A public workshop was held where the results were presented.

A draft of the 2009 Update was referred to the local planning agency, the Northwest CT Council of Governments (NWCCOG) and the Board of Selectmen for comment. Minor comments were received from NWCCOG and have been incorporated into the Plan. The implementation table at the end of the PLOCD has also been updated.

COMMENTS/DISCUSSION WITH THE PUBLIC

Robert Munson asked for any one wishing to speak to identify their name and address for the record. He also requested that comments be limited to a reasonable time period

Barbara Henry offered comments from the Board of Selectmen. She noted that there were many important things covered in the Plan. She described the original purpose for the formation of the Beautification Committee was to use funds left from the Bicentennial Celebration to plant trees. There is currently no Town funding for this committee. Examples of other Town committees which receive outside funding are the Friends of the Senior Center, Friends of the Library and the Roxbury Bridgewater Roxbury Garden Club.

She said that the Board of Selectmen were pleased to see that the Plan encourages smart growth and housing diversity committees. The Board of Selectmen would like regulations developed that would permit a restaurant in the commercial zone, specifically to preserve Roxbury Station

Tasks for the Board of Selectmen including increased efforts to increase open space and provide staffing to the Conservation Committee were reviewed.

Gary Steinman offered the following comments:

p.5 – Population projections show a decrease of 10% over the next 20 years.

p. 11 – Open space is offered to the Land Trust and then to the Town. Where the open space is held should depend on the characteristics of the particular parcel of land including location, size, abutting other Land Trust properties.

p. 13 – Preserve agricultural land and also encourage the State to provide incentives for farming activity.

He noted that protection by Public Act 490 is offered only for 5-10 years.

Mr. Steinman suggested that the Plan include a recommendation for the Town to look for another parcel of land of at least 14 acres, for a new Roxbury elementary school. The condition of the current school, the limits of the size of the current property(3 acres) and the wetlands were cited as reasons.

p. 23 – Identify appropriate places for trail crossings. A network of trails would require such crossings.

He cautioned that multiple cell towers would be required for full cell phone coverage.

Mary Ripper, representing the Conservation Commission, pointed out that the Conservation Commission has done a survey showing what is allowed to be developed

on particular parcels in Roxbury. The Conservation Commission agrees that the major tasks are to preserve rural character and protect ridgelines. She said that the Conservation Commission sees cell tower coverage as a major issue for the future.

David Sherman spoke about a letter that he had sent to Robert Munson offering his comments for the PLOCD regarding expanding the commercial zone in Roxbury. The neighbor's use of his property for a home enterprise is creating a problem. The business has grown to large for the residential area. Mr. Sherman feels the business should be moved to the commercial zone. Mr. Sherman explained that there is no mention in the PLOCD of expanding the commercial zone to allow for additional commercial storage.

Mr. Sherman also said that there was a problem on Mallory Road with speeding. According to Mr. Sherman, there are no speed signs on Mallory Road from South Street to the Southbury town line on Flag Swamp Road. Barbara Henry, First Selectman, responded that speed signs have already been ordered for Mallory Road. Also, the Board of Selectmen voted to raise the speed limit on town roads for 15 mph to 20 mph.

Robert Munson responded to Mr. Sherman's comments regarding expanding the commercial zone that home enterprises are done by special permit by the Zoning Commission and the Planning Commission has no power regarding special permits.

Hugh Rawson stated that he has submitted his comments in writing and would review a portion of them.

p. 8 – He suggested when discussing a “priority issue” that the word ‘easement’ be added.

p. 11 – The marking of easements should be made on the ground in addition to on the map of the property.

p. 14 – There should be more monitoring of other tributaries of the Shepaug.

p. 14 – This section should include the monitoring of septic tanks and fields.

In addition to these points Mr. Rawson suggested that the Town adopt conflict of interest guidelines.

On the task list which refers to the election of all officials and the combination of the Planning and Zoning Commissions, Mr. Rawson said that these issues should be revisited and time allowed for more public discussion forums.

Dennis McDonald said that he didn't find any facts in the PLOCD to create a baseline for what is proposed.

Chris Wood responded that a pamphlet was prepared as part of the update process with projections on growth.

Mr. McDonald said that there are obviously large parcels held by the Roxbury Land Trust. It was pointed out that there are other private land trusts such as Weantinogue, CL&P and the Southbury Land Trust. He asked if there has been any modeling done on the effect on taxes with the land held by trusts. His concern was that the land held in trust was not contributing any tax revenue to the Town.

Tom Holyrod asked for the PLOCD to supply the strategy for increasing open space.

Robert Munson responded that the PLOCD outlines principles for smart growth and provides for a variety of types of subdivisions.

Mr. Holyrod said that he was disappointed with the Planning Commission's failure to provide vision for the future.

Jay Kronfeld voiced his support to have the proposition for the election of town officials brought back. He asked for additional statistics.

Robert Munson responded that everything he was requesting was in the 1999 PLOCD or has been added to the new Update.

Hugh Rawson suggested and Barbara Henry confirmed that the report on open space is on the Town website.

Elaine Szemkus questioned how a private land trust is used.

Robert Munson responded that the land is controlled by the trust. Some land may be used for trails while some may be agricultural.

Dennis McDonald asked if the Land Trust property won't be a place to encourage affordable housing. Robert Munson responded that all the Planning Commission can do is to suggest the direction for the Zoning Commission to follow.

Jay Kronfeld suggest that there be a limit on the amount of land that can go into the Land Trust or declare a moratorium on Land Trust acquisition.

Tim Ring told the Commission that the bylaws of the Fire Department have a provision for a 3-year term for the Fire Chief. In the future this may be a paid position.

Barbara Henry reported that improvements at Botsford Hill have already been explored by the DOT and she doubts that any changes to the "Bridgewater Curves" will ever take place. However, she would like see the intersection of Route 67 at Crofut Road and the intersection of Davenport Road and Route 199 added to the list for improvement by the State DOT.

David Sherman asked what will happen with his suggestion for an increased commercial zone. Robert Munson responded that that should be addressed by the Zoning Commission.

Robert Munson asked for any further comments from the public.

Barbara Henry commented on the suggestion for an ethics committee in Roxbury. She said that an ethics commission would require full financial disclosure by all Town board members and their spouses. Presently a regional ethics committee was being considered.

Motion by Joseph Famighette to close the Public Hearing at 9:10 PM. The motion was seconded by Arlene Kershner and carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine M. Giordano,
Land Use Administrator

These minutes are not considered official until approved at the next Regular Meeting of the Roxbury Planning Commission.