

NEWINGTON TOWN PLAN AND ZONING COMMISSION

July 22, 2020

Regular Meeting

Chairman Domenic Pane called the Zoom meeting of the Newington Town Plan and Zoning Commission to order at 7:00 p.m.

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. ROLL CALL AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES

Commissioners Present

Chairman Domenic Pane
Commissioner Anthony Claffey
Commissioner Michael Fox
Commissioner Garrett Havens
Commissioner David Lenares
Commissioner Stanley Sobieski
Commissioner Hyman Braverman-A
Commissioner Thomas Gill-A
Commissioner Bryan Haggerty-A

Commissioners Absent

Commissioner Woods

Staff Present

Craig Minor, Town Planner

Commissioner Braverman was seated for Commissioner Woods

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Pane: I don't see that there are any changes, correct?

Craig Minor: Correct.

IV. PUBLIC HEARING

- A. Proposed Plan of conservation and Development 2030
PROPOSED POCD 2030

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Chairman Pane: If you could read the procedures for the public hearing I'd appreciate it.

Craig Minor: I'm sorry, I didn't bring the box home with me, I just brought my notes for the public hearing. I'm sorry, I don't have them.

Chairman Pane: All right, we will be allowing public to speak at any time. If the public has any questions James, you can interrupt me. Do we have any public on James?

James Krupienki: At this point, we only have NCTV.

Chairman Pane: Okay, thank you very much.

Why don't we go to Glenn, if you want to give us a short report to start us off?

James Krupienki: Commissioner Claffey has his hand raised at the moment.

Commissioner Claffey: Can people mute if they aren't talking. I heard birds in the background, a few different sounds.

Chairman Pane: Okay, thank you. Glenn, can you give us a brief overview?

Glenn Chalder: I apologize if there are any audio issues going on, I hope it works for the recording. James, if you could start the power point it would be great.

Tonight is the public hearing on the adoption, or for the Commission to consider adoption of the Plan of Conservation and Development. As you know, the Commission has been working on this for some time now, in terms of public meetings and input and because of Covid it seems like it has been a lot longer than perhaps a normal process, but again, tonight is the culmination of the Commission's work over the past year or so in terms of preparing this Plan of Conservation and Development.

The Plan of Conservation and Development as the Commission knows is an advisory document used by the Commission and other town boards and agencies to help make decisions about a community's physical development and also addresses issues related to economic and social development, but the most important part of the POCD is that it outlines strategies to help get us to where a community wants to go in terms of its physical development. What type of community it wants to be! I think at the bottom of the slide you can see the fact that Newington has been preparing plans for its future for years, and many of the recommendations and decisions that became part of that plan have guided the community over the years and again, that is why it is an important document for what might happen over the next ten years.

The Plan of Conservation and Development as the Commission is aware has six main parts to it, but four of them are really the key parts to it. The Plan starts off with introduction, then talks about four major strategic themes; Conservation and things we want to preserve or protect in the community; Sustainability is about how to adapt to future changes that hopefully will occur; Development is how we want to guide growth and change and then the fourth key part is the infrastructure strategy overall. These are services and facilities that help support our community and finally, there is a conclusion to the Plan.

The Introduction, I think a couple of key things in this section of the Plan, population growth in Newington is projected to continue at a slower rate than it has been in the past, but again, with changes going on in the world today, we'll have to wait and see if those projections come to be. Regardless of how the number of people in Newington changes, one of the trends that is pretty remarkable in Newington overall is the changing needs composition of the community. It is not uncommon for other communities in Connecticut to see an aging population, more residents in advanced years, and that starts to change the types of services and facilities a community might anticipate needing in the community in the future. That's a theme I think which actually follows through the Plan in a couple of different ways.

We undertook public meetings and interactions to get feedback from the community and the residents told us that the things that were most important to them was about preserving and enhancing the character of the community, maintaining a strong tax base, enhancing the town center, addressing challenges and opportunities of the transit train station, proposed train station, maintaining community facilities, addressing traffic, and then implementing the POCD overall. For that reason we organized the Plan again, around Conservation, Sustainability, Development and Infrastructure strategies overall.

Under the Conservation strategies there are three key chapters here. The first is how we want to protect natural resources in the community, and every chapter in the Plan, or almost every chapter in the Plan I should say, has a map to identify the location of the particular things that we are talking about in the Plan, recommendations, locations of key resources in the Community. In addition to protecting natural resources in the community this section of the plan recommends preserving open space. The Plan makes recommendations in terms of trying to improve or enhance a greenway within the community, to improve overall character and accessibility and then the third major chapter under the Conservation strategy is community character overall and the resources in town that really contribute to character. Things again that we should try to protect or preserve going forward.

The next major element of the Plan is about Sustainability, and this is sort of two concepts, the first of which is sustainability, and this is how we can be greener in the future and be cognizant of the fact that we could be more efficient and economical in the way that we use a lot of our resources in terms of energy and generating ways of use of water and things like that, and the

Plan advocates for these types of strategies, and also the other part of that is becoming more resilient. The world may change in the future in ways that we can't yet visualize, nobody saw Covid coming, and things like this happen. It's wise for communities to be adaptable and resilient to be able to respond to new challenges and opportunities that come along. This section of the Plan addresses that.

Development strategies in the Plan are really perhaps one of the most important parts when these documents were being prepared for communities in the past, they were called Plans of Development because this is how we might want to guide growth or change in the Community. In the sections of the Plan which address this are first of all to strengthen Newington center. It is the focal point of our community, in many respects the heart and soul of the community and the Plan recommends that we implement strategy to make it a stronger, more relevant place in the lives of people, and because there may be some opportunities that arise there from the properties in the Town Center over the next five or ten years or so, or perhaps even sooner, there is a significant opportunity for Newington to guide growth and development in the Newington Center area.

There is a whole chapter that identifies opportunity sites within Newington, and recommends strategies and directions to take advantage of these opportunity sites. There is a comment in the sidebar of the Plan that it's going to be harder and harder for Newington in the future to grow its Grand List. Our land is mostly developed, so the question is, how do we get more value out of the land that we have, and these opportunity sites may provide an opportunity to grow our Grand List, but also to create strong places or a central place, mixed use, pedestrian use, pedestrian friendly, transit oriented, so this chapter of the Plan addresses those issues. There is a chapter on promoting economic development, which in this Plan talks about not only about business and industrial development but also housing as a way to grow our grand list, and then also a chapter on guiding residential development, addressing housing needs in the community. Those are key and important chapters as well.

The next, last major theme of the Plan is infrastructure strategies, and this is sort of three key areas containing multiple maps, the first of which is addressing community facility needs in the community, continue to maintain what we have, make improvements as appropriate for how the community is growing and changing. There are a number of recommendations related to transportation, both vehicular transportation on the roadway system, managing that for safety and capacity and just for taking care of the pavement that is a major part of our municipal assets, and enhancing walking, biking, transit and rail for the future. Lastly there is a chapter on maintaining and improving utility infrastructure, water, sewer, cellular, five G, wireless services, and also wired internet to improve the capacity of the internet overall.

So the final part of the Plan is the conclusion part if you will, are the recommendations throughout the Plan to use the policies every chapter in the Plan identifies policies, this is the blue box, you see on the screen. Policy sections identify what recommendation or strategy in the Plan is, and then the column on the right identifies the people and partners. These are the people that would be involved or would be responsible for implementing that element of the Plan. Then each chapter also contains action steps, and down at the bottom, we see the pink boxes and these are actual action steps that the Commission can undertake, so policies seem to be somewhat reactive in nature. When a proposal would come before the Commission, or the Commission was deliberating an activity, these are the guidelines you might use, but action steps are actual work items that the Commission can pick up, undertake, and move ahead with, and there are also other boards and commissions that might be involved in that.

So those are the key elements of the Plan. There is a focus on implementation and these recommendations in terms of policies and action steps and for those reasons, I hope it will be a useful guide for Newington in the future, just as past plans have been helpful in the past.

That concludes just an overview of the Plan. I am prepared if the Commission has any questions or any questions from the Community to go into more detail, but that's a quick summary, if you will, of the Plan and the recommendations, so Mr. Chairman, I'll turn it back to you.

Chairman Pane: Thank you very much, Glenn. I'm going to go to Commissioners, to see if any of the Commissioners have any questions?

Commissioner Claffey: I have a few questions, and I don't know how you kind of want to walk through this, because I have read over it again, and looked at a few things, and one of the questions that I came up with in the beginning was on page, on the POCD that I have it's like page 40, 41 where we talked about the importance of mixed use in both, not just buildings, but what the building does. It seems that a lot of focus has been on the town center, downtown, in this POCD, and I'm just trying to understand like, you talk about mixed use buildings are a plus, but we want to discourage a mixed use site. I just want to get your ideas on with our tight constraints of our downtown, it's not like a blank slate or a canvas, most of our downtown is one story right now, there are two story, but I don't think there is much more than two story. Yes, we do have the exception of the apartment building, but you know, with the size that we have to work with in the downtown area, I mean, looking at page 41 there, the first thing that you see there is a mixed use building and most of them aren't three stories, but then when you look at the mixed use site, which is more broader picture, you have a nice compilation of one story, two story and then yes, it gets up to a higher story, but why are you saying get away from the mixed use site and be more encouraged with mixed use building?

Glenn Chalder: I think that, the Town Center is actually not that large an area, it's actually fairly compact. Change that could occur in the town center, actually in the near future are the two sites that may become available for redevelopment. I don't think Newington is ready for what West Hartford did in terms of Blue Back Square, but I think the introduction of a walkable pedestrian friendly area could pay big dividends for Newington overall and the town center area and that really involves a focus on the streetscape. So, the Zoning Regulations right now in Newington today already allow for mixed use buildings of three stories in the town center area, so really all we are talking about is continuing that, possibly even allowing for some additional height here. But a mixed use building makes an effective use of the real estate capacity that is available. We would like to have business uses on the first floor, facing the street, to create street activity, be it restaurants or stores or other things that create an activity area that people, other people want to go visit and spend time and spend money at. That is one of the things that will strengthen the town center. Then the upper floors can be used for residential uses. If remote commuting continues in terms of people working at home, etc., then the down town could be a fairly quiet place, but upstairs buildings will create the opportunity for activity in this particular place. So, the most important part, I think for town centers, vibrant town centers is to have a vibrant street, so that is why, if you have a one story retail building on the street, it really doesn't take advantage of the opportunity to animate the street with people and activities. Generally speaking, a two story building I think would be a step in that direction. I think the idea also in this chapter, and it's just one chapter in the plan, so I don't think it dominates the whole plan, but it really talks about a process, involving residents, property owners, other people, coming up with a vision for the town center so that what happens there is Newington's vision for the center rather than something else. So I want to illustrate the difference here for the Commission in terms of mixed use building versus mixed use site, but more than anything, I would like Newington to pick the center for itself that it would like to have.

Chairman Pane: I can understand that, but correct me if I'm wrong Anthony, but I mean, if somebody came in with a single use building over there, I don't think we should be discouraging them, it's still development. So I think we have to be careful there.

Commissioner Claffey: On that, because I had a few questions on page 42, where you have asked what might be a site plan, what might be a special permit, I don't know if we want to move certain things, because zoning laws are so interchangeable, we can change something just like we did at the last meeting about having special permits for distilleries, etc., I don't know how in depth the Commission feels about flip flopping some of the things that were in red to green and some of the things that were in green to red. One of them, to me and I'm using it because it is Covid, you know, the temporary outdoor seasonal dining. We have a special permit which has been very good for us to control just people putting a patio out, so I don't know how much the Commission, I don't know if any other Commissioners have a comment on changing some of the things on page 42. We can get to that later.

One of the bigger concerns that I have and it comes up in this section on the town center, is parking. One page 46, in one way the policy is to improve the public parking area, but then under the action step it says, evaluate to lower the parking requirements, and I think our regulations already give us the authority, across the whole town, not just specific to one area, to lower parking. On a busy day, you go to downtown Newington currently, it's hard to get a parking space that is close to where you want to be. Usually you have to end up parking in the back, and walking in an amount of time, which is fine for me, but maybe not every resident, and the parking thing, you know, West Hartford did a parking change with their Blue Back and their new, and when they did Blue Back over and now they are having a huge parking problem at Blue Back and it's affecting business and it's affecting growth, so I don't understand why in one way we want to lessen parking, but then you are saying, you need to expand parking, or have better parking. I'm not a proponent for lowering the parking amounts in an action, I'd rather see it as it already is. If a business comes to us and wants to open up, and they already have that right to say, hey, we want to have less parking spaces because here are our numbers, and can we meet them. We've done that in the past, so I'm trying to understand your parking, taking away parking, adding parking.

Glenn Chalder: I think parking is one of the biggest challenges that downtown areas have. So, if we look at the Berlin Turnpike, our parking ratios are built for uses where each site is functionally a lollipop, there is one driveway in, and you park in that parking lot. You want to go to another store, you drive out and go to another one, so each site has to have parking for its peak demand. When you get to a town center area, you have a situation where the residential uses might have some parking, but they are parked at night, and then during the day the businesses use the parking spaces, so we can plan all sorts of efficiencies. Part of my career, I worked for private development companies and then I discovered as part of that process that parking is often the biggest impediment to new development and activity because it chews up so much land area that the space left for a building is not everything that it could have been, so if we can find ways to be more efficient with parking in Newington center, I think we have the ability to spur economic growth and activity there, rather than have people coming to the Commission asking for an exception. It's possible to give them an exception right up front, you are basically giving people the green light for development rather than a yellow or a caution light where they have to come and ask for permission. Development is becoming pretty competitive these days and I think Newington has a strategic location, I think you are poised for growth opportunities, and I think these opportunity sites, one of which is the town center, are an area where we can recast our thinking to try to create new opportunities, so I mean, if you can back off on some of these requirements, in ways which make sense, I think it could serve you well. I think, one of the things I would like to suggest, if there are specific words in here which are too strong, then I think we should soften those verbs and, for example, back on page, when you talk about the chart on page 42, in terms of the green and red, identify those as possible considerations. This is an advisory document. My hope again would be that ten years from now that Newington center is a different place and is functioning as the town center that it used to

be. Nowadays people sort of bypass the town center and go to businesses and things in other locations, and if we could bring some of that activity back, I think it would be a real shot in the arm for Newington center.

Chairman Pane: Anthony, if you could hold off for one second, we have Commissioner Fox with a question, and then Commissioner Braverman after Commissioner Fox.

Commissioner Fox: Thank you. I don't have a question right now about the POCD but I have been wondering if this is a public hearing, why aren't we hearing from the public. I don't think...

Chairman Pane: I don't believe there is any public on right now, I'll check with James. Any public on yet James?

James Krupienski: No public in attendance, we just have NCTV still.

Chairman Pane: Okay, thank you. We will open it up to questions from anybody as soon as we get through. Do you have anything else?

Commissioner Braverman: A point of order, I didn't hear it said that I was seated as a Commissioner because another Commissioner is not in attendance. I just wondered if that was a point of order that I should be making.

Chairman Pane: Sorry for that Commissioner, we'll have you seated for Commissioner Woods. Thank you for bring that to my attention, I appreciate it. Craig, do you have any other questions?

Craig Minor: I just have an observation about the point that Commissioner Claffey brought up about Mr. Chalder's observations, page 26. What Glenn is suggesting is that we continue to try to expand the public parking area, but at the same time, reduce the amount of parking required for each individual business. It's not really a conflict, it's just two different sides of the same coin.

Commissioner Claffey: Wait, let me ask a question. I guess in the downtown there is public parking in the back, that businesses are using as a calculation factor for their business, so like, the businesses that all face Main Street we allow them to use the municipal public parking lot for some of their calculations, so that does become a problem if you then want to say, in five years someone comes in and says, oh I want to put in, like on page 41, a three story mixed use building where the plumbing supply house is, and you know, how are you going to allow them to calculate the parking if the next block over? They can't use the municipal parking lot as a calculation. I don't know how they go hand in hand, or how we can differentiate, if we start to differentiate and say, X percent is for municipal and X percent is for the business, then that is

different than what we currently do, etc., etc. It's a fine line here with parking, because parking is either going to choke your growth, or it's going to help your growth. You're right, like the Berlin Turnpike, we need 500 cars in Lowe's, it's no problem but if you go and try to put 500 cars into the Aldi parking lot, you can't do it.

Chairman Pane: So you are basically concerned Commissioner Claffey that our, that we want to be careful with our parking count in the town center. For instance, if there was a new complex or a new building where the factory is, that's like a block away from the municipal parking, so they probably would have to have their own parking because, maybe they could use a little bit of the municipal, but that municipal parking lot is pretty full and we have taken spaces away from it in the past to create the green space there.

Commissioner Claffey: You're right. If we're using that building to get calculations for business on Main Street, it's really not a proper way to figure out your parking.

Chairman Pane: Okay. Commissioner Braverman, did you have a question?

Commissioner Braverman: One of my questions is, and I know we are talking about the downtown, but the surrounding downtown, the Berlin Turnpike, we have a number of situations where there are big box stores that are closed, and they are empty. You know, the Pier One that is going out of business, I'm just kind of curious as to how that is going to be addressed.

Chairman Pane: I think somebody is moving into the Pier One facility over there, so it's unfortunate that we lost the tenant there, but I think that gradually, hopefully, these empty spaces get filled up again. Are there any questions from any non-Commissioners? Any Councilors have questions or if there is any other public on?

Commissioner Sobieski: I have a question. Glenn, a quick question. Several years ago there was talk about Market Square, trying to make that a one way street with diagonal parking to increase the parking in that area. Did you look at that when you were looking at the down town area?

Glenn Chalder: Not specifically because I think the recommendation that I have for the Commission based on my experience is to undertake community driven planning process, sit down and start to actually look at those types of questions. I'm a big fan of diagonal on street parking, but I think that it's applicability, you really have to get out there and measure the curbing and everything else, and you have to figure out what building heights you are going to have, and how this is all going to function, so I think it's an important thing for a down town area, and I would encourage the Commission to consider that as part of the community planning process.

Commissioner Sobieski: I know when they did that and put the bump outs on, it took a lot of parking away from the businesses and if you want to become business friendly, that might be something to look at. Only a thought.

Glenn Chalder: I think the only thing I would add to that too is that the other thing that is going on these days in downtown areas is making it pedestrian friendly. You can have all the parking spaces in the world, but if it is a hostile environment, people aren't going to want to go there anyway, so you have to find that sweet spot and that balance that works well for the center, and again, I think if some of the sites down there are going to get redeveloped, I think it's an opportunity that comes along once in a century and I think being ready for that, and being ready to work with property owners is going to be the key to success.

Commissioner Sobieski: Like I said, I just thought about that, I hadn't thought about it for a while. If you took Market Square, about 300 feet or so, make it one way, allowing the bank (inaudible)

Chairman Pane: Thank you.

Commissioner Claffey: I have a question for our Town Planner in regards to the plan for Business Development, turn to page 58 and how we recently have been talking about buffers and buffers between residential and business, etc., how, we haven't dived into that too much Craig, but how does the action steps in stuff like that coincide with what we are currently dealing with in our town and how would it be better if we were to say, enact these because there are some sites in town that you might not be able to get the 25 foot buffer, but hey, here's another way to get it done. Does that seem okay with what we are trying to do in town?

Craig Minor: That is what this plan is about, that we sit down and take a closer buffer regulations, and come up with some ways that you could achieve the same goal, which is protect residents from commercial development nearby, both of which are very important to Newington's character and we haven't in the past done a good job of giving developers a clear guidance of what we require in terms of a landscaped buffer between new development and residential neighborhoods.

Chairman Pane: Anyone else have any questions? James, is there any public on? Are there any Councilors, or TPZ representatives that would like to take the floor and have any questions?

Gail Budrejko: I just want to reiterate that I believe Carol and I both gave significant input as this plan was being developed, we've kept on top of it, we've read it, we've commented pretty extensively in the past so it's not that we don't have any interest, it's just that we're curious now to see where this goes. Thank you.

Chairman Pane: I'd like to know Gail, is the Council going to respond back with anything for us, because I would hate to move this forward if we're waiting for the Councilors to respond.

Gail Budrejko: It's been on our agenda for discussion for the past couple of meetings, and the decision of the Council was, we reviewed it, but we want to wait to hear what the results of the public hearings were before we consolidated our position.

Carol Anest: It's on our agenda for Tuesday evening pending this public hearing. Unfortunately, is this being live on NCTV? Is there a way, I mean, maybe I'm the only one, I haven't seen a lot out there about this. There was no press release or anything. Is there a way that we can have one more public hearing and if nobody speaks, I'm just concerned that the public isn't having the change to really weigh in. I mean, ten years ago and you remember Domenic, we had tons of people.

Chairman Pane: You're absolutely correct and I know it was a concern of the Councilors and the TPZ Commissioners that we haven't had many public and with this Covid virus, it's only made it worse, and I know that some people had wanted to possibly create a meeting in person with social distancing to see if that would bring some people out just to hear their comments, and I'm open to any suggestions that either the TPZ representatives or Commissioners have concerning that.

Commissioner Claffey: I think in regards to that concern of the public input, I mean, I don't know what the time frame is or if we can get more public approach to this back in four walls in an L101 type setting. I mean, is there a time frame here Mr. Minor?

Chairman Pane: I would imagine with the Covid, we don't have to comply with any time regulations, even though there is a time regulation, and Craig will tell us if there is a time regulation on this, but

Commissioner Claffey: I mean, when there is a hot button item, we get a good amount of people that come to the meetings and voice their concerns, I mean, I think, can we put it on the agenda for say, September, if we are back in a standard type meeting or maybe they come to a microphone outside the Town Hall to get piped in, I don't know, I don't think this is something that we don't have to close, I think we need to leave it open and find suggestions, leave it open as long as we can and try to get some input through the town web site or a link or through the town Facebook page, not all the private pages, the town's specific page. We're holding a meeting on this date, just to kind of know what is going on.

Chairman Pane: Thank you Commissioner Claffey: Our Town Planner has a comment I think. Go ahead Craig.

Craig Minor: The Executive Order did give us an additional 90 days which gives us a deadline of September 8 which is far enough away that if the Commission wanted to keep the hearing open tonight until the next meeting, you could do that, as long as the Commission votes on the Plan no later than your August 26th meeting, so Mr. Chalder built some flexibility into this in case the Commission decided to keep the hearing open for another couple of weeks, so the answer is yes, yes we can keep the hearing open.

Chairman Pane: Other comments?

Carol Anest: One other thing, can we get a press release or something out on this. I know that the Crier isn't mailing out, but the Rare Reminder is, the New Britain Herald is doing stuff on line, I mean, a lot of people don't know that this public hearing was this evening, it just feels that a lot of this was done like, under the radar, and I know because of Covid, but I really would like to see a little more publicity on this. One last shot, see what happens.

Chairman Pane: What is your opinion of possibly having an outside meeting?

Carol Anest: I agree, I think anything that would bring people to address this would be a benefit, I mean, even if you guys met and then people were able to call into NCTV. I think people aren't really sure that they can call in because you can't call in for TPZ, but I know that there are changes in the regulations because of Covid but I didn't even know that you could call into the TPZ meeting until I asked Craig about that. I think the public needs to be educated more and one more public hearing would help.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: The Town web site, to me, is not very user friendly, and it's very hard to find things unless you know exactly what you are looking for. If it were on there, and people could look at it and go over it, I'm watching you and I'm watching along at various times on the Plan, but I'm still, I'd have to sit down and print it out, I don't know how many pages it is, but I'd like to look it over, but in any case, if it can be somewhere on the town website and also when, at budget time I think at one point, I don't know whether they did it this year or not, I asked the Town manager if they could have specific e-mail addresses to e-mail questions to, if people have them, and I don't know with TPZ with this type of thing, if that is allowable or not. Given the Covid situation, it's very hard for the public to participate and I'm just thinking, myself, I've seen people come out before to meetings, not a lot, I'm not saying you are going to get 100 people to a meeting, but at least afford them the opportunity to look at the Plan, have a place where they can ask questions, or give them information through the media. I have not seen anything, and I could be mistaken, about this public hearing and the impact it may have for the next ten years on the residents of this town. Just as a person who has been following this, and was there for the 2020 Plan I would urge you to think about not closing it tonight, give it some publicity, and if nobody shows up, nobody calls rather, nobody writes in, nobody does anything,

then so be it. They had their opportunity. I think to have somebody come back and say, I never knew anything about this, it went through without my knowledge. Like I say, you might not get anyone, but just my opinion, having watched before.

Chairman Pane: I completely understand Rose, and I appreciate your comments. Thank you.

Rose Lyons: Thank you. I hope you all stay safe and stay well.

Chairman Pane: Thank you.

Commissioner Haggerty: Thank you. We couldn't do, what is the normal process by which information about hearings are disseminated I guess. So if this was pre-Covid it wouldn't be an issue, the public would just know about it, and now that it is Covid, the public doesn't know about it. Was something done differently? If we somehow make it public for people to show up in a parking lot, it's assumed that people will show up, but if we make it public then people can sign onto a computer, then nobody will do that. I guess I'm not following that.

Chairman Pane: I don't know if they are not showing up on the computer, and they might not show up in the parking lot either. I think part of it is, there are no big issues like we had the last time, there was a large issue with the open space and Save Cedar Mountain, at the time that we were going through the last Plan of Development. So there were hundreds of people objecting and commenting and I just don't think we have that one big issue right now. I can understand some of the concerns, where they want to make sure that the public is covered here.

Commissioner Gill: Following Rose's request and I think that is a very important part of this. Start conversations on what the people are concerned about, because we will go to this meeting that we are talking about and we're not going to know what they are going to be talking about, and I think if we can get some kind of communication avenue, e-mail address that we could start communicating back and forth.

Chairman Pane: Good point, thank you Commissioner.

Gail Budrejko: Just a comment, similar to what Bryan said. Perhaps if we can get the publicity out there, and it would be good maybe if a tiny little blurb can be created by the Town Planner that could be put on multiple Facebook pages and just say, with the link, also maybe people are still nervous to come out to a public meeting also, even if it is September or October. If they can be invited to send their comments via e-mail, that might be a way, but I also do agree that last time, being one of the hundreds of people who sat in the auditorium, there seemed to be more significant changes to the Plan, and issues at that time, particularly development of the mountain, and there were even some issues about Newington Center, so I'm not sure the public will be as interested because an awful lot of issues that aren't identified in this plan, for example,

a train station, the busway whatever, have already been done, or covered in other meetings and they are part of this plan already, so it's really not an opportunity to comment on the idea per se, but I think the opportunity to provide an easy link and to provide mail-in comments, you know, you can lead a horse to water, or whatever that saying is, thank you.

Carol Anest: One other thing, Glenn, didn't you have an e-mail set up when we did the charette.

Glenn Chalder: I think we did, I'm going to check on that, I think it's POCD @Newington.gov, so I'm going to send an e-mail to that right now and check really quick.

Chairman Pane: Craig, do you have something that you would like to add?

Craig Minor: No, actually.

Commissioner Haggerty: Either way, we have to vote on this and we have one month, max, correct? One meeting to talk about it again, and then the very next meeting it is going to happen, one way or the other?

Chairman Pane: What did you say, by the end of August Craig?

Craig Minor: Yes, unless you have special meetings, the August 26th meeting is the last meeting to adopt the Plan on schedule.

Chairman Pane: But we could go off schedule if we had to? If we felt we wanted to.

Craig Minor: You can, the consequences are, if the Town doesn't meet the deadline, the consequences will impact grants. We would have to explain.....

Chairman Pane: I think with the Covid, we would have plenty of cover because the ninety days for the Covid is really, but hopefully we can get this resolved by the end of August. I think what I should do is discuss with Craig how we can get some news articles out there, possibly with an e-mail address and requesting questions from the public and then we can talk right now if you guys want to hold another public hearing or not.

Glenn Chalder: I just wanted to bring the Commission's attention to something in regards to time frame. I think all of the comments here tonight, I think it makes sense to continue the public hearing. The Council is going to weigh in with comments, they should do that before the close of the public hearings to give them an opportunity to do that. I would be happy to work with Craig and you Mr. Chairman in terms of press releases and all of the other stuff. I did want the Commission to know that OPM has become a little bit more robotic in terms of their approach to the deadline. I believe the question was raised before whether or not there might

be any flexibility in regards to Covid, and the state's response was, we gave you ninety days, if you are going to go over the ninety days, you need to ask for an extension, or you fall into the abyss. I think for the sake of two weeks even, if we were to continue this through, I'm not sure when your meeting is in September, if the Commission wanted to do a special meeting, just need to attach a letter to a grant application during that window, so I think we can continue this to August, continue our efforts, see what we get, and if you want to continue it beyond that, we can do that as well, so whatever your pleasure is Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Pane: Thank you.

Commissioner Lenares: I just want to chime in, I'm not a big echoer of thoughts, but I'm going to echo a lot of people's thoughts. I think the public participation, even though it's on our agenda, I don't know how many people go to our agenda to see what is going on or what not. I think the past couldn't be simpler in regards to what Carol brought out and Rose, I think that we should have this stay open for one more meeting, but in the mean time, make the efforts going forward to getting some press releases going to some of the web pages, whether it be the Newington pages or the town web page directly, doing our due diligence to make sure that the public is informed of what is going on, and give them one more shot for sure, whether it be e-mail, calling in, Zoom meetings. I don't think you are going to get any better response if you prolong this and you go to some forum where people come and meet in person. I think people are still leery of that, and it's their right to feel so, but I do feel very comfortable with having one more meeting with this open, then take into consideration what they say, having the Council weigh in on it, and then wrapping this thing up. I think the velocity of this is because the Plan is really good. The Plan is good, it's specific in some respects and it's vague in another respect where it allows different directions of the Plan to exist in the future. I also think that the hot button issues that you touched on Mr. Chairman, are not here. It's just your regular development going forward and I think it's a good plan. I would be in favor of another public hearing for the public, and then after doing that going through the necessary steps to comply with the ninety days that we were already given, and then wrap it up. Thank you.

Chairman Pane: Thank you. James, we have Patty Foley in the webinar room. Is it possible to connect to her?

James Krupienski: I can connect her for you.

Patti Foley: Good evening, Chairman Pane and everybody there. I want to first, as Chair of the Environmental Quality Commission and Sustainable Connecticut and looking for our sustainable award for Newington. This POCD is an amazing document. I have read it, I want to commend the Commission and staff for working on this. It's tremendous. It is a wonderful document as the last one was ten years ago which really helped steer the community to improve Newington. I'm looking forward to being able to speak out and as you said maybe there is an opportunity in

the few weeks for folks to understand how important it is to speak out on this, but I did want to thank you for all the time and effort for putting this together because I know you have been working on it for almost a year. So, congratulations, I think it's a great plan. It does point to the challenges that are facing Newington which is a good place to start with the Plan. Thank you very much.

Chairman Pane: Very good Patty, thank you. We appreciate your comments?
Commissioner Fox, do you have a question?

Commissioner Fox: It's basically a statement. Like Commissioner Lenares, I'm not one for reiterating overall, I've gone along with people, but you spoke about this as the last meeting, and I think the consensus was that we should keep this going, but as everybody else says, we need to get this in a venue where we can get more public participation. E-mails might be a good idea, but until we get out on social media which right now is the basic mode of communication with Covid and technology, but we need not only to let people know that we are holding public hearings on the Plan of Development and I think the facts that I'm quite aware of, the web site is not really the place. I don't know how much information you can get out to the public on social media but I think the public should be able to view the POCD because if don't see what is in it, they won't have any questions. So we also have to figure out how to get the public to be able to read and know what questions to ask. Thank you.

Chairman Pane: Councilor Budrejko, did you have a comment?

Gail Budrejko: No.

Chairman Pane: I think what we want to do then is, I'll work with the Town Planner and Glenn and we'll try to come up with some publicity to put out, onto the town page and maybe share it with some Facebook sites and maybe a couple of articles encouraging people to send their questions in by e-mail and maybe we can also let them know, and give them directions on how to get onto the web site and review the Plan so that they can read it and we'll see how that works for the next meeting.

Commissioner Claffey: Can we make a motion to keep this open until our second meeting in August for the next discussion on this?

Chairman Pane: Absolutely. You can make that motion.

Commissioner Claffey moved to keep the public hearing open in regards to the POCD 2020 Plan until our second meeting in August, I don't know the date specifically. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fox.

Craig Minor: I just want to point out that if you continue the hearing until August 26th, that is your deadline. You are going to have to adopt it that night, so that is kind of cutting it close.

Chairman Pane: Let's have it open on the agenda for the next meeting, and then we can decide then if we want to keep it open until the 26th. We could keep it open until the 26th and then at that meeting move it to Old Business and act on it, right?

Craig Minor: You could, but I just think that is cutting it close, that's all.

Commissioner Claffey: Mr. Planner, with all of the times and things, if we keep it open until the next meeting, and have an update of where we're at with everything that everything has asked about the public being informed, is the newspaper going to run an article, is the web site going to post something, at that time we will have a better understanding of where we are with all the concerns of our Commissioners and our Councilors and then we are at a better stand to keep it open until our following meeting. Is that a better plan?

Craig Minor: It is.

Commissioner Claffey: So I will retract my original motion and move that we keep this meeting open for the POCD until our first meeting in August and move it accordingly.

Commissioner Fox: I'll retract my second and I'll second the new motion.

Chairman Pane: Could you go over that one more time Commissioner Claffey?

Commissioner Claffey retracted the original motion, and moved that we keep the Newington 2020 Plan of Conservation and Development public hearing tonight open until the meeting of August 12th, to discuss where we're at with all of the concerns from this meeting and the public concerns.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fox.

James Krupinski: Mr. Chairman, before you pass the motion, I have an attendee with their hand raised.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: Sitting here watching this, half on my phone and half on the TV, on the TV it is saying public hearing, Newington 2020 Plan of Conservation and Development proposed for adoption. I think Commissioner Claffey also referred to it as the 2020 plan. Aren't we doing the 2030 Plan?

Chairman Pane: It's the 2020 to 2030 Plan, because it was the 2010 to 2020 Plan, so.....

Rose Lyons: Because on the public hearing, on the agenda, it says, proposed Plan of Conservation and Development 2030, Proposed POCD 2030. I just wanted to be sure. Wasn't the 2010 to 2020 referred to as the 2020 Plan?

Chairman Pane: The last plan of development was the 2010 to 2020 Plan.

Rose Lyons: Okay, just for clarification, thank you.

Chairman Pane: We have a motion on the floor with a second by, who as it?

Commissioner Fox: Commissioner Fox.

Chairman Pane: We have a motion and a second to keep this plan open until August 12th meeting and we can determine then what we are going to do with it. Any other questions, comments concerning this motion?

Commissioner Braverman: I just want to make sure that the posting that is on this, the website, the Newington web site, that the POCD get a prominent position in it, so that when people first come to the site they will be able to see the POCD document.

Chairman Pane: I'm not sure, whatever is possible within the IT Department, they will try to accommodate that. I'm not sure if they can, but Craig, can you make a note of that?

Craig Minor: Yes.

Chairman Pane: So we have a motion on the floor, we have a second. There are no other comments. Can we have a roll call vote Craig please?

Craig Minor: Commissioner Claffey – Yes

Commissioner Fox – Yes

Commissioner Havens – Yes

Commissioner Lenares – Yes

Commissioner Sobieski – Yes

Commissioner Gill – Yes

Commissioner Braverman – Yes

Commissioner Haggerty – Yes

Chairman Pane – Yes

Chairman Pane: Okay, so we will leave that open then. Is there anyone in the public, does anyone have anything else? If there is nothing else, I will work with the Town Planner and I will work with our consultant to come up with some articles to get out to the public and try to

encourage them to look up the Plan on our web page and try to share it on social media, and as soon as I come up with something, and I work that out with the Planner and our consultant, then we will have the Town Planner e-mail all of the Commissioners to tell them what the plan is, if that is okay with everybody. If there is no other public participation, or there is nothing else, I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Sobieski moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Claffey. The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Norine Addis".

Norine Addis,
Recording Secretary

