

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CPAC)  
REGULAR MEETING**

**MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 25, 2009**

**As Approved**

**Present:**

*Members:* Kate Bedard, Mike Fisher, Lucia Foley, Martha Johnson, Dale Johnston, Wendy Kelleher, Jeff Labrecque, Jesse Lytle, Melissa O'Brien, Kurt Schenker, Martha Terry, Nathan Therien and Linda Young (Excused: Connie Clancy, Bob Gelinis, and Dan Luis)

*Staff:* Stacy Metzger - VHB, Inc. and Richard Harris, Town Planner

*Liaisons:* Helen Fantini

*Public:* Joan Rosner, Thomas Callahan, Ann Griffin, and Mark Cavanaugh

Ms. Young called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She welcomed everyone in attendance.

**1. Minutes of Meetings – February 4, 2009 Regular Meeting and February 11, 2009 Special Meeting**

Mr. Harris noted that the February 4<sup>th</sup> minutes were not distributed.

**Motion** – Ms. O'Brien moved and Mr. Labrecque seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2009 meeting as presented. All members present voted in favor of the motion.

**2. Special Resource Speakers – Planning Board**

Ms. Young stated that the Planning Board members were asked to meet with CPAC to discuss historical issues related to the town's development (i.e., projects w/significant community opposition, etc.), obstacles faced by the board and the tools needed for the town to become more responsive and sensitive to the community's needs and desires. She asked Joan Rosner, Planning Board Chair to introduce the board.

Ms. Rosner introduced the members present: Thomas Callahan, Ann Griffin, and Mark Cavanaugh. She also noted that Associate Member Helen Fantini is present and serves as the Board's liaison for the comprehensive plan.

Ms. Rosner thanked the members of CPAC for the work they have been doing. She stated that the Board needs the guidance which the plan will offer.

Ms. Rosner noted that she has been on the board over 20 years. During this time, there have been a variety of developments and development focus and problems have

varied. She reviewed some of the land development issues which confront the board including, but not limited to:

- Costs
- Development restraints
- Demands
- Infrastructure requirements
- Development default

Ms. Rosner suggested that the CPAC needs to “think outside of the box” in generating recommendations. This is particularly important when considering the Alvard Street corridor which has several large farms that are potentially to be developed in the near future. She asked several questions which CPAC needs to address:

- Do we really want a viable commercial base?
- Do we really want to take the steps to develop a viable commercial/industrial base?
- Should setbacks be adjusted?
- Should we require set asides for affordable housing?
- Where should require sidewalks/bikeways?
- Do we want to allow Planned Developments (mixed use)?
- Should we exercise control over how things look (Design Review)?

Regarding this latter point, Ms. Rosner noted that when the “Business C” zoning district was originally proposed, the Board included Design Review as part of the amendment. This inclusion was based, in part, on the experiences in Connecticut. However, due to local opposition, this provision was deleted.

Mr. Callahan noted that during the past several years in which he has been on the Board all but one development was multi-family. His experience with these developments led him to conclude that the Town has antiquated standards to apply to such developments. Among the issues he suggested which need to be addressed are:

- Lot coverage
- Buffer requirements
- Visual image

There was also discussion about where development is occurring. It was noted by several people that parcels were overlooked by developers 20 years ago due to wetlands and other considerations. However, as land has become more expensive, those previously overlooked parcels are now the subject of development interests – multi-family and single-family. This has resulted in newer developments being “wedged” into already developed areas. Further, it was noted that it is common that the surrounding areas were developed at varying times, so it is not simply making a

development compatible with one era or style of development, but multi-generational styles of development.

Mr. Harris noted that the Flexible Development provisions are stricter on multi-family developments in districts other than the “Agricultural” district. Thus, there is no incentive for developers to use those provisions if they want to do multi-family; unless it is in an Agricultural district which does not normally allow multi-family housing.

Ms. Johnson inquired as to who is the audience for the plan? And, what is the leverage?

Several members opined that the plan should speak to the community, developers, visitors – a wide array of people. It will provide policy guidance for the Planning Board when acting on development proposals. Further, developers (prospective applicants) will be able to see what are the objectives and development desires of the town and address their plans to meet the Town’s objectives.

The issue of the “quantity of businesses” which the Town has was expressed as a concern. Examples raised included banks and gas stations. Mr. Harris noted that the Town cannot, generally, use a Zoning Bylaw to restrict the quantity of a particular business in a community. He used as an example, the Cumberland Farms proposal which generated substantial community interest.

Other issues and concerns raised by the CPAC members included:

- Preservation of open space
- Preservation of historical buildings
- Sign regulations
- Lack of development in the Falls and in the Willimansett Street corridor
- Protection of the Town Center

Ms. Young noted that the time was 8:25 and thanked the members of the Planning Board for meeting with the CPAC.

### **3. Upcoming Events**

#### **a. Community Gatherings – March 18, 2009 and April 29, 2009**

Ms. Young noted that the Community Gatherings are scheduled for March 18<sup>th</sup> and April 29<sup>th</sup>. The first event is to focus on issue identification while the second event will focus on the plan recommendations.

### **4. Break out meetings for Phase 2 subcommittees**

Ms. Young suggested that the subcommittees can utilize the remaining time to meet. The CPAC members broke up into their individual subcommittees.

## **5. Adjourn**

**Motion** – Ms. Bedard moved and Ms. O’Brien seconded the motion to adjourn. All members present voted in favor of the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 9:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*As Approved*

Richard Harris, Recorder