

PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JULY 24, 2019
TOWN HALL 7:00 P.M.

Present: Lee Hall, Paul Roche, Alternate Member Roland Perreault, Alternate Member Debra Freidus and Land Use Coordinator Polly Redmond

Absent: Chairman Michael Orefice, William Starr, Jon Truskauskas and Alternate Member Michael Rewenko

Acting Chairman Lee Hall called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. All regular members present are seated with Alternate Member R. Perreault seated for M. Orefice and Alternate Member D. Freidus seated for J. Truskauskas

Review and discuss potential updates to the 2010 Plan of Conservation and Development.

P. Roche refers to his written recommended additions to the POCD regarding Airbnb regulations, Bed and Breakfasts, Startup businesses and establishing a Startup Committee in town to work with NWCC's Northwest Startup. Housing needs for an aging population including assistance in travel, meals-on-wheels, senior activities and home health services. Tax relief for seniors, allowing accessory units for seniors in some zones, permitted multi-family developments, allowing assisted living/life-care facilities as a Special Permit and the development of subsidized elderly housing. Additionally, recommendations include encouragement by the town for development of less expensive housing/workforce housing and recommendation that the Zoning Commission research and adopt regulations regarding home-based businesses that are consistent with recommendations he has listed.

P. Roche's final comment for recommended additional wording to the Plan is that Harwinton agrees with the findings and recommendations of the Northwest Connecticut Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which was endorsed by NHCOC in April 2018.

In particular, the following points made by CEDS are particularly appropriate to Harwinton: a) Economic weaknesses include an aging workforce, limited transportation options, limited broadband infrastructure, a lack of housing that is affordable to the workforce, and a perception that there are no jobs; b) zoning regulations should be made friendlier to home-based businesses; c) make Northwest Connecticut, including Harwinton, the nation's "Rural Lab" by developing a comprehensive strategy that invites the world's leading entrepreneurs, academic institutions, and companies to develop their complementary innovations in a rural setting – including attract companies and entrepreneurs interested in testing new agricultural and other technologies, tourism, remote healthcare applications, efficient rural package delivery systems, architectural design and construction materials, and other innovations in a rural setting. This is another task for a new Harwinton Startup Committee; and d) high speed fiber optic broadband is needed throughout Town – this should be coordinated with Northwest Connect (a non-profit corporation formed for two purposes: to orchestrate for our region a universal gigabit data highway using fiber optic transmission lines; and to promote economic and community development made possible by such a network).

LUC Redmond informs Commissioners of the four (4) responses received out of the fifteen (15) requests made to Boards, Commissions and Organizations. Those comments came from the Harwinton Ambulance Association, the Inland Wetlands Commission, the Zoning Commission and the Harwinton Land Conservation Trust.

D. Freidus provides information on Municipal fiber optic broadband networks she received from Northwest ConneCT and also information on what Cornwall and Warren are putting in their Plan of Conservation and Development regarding promoting high speed internet and cell signal coverage.

Comments from members of the public include those from Rosemarie Simko regarding the survey and the timing of it being sent out in the summer when people's lives are very busy. She notes that one of the survey questions was whether people supported regulations that create and promotes a community Town Center and points out that the Harwinton Library had proposed just that and that studies have already been done for a new community center within the library. Stasia Motuzik questions how the survey questions were developed and was informed that the Northwest Hills Council of Governments had helped form some questions and others were taken from neighboring municipalities conducting their own surveys.

Commissioners may hold another Special Meeting on Wednesday, August 7, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. in the town hall only if survey results are received from NHCOC. The survey ends on July 31, 2019. If the results are not in, the Planning Commission will next meet on their regular meeting night, Wednesday, August 14, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.

P. Roche **motioned** to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m., seconded by D. Freidus. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Polly Redmond
Land Use Coordinator

RECEIVED FOR RECORD AT HARWINTON CT
ON 7-25-19 AT 1:55pm
ATTEST TOWN CLERK *Jane f. Bayan*