

## MINUTES

### PLANNING & ZONING PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DESIGN SUBCOMMITTEE, WEDNESDAY, 28 MARCH 2023, 7:00 P.M.

**A. Call to Order** was at 7:01 pm.

**B. Attendees:** J. Castignoli, J. Kader, J. Mortimer, J. Quish / **CONSULTANT:** A. Tecza / **STAFF:** D. Sulkis, M. Greene

**C. Topic for discussion: POCD draft document review with consultant**

Chairman Quish opened the meeting and invited Mr. Tecza to comment. The group immediately responded to the new cover image and were very pleased with it. Mr. Quish noted that current and former subcommittee members had been listed but that further edits were forthcoming.

Mr. Tecza noted that the group's editorial comments were highlighted in red with some deletions, insertions, updates to maps. He called the group's attention to the biggest changes, which he said started on p 32. He and Mr. Sulkis noted inclusion of key findings and recommendations from city's recently adopted 5-year consolidated housing plan. At Mr. Quish's request, Mr. Sulkis provided a refresher on the 5-year plan, saying it was a product of the city's Community Development Department working with a housing consultant and that it is specific to the city of Milford. Mr. Tecza said that almost every community writes such a plan because it must be submitted to apply for block grant funding via the Community Development Block Grant Program. He directed attention to page 24 with its updated housing goal as the city looks at what is to be permitted and how to meet increasing housing demands, such as by adding residential uses to the CDD3 zone. Mr. Sulkis described the zone as an underutilized mix of industrial and commercial uses, and that adding housing was a useful idea. He noted interest at the last meeting in extending the downtown MCDD zone or using much of that zone's text to create new housing regulations near the MCDD. Mr. Quish said he thought that mixed use featuring residential is the best way to monetize old commercial areas, maybe extending east along New Haven Avenue to Gulf Street or Pond Point Avenue and west to the Stop and Shop on Bridgeport Avenue. Mr. Tecza said that idea fits in well with housing goals and suggested more direction toward multifamily projects. Mr. Sulkis noted how wide Bridgeport Avenue is in that area—wide enough to be considered a boulevard, which could readily support dense development. The group noted the presence of a brownfield site that would add extra cleanup costs, further supporting the potential need for density to incentivize developers. Discussion ensued on proximity of the area to the train station with Mr. Tecza advising that Transit-Oriented Development typically extends to about a ½-mile radius around a transportation hub.

Mr. Tecza said the next substantial change was on pp 67-69 where strategies were incorporated from Milford's energy plan aimed at attaining the city's net carbon reduction goal by 2050.

He pointed out the last substantive change on p 73, featuring a goal of optimizing current zoning on mixed residential/commercial uses near the mall. He suggested that more work on adjusting zoning regulations to facilitate appropriately scaled residential uses.

Mr. Tecza asked for any thoughts on the changes and to discuss next steps. Mr. Mortimer expressed satisfaction with the document. Mr. Quish suggested that small edits be sent to Mr. Tecza offline, including any copyedits. Discussion ensued about the best timeline for sharing the document with the full board and the public. Mr. Quish favored giving time to full board members to add input, to discuss their comments and then holding 2 or 3 public hearings to discuss certain sections. Mr. Sulkis suggested having the group do edits, updating the document, then publishing the draft on the website simultaneously with full board review. He said he would research public notification requirements. He and Mr. Tecza agreed that the document is close to being able to submit to the Southern Connecticut Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG). They also suggested that despite the group's hopes, hard work, and enthusiasm, release of the POCD doesn't necessarily get the public excited unless it has a controversial finding. Mr. Tecza advised that when as much work goes into this type of document as the subcommittee has done, people tend to be comfortable with it, and if they are, they may not show up. He noted that many people prefer not to come out to a public gathering, but to submit written comments. He said virtual meetings have become the best way to get people to show up and contribute. Mr. Sulkis noted higher public participation rates at public hearings during the COVID lockdown as further evidence that this is an effective forum to capture feedback. Discussion ensued about the best ways to bring the POCD to public attention, including help from the mayor's office, Economic Director Julie Nash, social media sites such as the historical societies, Downtown Merchants' Association, Chamber of Commerce, Walnut Beach Association, and All In For Milford, with the idea being that once the document is online, other groups can link to it. A special meeting could be called. Mr. Sulkis noted that as chair, Mr. Quish can steer the format for POCD review.

The group decided that the deadline for subcommittee corrections and comments would be the end of business on Tuesday, 4/4, with a full board distribution target of 4/14. Mr. Sulkis noted that he can't attend the regular board meeting on 4/18. He said that once the board has the document, it becomes a full board item. Mr. Quish suggested incorporating both public and board comments by the 4/18 meeting, then at the next regular board on 5/2, making any changes based on that commentary. After the final draft is available, public hearings would involve the full board with the goal of approving the document for publication in July. Mr. Quish

said he favors 3 public information sessions in the context of special meetings of the full board. Mr. Kader wondered if consideration should be made of managing public input during the hearings. Mr. Quish suggested that Mr. Tecza's experience might allow for some questions and answers. Mr. Sulkis said the best course in such a forum is to listen, make notes, but don't make promises. Public feedback can be considered by the full board. Mr. Castignoli agreed with the recommendation to just listen and take notes, then discuss with the group. Mr. Kader noted that speakers tend to be negative. Mr. Quish suggested there might be more balance of both positive and negative feedback in written comments.

**Committee member suggestions/comments:** None.

**D. Approval of Minutes:** Minutes from 3/15/23 were approved unanimously.

**F. Adjournment** was at 7:47 pm.