



# The Planning Commission

Town of New Fairfield

New Fairfield, Connecticut 06812

## Planning Commission Town of New Fairfield Special Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 11, 2024 @ 7:00 pm

Town Hall Conference Room

4 Brush Hill Road, New Fairfield CT

**Commissioners:** Ms. Cynthia Ross-Zweig, Chair  
Mr. Cory Neumann, Vice Chair/Secretary (absent)  
Mr. Ernie Lehman  
Mr. Gary Reetz (absent)  
Mr. Keith Landa

**Alternates:** Ms. Christina McCartney  
Mr. Michael Oliva  
Mr. Dylan White (absent)

**Guests:** Glenn Chalder, Khris Hall, Evan White, First Selectmen Melissa Lindsey, one member of the public

**Call to Order:** 7:00 pm

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Appointments**

Ernie Lehman made a motion to elevate Christina McCartney and Michael Oliva to voting members. Seconded by Keith Landa. **All in favor.**

### New Business

#### **Update on the POCD (Glenn Chalder)**

Glenn Chalder stated that if the POCD document review is completed tonight he will start writing the POCD first draft and get it back to the commission as soon as possible, tentatively April. The process would include a review of the plan, refine the plan, have an informational meeting about the plan, and then have the 65-day notice period. The adoption date is tentative for the fall.

**Town Center** - Development elements of the town. The major recommendations were seeking policies and actions steps to promote and enhance the town center with economic, social, and governmental focal point. Glenn Chalder suggested zoning changes or a comprehensive center study to evaluate the potential of what could be for a town center. First Selectman Lindsey stated that the town is looking into options for a town green. There were two pieces of property purchased behind town hall as the match for the STEEP grant the town is looking into a town green that would include parks, benches, pavilions,

gazebos, grass area and this is in the planning stages to make a viable plan. Keith Landa inquired about the meaning of village concept/district. Glenn Chalder stated that it is a special district that would give the zoning commission power of review to give an aesthetic view and must be recommended in the POCD. Ridgefield, Kent, and Wilton are examples of a village district. As part of the process of the POCD it would need to define the distinct characteristics that the community wishes to be preserved and enhanced. A goal to keep the small-town/rural feel was an overall request on the surveys. Glenn Chalder stated one of the key recommendations to evaluate thru a town center study what is hoped to be achieved to keep the small town feel as the town grows and changes. The first step would be getting a vision by forming a project specific Town Center Study Committee.

**Housing/Residential Development** – Glenn Chalder stated that providing diversity in a housing portfolio may give developers other options to consider. Cynthia Ross-Zweig questioned affordable housing and keeping it within the current landscape of the town. She questioned the viability like what is currently off Sawmill. Evan White stated that the aesthetics and architectural details are part of the Zoning Commission responsibilities. Glenn Chalder stated that the way the statute is set up if the developer proposes a housing development with more than 30% of the unit's deed restricted as affordable half of those units have to be deed restricted at 80% of area median income and the other half of the units at 60% of area median income. Those are levels are challenging to developers. If the developer meets those thresholds, by state law, they do not have to pay attention to local zoning and can come in and propose anything and the burden of proof then shifts to the town. The town would have to prove that there is a threat to health and public safety to approve this. Affordable housing appeals lists are sent out by the state every year. It could take several years to get up and running and on the states list. There are four types of housing that the state defines as affordable housing: assisted housing; tenant rental assistance; CHFA mortgages; and deed restricted. There are certain towns that require accessory dwelling units to be affordable. Keith Landa asked for successful strategies that incentivize a developer to come in and develop. Glenn Chalder stated that the first step is starting a dialogue with the developer. The POCD should advocate for housing diversity. Cynthia Ross-Zweig stated to keep in mind that there are limited open lots available in town. Glenn Chalder stated that affordable housing could be broken down into three levels to make them affordable for more individuals. Cynthia Ross-Zweig stated that wording will be important. Cynthia Ross-Zweig stated a concern for seniors. Ernie Lehman stated an idea of encouraging smaller home owners to sell their homes as deed restricted. First Selectman Lindsey stated she has met with WESCOG and talked about the needs of New Fairfield. Glenn Chalder went over a 2023 list of units in town which showed that New Fairfield has a total of 5635 housing units in town. There were zero units listed as assisted housing, 7 units of tenant rental assistance, 49 households with CHFA or USDA mortgages, and 16 units listed as deed restricted. Glenn Chalder questioned the lead agency for housing diversification and if the affordable housing committee is going to continue. If this committee does not continue should the POCD suggest the need for a committee. Glenn Chalder stated that the POCD could advocate for an organization for housing issues. Cynthia Ross-Zweig stated that if the affordable housing committee does not continue then those responsibilities should be moved to another commission.

### **Business and Economic Development**

A bit of a challenge due to New Fairfield not being on main travel routes. It would be key to get current town residents to shop in town. Cynthia Ross-Zweig stated a need for a grant writer. Glenn Chalder

stated that New Fairfield needs to leverage the amenities that other towns do not have. An example of this would be Candlewood Lake. Give incentives for people to come to New Fairfield to take a walk and use the trails with activities such as geocaching and/or letter boxing. A discussion was held on linking walking trails to current walking trails that could in turn incentivize economic development. Glenn Chalder stated that a connection with Marjorie Trail, sidewalks that connect to town, and possibility to get to the northern part of town. Glenn Chalder stated that the overall goal to promote business and economic development in New Fairfield to provide local employment, availability of goods and services, and enhance the tax base. The lead agency is Economic Development. Strive to capitalize on the potential for recreation based economic development associated with Squantz Pond, Candlewood Lake, Ball Pond and promote tourism through seasonal events, local open space and trails, and natural assets and features. Cynthia Ross-Zweig stated a need to link the town together.

### **Infrastructure – Community Facilities and Services**

The lead agency would be the Board of Selectmen. The goal is to provide community facilities and services to meet community needs and desires. Key action steps would be a comprehensive study to evaluate the needs across all boards and functions. Organize community facility planning could be a recommendation. The POCD should recommend a structure or process to keep the town organized for decades to come. The POCD should recognize the needs that have been expressed with the framework to move forward. These needs and actions need to be a part of the implementation section.

### **Transportation – vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian, transit etc.**

No major accident or problem areas in town. The biggest challenge is pavement management. Public works is doing the best job they can with the funding they have. A pavement management database would be helpful. WESCOG may be able to help with this. The pedestrian system needs to be linked. The bicycle system is a big challenge. Bicycle awareness would be key. Regular transit service is lacking. HART runs to two places in town. The challenge would be ridership and funding. Glenn Chalder will talk with HART.

### **Utility Infrastructure**

Piped utilities such as water, sewage, and storm drainage. Aquarion is improving their systems. Most of the town relies on septic. Glenn Chalder stated that it seems as if it would be in the best interest of New Fairfield to consider the piped sewer system. Cynthia Ross-Zweig stated that due to the ledges in New Fairfield it would be difficult to expand that sewer system and that there has been a study that needs to be looked at. Glenn Chalder stated that the challenge in the town center area are currently water supply and sewage issues. The sewage being offered now is a limited commodity and if it is not tied into now then New Fairfield could lose the use of the sewage system. A decision about sewer will be on hold until the sewer study is released.

Wired and Wireless - advocating for broadband capacity and wireless service in the least visually obtrusive way. Glenn Chalder asked for a map of the existing tower services and should have it back by the end of the week. An option is for the town to install additional towers and get the income from it.

### **Implementation**

Key element to adopting a plan is the that the implementation of the changes has to occur. Glenn Chalder would like to keep the implementation as compact while adequately discussing the issues and

really put focus in on the policies and the action steps with clear responsibility with who is responsible for doing what. Glenn Chalder will give the town a sortable excel spreadsheet to set the stage for moving forward. The lead agency would be the Planning Commission. Glenn Chalder suggested establishing an ad hoc group lead by the Planning Commission that would identify recommendations with the important changes identified and how that can be done.

Glenn Chalder would like to have a future prioritization process that includes all boards and commissions.

**Adjournment**

Christine McCartney made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 pm. Michael Oliva seconded the motion. **All in favor**

Received by email on 03/13/2024 @ 9:51 a.m.  
by Chrystie M. Bontempo, Asst. Town Clerk, New Fairfield