

3 PRIMROSE STREET
NEWTOWN, CT 06470
TEL. (203) 270-4276



TOWN OF NEWTOWN
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, February 15, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.
Multi-Purpose Room#3, The Community Center
8 Simpson Street, Newtown, CT 06470

Present: David Rosen, Gregory Rich, Roy Meadows, Barbara Manville, Peter Schwarz, David Landau, Jill Soderholm

Absent: Connie Widmann

Staff: Rob Sibley, Director of Planning and Land Use, Amy Coyle, Clerk

Mr. Rosen called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Jill Soderholm was seated for Connie Widmann.

1. Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) Update

Thomas Madden, AICP, Associate Principal, BFJ Planning and Michelle Gilman, Planner, BFJ Planning, gave a summary of the Newtown Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) project (See Attached). BFJ will have a Zoom meeting with the P&Z Commission to review and amend the draft data chapters on Thursday, February 29th at 7 p.m. that will be available for public viewing. The draft chapters will be posted online and on Facebook for public comments. Mr. Madden would like residents to submit photos that represent the Town of Newtown.

Mr. Rosen opened the meeting to the public.

John Buccizzi, 57 Queen Street, from the Friends of Newtown Seniors (FONS). Mr. Buccizzi spoke regarding the importance of transportation and housing for seniors and the lack of medical infrastructure, the need for sidewalks for both seniors and young parents, smaller homes for seniors or empty nesters and larger homes are needed for young families. The median age for seniors is considered 55 years old.

Frank Monette, 9 Berry Drive, from the Friends of Newtown Seniors (FONS). Mr. Monette stated seniors age 55+ equals one-third of the Newtown's population and feels the POCD survey applies to multi-generations. Mr. Monette stated as seniors downsize and young families move to available larger homes there is a shortage of smaller homes for seniors. Mr. Monette stated he

*These minutes are subject to the approval of the Commission.
Copies of applications and documents are on file at the Land Use Agency.*

would like Fairfield Hills to be considered for senior housing, medical offices, barrier free sidewalks and effective public transportation.

Ned Simpson, 42 Watkins Drive, Friends of Newtown Seniors (FONS). Mr. Simpson spoke regarding the lack of public transportation for the senior population. Mr. Simpson would like grants for public transportation and to increase medical density. Mr. Simpson stated that currently 26% of Newtown's seniors are in need of public transportation for medical appointments and shopping. Currently, due to lack of medical facilities seniors need to travel to Danbury or Southbury. Increased grants will help seniors become independent and continue to live in the Town of Newtown.

Mr. Rosen Thanked the FONS speakers and closed the public hearing.

4. Director's Report

- Mr. Sibley shared with the Commission available classes, online courses and reviewed funding for the requested 4-hour Commissioner required training.
- Mr. Sibley stated the sub-committee will meet again to continue discussion regarding short terms rentals and ordinances at 6:30 p.m. on March 7th.

3. Approval of Minutes

Regular Meeting of February 1, 2024

Mr. Meadows moved to approve the February 1, 2024. Jill Soderholm seconded. All were in favor. Barbara Manville abstained.

5. Adjournment

Ms. Soderholm requested a motion to adjourn. All members were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

** Please note any amendments or corrections to these minutes will be reflected in the subsequent meeting's minutes when the minutes are approved by the Commission**

*Respectfully submitted,
Amy Coyle, Clerk*

Town of Newtown Plan of Conservation and Development



Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting
February 15, 2024

BFJ Planning

Agenda

- 1 Project Status
- 2 Chapter Review Schedule
- 3 Draft POCD Vision Statement and Goals

Project Status: Work Completed Since Last Meeting

- Stakeholder meetings with Town Commissions
- Public Outreach Summary Report
- Databook Revisions
- POCD Chapter Outlines

Tentative Chapter Drafting and Review Schedule

	February														March																															
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23		
	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
Chapter 1 - Intro and Regional Context																																														
Chapter 2 - Demographics																																														
Chapter 3 - Land Use and Zoning																																														
Chapter 4 - Housing																																														
Chapter 5 - Transportation & Mobility																																														
Chapter 6 - Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability																																														
Chapter 7 - Economic Development																																														
Chapter 8 - Parks, Open Space, and Recreation																																														
Chapter 9 - Community Facilities and Infrastructure																																														
Chapter 10 - Historic and Cultural Resources																																														
Chapter 11 - Future Land Use Plan and Policy Consistency																																														

 Due to P&Z

Emergent Themes

1. **Quality of Parks and Open Spaces:** Residents appreciate the town's natural amenities, indicating a strong connection to local parks and open spaces.
2. **Affordability and Cost of Living:** Challenges related to the affordability of living in Newtown, including taxes and housing costs, are significant concerns.
3. **Transportation and Traffic Issues:** Traffic congestion and the need for improvements in transportation infrastructure are major concerns.
4. **Environmental Conservation:** There's a strong consensus on the importance of protecting open spaces and addressing environmental issues such as loss of vegetation and insufficient protection of natural resources.
5. **Economic Development:** Supporting local entrepreneurship and the development of key areas like Fairfield Hills are seen as crucial for economic growth.

Emergent Themes

6. **Housing Diversity and Availability:** The survey reveals a demand for more diverse housing options, including affordable and senior housing, to meet the community's needs.
7. **Community Services and Facilities:** The majority of respondents feel that current community services and facilities meet their needs, but there are calls for enhancements in certain areas.
8. **Public Safety:** A high level of agreement exists on the perception of safety within the town.
9. **Education and Schools:** While not detailed in the initial summary, schools often emerge as a priority in community surveys, linked to quality of life and future planning.
10. **Sustainability Initiatives:** Interest in sustainability, including the promotion of green building standards and renewable energy use, reflects a forward-looking

Draft Vision Statement

2014: The goal of the Town of Newtown is to protect and enhance its picturesque, rural, historic New England setting and attributes. The architecture and landscaping of all types of properties will be designed to protect the image of a rural and historic town. Over the next ten years various town agencies will work in concert to maintain a suitable variety of homes for its citizens taking into account varying lifestyles and economic capabilities while providing and developing equal recreational activities and facilities for all age groups. We will work together as a town to promote and protect open space, farmland and trails throughout the town always maintaining an environmentally active position protecting our aquifers, wetlands and other ecologically sensitive areas. Education for Newtown's children will continue to excel in quality and efficiency. Newtown will succeed in attracting commercial businesses at a rate equal to its growth and the design of the town's roads and traffic patterns will enhance business development while minimizing traffic congestion for the residents. Fairfield Hills will evolve to a vibrant area that provides facilities to serve municipal government, recreational activities, community and cultural arts, and commercial activities while still maintaining open space.

Proposed: Newtown is committed to promoting environmental conservation, sustainable developed development, and community connectivity; this future includes interconnected trails and open spaces, strengthened safeguards for natural habitats and resources, upgraded transportation networks to enhance safety and reduce congestion, the provision of diverse housing options, and the development of community hubs like Fairfield Hills; the Town will foster economic growth through thoughtful redevelopment of existing areas while maintaining its historic charm and ecological integrity.

Draft POCD Goals: Housing

Existing (2014) Goals:

- Strive for a more balanced supply of housing types that will accommodate the housing needs of Newtown residents and those working in Newtown.
- Manage residential development to enhance Newtown's present community character.

Proposed Goals:

- Expand options for senior housing to support residents aging in place.
- Encourage a more diverse supply of housing types to accommodate the housing needs of young adults and municipal employees.
- Investigate options to provide additional emergency housing for Newtown residents.

Draft POCD Goals: Transportation & Mobility

Existing (2014) Goals:

- Achieve the appropriate functional classification of State roads in Newtown.
- Alleviate areas of congestion and address safety issues.
- Improve opportunities for pedestrian circulation.
- Initiate “fixed route” bus service in Newtown on a trial basis.
- Maximize rail mobility opportunities.

Proposed Goals:

- Alleviate traffic congestion.
- Continue investment in road maintenance and sidewalk installation throughout Newtown.
- Review measures to alleviate congestion and enhance road safety for all users.
- Investigate technology upgrades to facilitate roadway efficiency and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.
- Work with Housatonic Area Regional Transit to explore potential opportunities to expand SweetHART bus in Newtown.

Draft POCD Goals: Natural Resources

Existing (2014) Goals:

- Continue to preserve and protect Inland Wetlands and Watercourses from potential sources of contamination or development.
- Achieve and protect high water quality classifications throughout Newtown.
- Regulate development and storm water management activities within flood hazard areas to protect life and property and to preserve the natural storm retention functions of the watershed.
- Protect prime agricultural land resources and promote agricultural uses.
- Conserve and protect natural systems and their functions in order to maintain indigenous wildlife and plant life.

Proposed Goals:

- Continue to preserve and protect Inland Wetlands and Watercourses from potential sources of contamination or development.
- Regulate development and storm water management activities within flood hazard areas to protect life and property and to preserve the natural storm retention functions of the watershed.
- Protect aquifers and safeguard high water drinking quality.
- Explore strategies to expand and accelerate renewable energy opportunities in Newtown.
- Improve power grid reliability.

Draft POCD Goals: Economic Development

Existing (2014) Goals:

- Grow Newtown's commercial property tax base at a rate at least equal to the Town's growth in its residential tax base.
- Increase the inventory of viable economic development sites.
- Prioritize the clean-up and re-use of Newtown's brownfield sites.
- Facilitate the maintenance and development of agricultural businesses in scale with Newtown.

Proposed Goals:

- Prioritize redevelopment of vacant, urbanized sites.
- Expand opportunity for economic activity at Fairfield Hills.
- Consider strategies to support existing businesses and attract new commercial activity in Newtown.

Draft POCD Goals: Parks, Open Space, and Recreation

Existing (2014) Goals:

- Achieve the preservation and protection of Newtown's key natural resource features.
- Newtown will achieve or exceed the State's goal for 21% open space.
- Enhance opportunities for passive recreation.

Proposed Goals:

- Achieve or exceed the State's goal for 21% open space.
- Improve trail connections throughout Town.
- Increase opportunities for additional recreational activities.
- Maintain investment in recreational facilities.

Draft POCD Goals: Community Facilities

Existing (2014) Goals:

- Strive for a more organized and efficient approach for municipal office buildings.
- Define long-range school facility requirements.
- Maintain and support recreational facilities for townspeople of all ages.
- Provide sufficient space for the operations of the Newtown Senior Center.
- Maintain the capacity of Newtown's public sewer system.
- Continue to provide for a high level of police, fire and emergency services.

Proposed Goals:

- Prioritize ongoing investment in critical emergency services.
- Examine approaches to improve coordination and information sharing between municipal organizations and services that serve Newtown.
- Maintain and support recreational facilities for townspeople of all ages.
- Maintain the capacity of Newtown's public sewer system.

Draft POCD Goals: Historic and Cultural Resources

Existing (2014) Goals:

- Preserve Newtown's historic sites and archeological resources.

Proposed Goals:

- Continue to protect and preserve historic properties in Newtown.
- Apply to become a Certified Local Government.

Draft POCD Goals: Land Use

Existing (2014) Goals:

- Preserve the mixed-use functions and enhance the visual appearance of Newtown's commercial corridors and Villages.
- Protect environmentally sensitive areas along with infill development along Newtown's commercial corridors and the redevelopment of brownfield and under-utilized properties.

Proposed Goals:

- Promote economic activity in mixed-use districts.
- Preserve Newtown's existing community character while identifying opportunities for contextual infill development.

Thank You!

