

**BOLTON PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION**  
**SPECIAL MEETING**  
**7:00 PM, Wednesday, March 25, 2015**  
**BOLTON TOWN HALL, 222 BOLTON CENTER ROAD**

**Minutes & Motions**

**Members Present:** Chairman Eric Luntta, Arlene Fiano, Nancy Silverstein (alternate), Christopher Davey (alternate seated for Jeff Scala until he arrived at 7:30pm), Carl Preuss, Adam Teller, James Cropley, Neal Kerr (alternate seated for Thomas Manning until he arrived at 7:15pm), Thomas Manning (7:15) and Jeff Scala (7:30)

**Staff Present:** Patrice Carson, AICP, Director of Community Development, Sarah Benitez, Recording Secretary

**Others Present:** Glenn Chalder, Planimetrics, Robert Morra, First Selectman

**1. Call to Order:** Chairman Eric Luntta called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

**2. DISCUSSION: Plan of Conservation and Development**

G. Chalder introduced POCD Booklet #5, "**Possible Development Strategies for Bolton**". He said Bolton has no universally identifiable central point, and recommended greater organization and structure. Discussion followed on distinctions between business, commercial, and mixed use zoning along Route 44, and the transitional zones in the Route 44 study. The PZC agreed to incorporate the Bolton Center Study into the POCD provided it was only for reference.

G. Chalder raised a village district option in Bolton Center, noting the land is town-owned and exempt from zoning. A. Teller said even if a village district restricted residential building changes, it would be ineffective if it did not equally apply to town buildings and land. C. Preuss mentioned the state has say about the Town Hall and Rose Farm through the historical society. Point #2 will be replaced with a statement that the PZC believes the town center and buildings should meet village district criteria, but does not see the need to establish one at this time.

In reference to C. Preuss' point, A. Teller said the concern is less with private adherence to the town aesthetic than that of public buildings and land. He wanted public input on what is built for public use. He said going solely through the Board of Selectmen or Building Commission with little public input might result in public disapproval, as with the BHS renovation. G. Chalder said the municipality zoning exemption is a challenge. A. Teller said it might be possible to use PZC jurisdiction to recommend (or not) a particular plan of development due to aesthetic considerations per POCD. C. Davey said that discussion would be relevant after the public hearing next week. G. Chalder said with a 10-year POCD viability in mind, even a mention of design and aesthetics would be good precedence for the future.

**Industrial and Business Zoning**

G. Chalder said Bolton's industrial and business zoning is another issue, as it is unclear in motivation, organization, or coherence of location. Discussion followed on zoning configurations in other towns. A. Teller raised the possibility of trading open space and business development areas within the Route 6 project area in accordance with the state's standards. Discussion followed on land property options for transfer. State land could be swapped for state land as has been done in Tolland. A. Fiano suggested the PZC develop a list of necessary steps and revisit it. G. Chalder will develop a strategy considering the sewer service area, the lake residential area, and general business zoning.

C. Preuss asked how other towns develop with aquifer protection zones. G. Chalder said the zones are essentially for well-head protection and do affect development. He said they can speak to other towns about their experience, but he expects that development would have been benign, such as low impact offices. J. Scala raised the possibility of moving businesses to become less non-conforming, making new regulations more desirable. The issue was tabled for future discussion.

### **Neighborhood Business Zones (NBZ)**

G. Chalder said the NBZ concern is that their diffuse development will not contribute to a coherent, critical mass that encourages business. A. Teller explained the NBZ aim had been to improve business prospects, not restrict. Discussion followed on the possibility of West Street as a site for a critical mass of business development and the business history of the area. A. Teller said some of the zoning configurations are historical and likely candidates to revisit, but the PZC needs to confirm acceptability of current business zones with the town so they don't become contested areas later.

J. Scala said the PZC does not want to restrict residential areas to the point of preventing development, as long as the development remains low-impact, which was echoed by several members. P. Carson suggested outlining property zones for the Commission's reference. N. Kerr considered NBZs very restrictive and was concerned they give Bolton a business-unfriendly reputation.

### **Standards in Business Zones**

G. Chalder said that even business zones standards are not business-friendly, due to the amount of exceptions and details (such as special permits) and their unpredictability to a possible developer. A. Teller explained the special permits were written in because the PZC did not have design regulation at the time. G. Chalder suggested reducing retail distinctions. E. Luntta cited possible community disapproval as a reason to be selective. T. Manning explained that only listing approved business types freed the PZC from the obligation to accept an unwanted business. G. Chalder said the standards need to be better expressed in any case.

N. Kerr said Bolton needs to have a better likelihood for profit in order to attract business in the first place. J. Scala suggested that, since the PZC and the town seem to lean towards small business, Bolton needs to be specifically attractive to that type. He gave tax abatements as an example, given on a case by case basis. A. Teller emphasized the need to offer tax abatement on a fair basis. G. Chalder said the PZC can recommend that the BoS revisit their grounds for tax abatement.

## Miscellaneous Topics

The Commission affirmed current regulations and expressed interest in heritage tourism. G. Chalder will do a case study with other towns, noting that bringing people from Routes 6 and 44 into Bolton Center would go towards a critical mass. C. Davey reported on a list he developed identifying land properties for the grand list, among which are two vacant industrial zone parcels, and 8 neighborhood commercial areas. Depending on degree of development areas in those areas, a sizeable amount could be added to the grand list, which might help mitigate the town's tax increase or debt. R. Morra added that under-developed properties (not on the list) could also have potential. G. Chalder said it would be relevant for the PZC to discuss which vacant lots were most suitable for development. C. Davey suggested that the PZC look at the possibility of combining land, ways to work with owners, and recruit potential clients; as well as consider assessment data to review tax revenue. T. Manning said data could also be used by the BoS in considering tax abatement grounds. R. Morra cautioned that regardless of town attractiveness, the current economy is an obstacle to development statewide, so not many businesses are looking.

A. Fiano said we still need a lot of interest in Bolton as a location for the scenario of more business friendly zoning to succeed. E. Luntta noted that business has to be supported by the community, not just people in transit through town. A. Fiano said meeting points in town seem to be recreational (trails, the lake), and suggested that could be Bolton's niche. G. Chalder added Bolton Ice Palace. A. Teller said that business ought to add to community character and bring something to the community, so targeting certain types of business would be effective. N. Kerr said if Bolton targets business too restrictively, it will not be successful and businesses have to want to come in general.

Discussion will continue on the remainder of the booklet at next month's meeting.

3. **Public Comment:** Rod Fournier of Hanover Farms Road suggested that the Commission mainly focus on developing business zones, while keeping mixed use and residential areas in its back pocket.
4. **Correspondence:** Letters from Jennifer & Bill Viot and Christina Morra-Tiu & Vincent Tiu asking the PZC to encourage business development were received.
5. **Adjournment:** J. Scala motioned to adjourn. T. Manning seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Benitez  
Recording Secretary

Please see minutes of subsequent meetings for approval of these minutes and any corrections hereto.