

BOLTON PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING
7:00 PM, Wednesday, October 21, 2015
Bolton Center School, 108 Notch Road

Members Present: Chairman Eric Luntta, Jeffrey Scala, Carl Preuss, Adam Teller, Nancy Silverstein (alternate seated for Arlene Fiano), Christopher Davey (alternate seated for James Cropley), and Neal Kerr (alternate seated for Thomas Manning)

Members Excused: Arlene Fiano, Thomas Manning, James Cropley

Staff Present: Patrice Carson, AICP, Director of Community Development, Glen Chalder, Robert Morra, First Selectman, Gwen Marrion and Sandra Pierog, Selectmen, Sarah Benitez, Recording Secretary

Others Present: Several members of the public.

Chairman Eric Luntta opened the public hearing opened at 7:12 p.m. Patrice Carson read the notice of public hearing.

Glen Chalder gave an overview of the POCD draft.

Correspondence: A letter was received from CRCOG reporting they had reviewed the POCD and found no conflict or negative impact on the area, and they commended the draft. A letter was received from R. Morra on behalf of the BOS with comments and a commendation on the overall plan as well.

PZC Comments and Questions:

None.

Public Comments and Questions:

Gwen Marrion, 38 Maple Valley Road, said she was appearing as a resident and not as a BOS member. She presented a letter with notes on the draft. She thanked the Commission for their efforts. She said she would prefer to see stronger language stating PZC support for recommendations included in the plan. She believed the highest preservation priority should be areas easy to develop, such as farmland, not ones with natural restraints to prevent development.

Jim Adams, 48 Stonehedge Lane, said he agreed with improving pedestrian and cycling safety and access in town. He thought the Route 44 area was critical and supported the Multi-use Path.

Sandra Pierog, 37 Brandy Street, said she thought the policies and steps became nebulous where responsible parties were only identified as "town." She said the designation was too broad. She also disagreed with the phrase "Bolton may have more business zones than it needs" and said that no language that would deter business should be in the POCD. While the POCD says that senior housing is appropriate for Bolton Center, she was not sure if that was *only* place. She would rather it say that senior housing may be appropriate in any portion of Bolton where the location could support septic and

water needs. She also said that an implementation committee would be ineffective without legislative power, and thought a group meeting with the Board of Selectmen and any other relevant board(s) would be more fitting.

Richard Hayes, 139 Vernon Road, thought the POCD was too specific and should consist of more general ideas. He did not think it was good to include ideas if it was unsure that they could work, such as some of the concept studies referenced in the POCD. He said there were not enough studies done to support their implementation, and there was no DOT review. He recommended the BOS check the facts and figures. He also echoed S. Pierog that the POCD should be portray a town open to business and said that Bolton is at a critical juncture with its tax burden. He did note that he was referring to the March 25th, 2015 draft rather than the current one.

R. Morra, 15 Tinker Pond Road, also disagreed with the phrase “Bolton may have more business zones than it needs.”

N. Kerr explained that the meaning of that sentence was misunderstood. The intent was to encourage consolidation and limit variation of business zones, in order to make development simpler. The PZC would amend the language to make it clearer. S. Pierog and R. Hayes agreed that if the phrase was changed to better reflect the meaning they would have no issue with it.

R. Morra thought that Notch Pond should be noted under areas of conservation. He said it was an important place and they are working with the town to bring it back to a fishing pond.

G. Chalder took comments on all notes raised. As nothing required direct response, he recommended the PZC close the hearing. He would assemble the suggested revisions into a document with their respective pagination and bring it to the PZC for a vote.

A. Teller asked if there were any areas where town staff might need PZC guidance or input. He referred to S. Pierog’s comment on matrices of responsibility, explaining that the PZC had settled on the present approach because they felt it would be presumptuous to assign boards of elected officials, who already have their own charges. P. Carson agreed and said “the town” was meant to put responsibility on all town boards and commissions. At many points it was used to replace a list that was getting too long, and also so as not to overlook any boards/commissions that would want to be included. She also agreed with reworking language on business land zones to clarify the intent, which was not to restrict available land zone use but to simplify restrictions and zoning.

Regarding specificity on Routes 6 and 44 and endorsement of any certain concept or project, A. Teller thought that where the PZC has read the studies and likes them, they should endorse them, but they are included as context and concepts rather to recommend implementation. He said he would be interested to know where R. Hayes thought (as a developer) there were areas in town that more attract business with more or less restrictive language. R. Hayes said that architectural guidelines are not always beneficial and he did not think it wise to adopt a concept that might not be attainable. He thought the Bolton Crossroads study in particular was not vetted thoroughly. A. Teller replied that the PZC thought it better to include such studies than to leave them out, as it would at least allow the future possibility of

pursuing them should the town so choose. R. Hayes also said that he thought there should be better ways to process land use applications more efficiently.

J. Scala said the PZC had had a lengthy discussion on the Crossroads concept and explained that part of the motivation for its inclusion was the potential for a land swap with the state DOT, which is not in the plan.

E. Luntta reminded the public that the POCD was not regulatory but advisory, to showcase possibilities and review ideas.

R. Hayes said that his concern over specificity was that the POCD would be the first document developers would refer to and then might disregard Bolton immediately.

Peter Van Dine, 81 Vernon Road, said he thought responsibility should be assigned more specifically but agreed with A. Teller's point that the items were not necessarily things the PZC has power to do or assign to others. He suggested the phrase "town under direction of BOS." He also asked if they thought the statement that Bolton could take advantage of the Heritage Farm for corporate meetings, weddings, seminars, etc., was going too far. The PZC asked S. Pierog to respond.

S. Pierog said that the Heritage Commission gets frequent requests from residents and nonresidents for events that they currently have to turn down. The building cannot support that at the present time but there is demand. She said 25-75 people would be enough for Bolton's size. It would be possible to support the Farm as such a venue if the town is willing to spend the money, and it would be in the future rather than soon. The proposed bond would do some to bring the barn to a usable state, but not to that extent.

P. Van Dine asked if it was safe to assume that no changes to the draft plan other than those discussed at the hearing would be made.

P. Carson said that once the hearing was closed, there would be no changes (beyond simple edits such as for clarity and grammar) other than raised during the hearing.

C. Davey addressed Gwen's point on active language to support recommendation of studies. He said that in cases where the PZC elected to use a word like "consider," it was done intentionally, whether because it would involve much further discussion than supportable by the POCD process, or because they did not have a consensus.

P. Carson said the intent is for the POCD to contain information such as the studies so the town can point to the document if such a concept comes up as a possibility and say there is a precedent for its consideration.

E. Luntta pointed out also that the POCD is a 10-year document rather than a permanent commitment. In those ten years, the town may change and the document can be changed to reflect the town's preferences.

A. Teller moved to close the hearing. N. Silverstein seconded. Motion carried 6:0:0.

E. Luntta thanked the public for their attendance and comments.

J. Scala moved to adjourn. C. Davey seconded. Adjournment was at 8:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Benitez, Recording Secretary

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