

Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee MINUTES

**The Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee held a Meeting on February 26, 2019
In the Parks & Rec meeting room, 3 Main Street, Newtown CT 06470**

These minutes are subject to approval at the next meeting.

Present: Deborra Zukowski, Neil Chaudhary, Gary MacRae, Bob Bowen, Doug Smith, Robert Rau

Absent: Chandravir Ahuja, Bryan Roth, Rob Sherwood, Jeffery Jorgensen

Public Attendance: Ross Carley

Also Present: Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

Public Participation

None

Approval of Minutes

Chair Deb Zukowski asked for an approval of the minutes.

Wednesday, January 9th:

Neil Chaudhary motioned to approve the minutes from January 9, 2019. Doug Smith seconded the motion.

Motion passed with all in favor.

Deb recognized that Jeff Jorgensen had requested the January 9th minutes be updated to note the details of conversations during the meeting but he had not yet provided this additional information.

Wednesday, February 13th:

Bob Rau motioned to approve the minutes from February 13, 2019. Gary MacRae seconded the motion.

Motion passed with all in favor. – Neil abstained.

Communications

Deb began by reading an email from Mr. Joe Draper in which he gives a conceptual proposal for the Fairfield Hills Campus. (See attachment A.) Mr. Draper grew up in Newtown and although he now lives in Fairfield, has a weekend/summer residence next to his parents in Newtown. His proposal is to include the possibility of swapping development rights as part of leasing land at Fairfield Hills. He continued to describe opportunities the campus presents that would allow housing for young people just starting out, for those looking to downsize and for seniors and others looking to continue living part-time in Newtown, while leaving the aesthetics that make the campus inviting. The aim of the proposal would be to provide a way to use Fairfield Hills to help conserve other areas in Newtown. Deb read her response to the group in which she recommends to Mr. Draper that she, Neil and Mr. Rosenthal meet to discuss this further. She also explains in her reply that this discussion may be of

interest to the committee at a high level, but is out of scope at a detail level. Deb then told everyone that Neil, Dan Rosenthal, and she met with Joe Draper. Neil noted the “net zero” impact in development as another property in town would remain preserved. Deb added that this type of plan allows to maintain the ecological value of other parts of town. The group discussed further, and Neil clarified that in this proposal the Town would lease property in another part of Newtown from the owner, and the owner would lease property on the Fairfield Hills campus from Town.

New Business

Community Survey Preparation:

Deb reminded members of the 2011 survey she had emailed and ask that the group review the questions. In Bryan Roth’s absence, Deb told the Committee that Bryan said, to a point that was made last meeting, it is important to develop questions to point to a more defined answer. She gave examples provide by Bryan that drove to more detailed information.

Deb told the group that Neil would be developing the survey and then turned the meeting over to him. Neil explained that when he puts together surveys they are short and to the point. He agreed with Bryan’s suggestions, but highlighted the need to be brief. His general recommendation is to make the new survey shorter than the original. Neil would like to see more of a scale style, but the group can discuss this later as the survey is being put together. Many questions in the prior survey are no longer relevant, such as questions that relate to environmental concerns which fall under zoning. Some questions were not realistic and Neil recommended to avoid the highly improbable.

The group went through the previous survey and reviewed question by question. They determined that population growth was not as relevant as it was during the 2011 survey. Deb expressed that she felt the first 4 questions are generally instructive to ensure people understood conversations happening in the community at the time. Ross told the group that most concepts presented recently have been 55 and over. Neil said that he did not believe they should be telling the developer what to do. It is the developer’s decision to determine what would give them the greatest benefit. Neil continued to explain that the data must be carefully analyzed to fairly represent what the people say.

The group discussed:

- Having a brief opening text about what will be asked in the survey.
- Providing relevant information to educate people taking the survey.
- The need to have a clear and concise survey.
- Grouping the questions by sections
- How the questions should flow.
- If the answer format should be yes/no or a scale (agree, strongly agree, etc.)
- Not forcing or driving answers

Deb said that the meat of the survey begins at question 7. The group continued to review the questions and gave examples of how they could be re-written. Deb suggested the survey cover what should be done with the buildings and if there are enough recreational spaces on campus. In regards to commercialization she described 3 levels: 1) Fairfield Hills should be an economic driver for the whole town, 2) Fairfield Hills should cover its own costs, or 3) Fairfield Hills commercialization should be at the pleasure of the visitors who are there. The group continued to discuss possibilities for the buildings and how questions regarding this topic should be written.

Deb explained the need to have a head on discussion about the buildings. People need to understand the related costs.

Neil asked that Committee members give him questions that they would like to see in the survey. Deb asked that a first draft of the survey be completed by the Monday prior to the next meeting. This first draft will be reviewed and updated in the Wednesday (3/13) meeting. Deb asked all members to read through the survey beginning at question 7 and mark what they think are interesting questions, and what they think are obsolete. Deb noted all communications go to Neil, and to expect that the next meeting will run long.

Liaison Reports

Liaisons did not have anything new to report.

Public Participation

Ross asked members to keep an open mind and explained that there is a lot of activity.

Discussion of Future Agenda Items

Deb reminded members that the Agenda New Business will become Old Business, and the agenda will remain the same.

Adjournment:

With no further business, Gary made a motion to adjourn. Doug seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk.*



Attachment A

Kimberly Chiappetta <kimberly.chiappetta@newtown-ct.gov>

For Communications: Floating an idea for Fairfield Hills

Deborra Zukowski <debz.newtown.ct@gmail.com>
To: Kimberly Chiappetta <kimberly.chiappetta@newtown-ct.gov>

Tue, Feb 26, 2019 at 4:21 PM

I will be adding this as part of our communications item on the agenda.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: JoeDraper <joseph.t.draper@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Feb 4, 2019 at 2:23 PM
Subject: Re: Floating an idea for Fairfield Hills
To: Deborra Zukowski <debz.newtown.ct@gmail.com>
Cc: Neil Chaudhary <neilffh@4newtown.com>

Sure! That sounds like the right steps.

For scheduling I'm free most days between 9am and 1pm. I have to be back in Fairfield by 2:30 most days as my 4 kids are still in elementary school here.

Thanks. Joe

Sent from my iPhone

On Feb 4, 2019, at 1:28 PM, Deborra Zukowski <debz.newtown.ct@gmail.com> wrote:

Greetings,

I recommend our discussion include Neil Chaudhary, vice-chair of the FFH Master Plan Review Committee - CC'd above, and Dan Rosenthal. My sense is that the discussion will be of interest to the Committee at a very high level but also be out of scope at a more detailed level. By including Dan, the conversation can be more substantial and so help Neil and I more fully understand the high-level implications for our survey and consequently our master plan update recommendations.

If you agree, I'd like to see if Dan's office could coordinate the meeting time and place.

Deb

PS. For full disclosure - I live across from the property at the top of Castle Hill.

On Thu, Jan 24, 2019 at 10:28 AM JoeDraper <joseph.t.draper@gmail.com> wrote:

Thank you for the reply. I've been noodling this for several years. I met with Mr Clark about it maybe 2 years ago.

I think it's first about discussing it with you. The risk is always the loud minority resisting before a proper hearing. So what if like is to meet and tell you what I think are the toughest questions and answers. Then fire away.

Dan likes the idea a lot. It has positive implications for preservation and development at the same time.

So when you get back shoot me an email and we can meet for a preliminary discussion. That work ok?

Thanks. Joe

Sent from my iPhone

On Jan 24, 2019, at 10:08 AM, Deborra Zukowski <debz.newtown.ct@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Mr Draper,

Thank you for a very interesting letter. I need time to better comprehend all opportunities and implications of your suggestions. Will be away until Feb 1, but will answer more fully once I get back.

It sounds very interesting, though decision making may be beyond the scope of the Master Plan Review Committee. I do agree that coffee would be good. My question right now is who else should be there.

My best to you and your family,
Deborra Zukowski

On Thu, Jan 24, 2019 at 9:50 AM JoeDraper <joseph.t.draper@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Ms Zukowski.

I saw your name as the head of the Fairfield Hills master planning commission and wanted to throw an idea your way.

About 6 years ago I purchased the large property (about 133 acres) at the top of Castle Hill Road from the Diocese of Bridgeport. My hope is to keep this property preserved if at all possible.

By way of background I grew up in Newtown and lived largely on Deep Brook Road behind Dickinson Town Park. My father still owns the land between the park and Valley View Road.

While I live full time in Fairfield I maintain a residence on Taunton Lake next to my parents and spend all summer and many weekends there.

Several years ago I floated an idea past George Benson and a few others about considering a land swap where I would have development rights at FFH and give up those same rights at Castle Hill. I've similarly floated this to Dan Rosenthal.

The type of housing and mixed use opportunity that FFH presents matches much of what people now look for terms of community and convenience. Many residents may want to downsize or maintain a part time home and give up the burden of home ownership.

FFH has always struck me as an unpainted Normal Rockwell waiting for its opportunity. I am not a developer but I do see the need and potential of invigorating FFH and equally maintaining the open space and hilltops that one celebrates while walking around on the FFH trails.

The idea is to leverage FFH to move development that scars the hills and fields of all our neighboring towns and create something special in the center. Newtown is uniquely positioned to do so.

I would see this as entirely brownfield. The existing ball fields and open space is very much part of the attraction.

I know my father is also interested in preserving his 50+ acres that are contiguous to the park which leads to many potential future uses of recreation.

I have been following the plans for FFH for years. I've read through your most recent minutes and the Bee articles on recent meetings. Regretfully work and raising 4 elementary school age children monopolizes most of my day so I have not been able to attend meetings in person.

I would be delighted to share a coffee with you if you had time. Most days with a bit of planning I'm happy to be in Newtown mid mornings. Or you're welcome to call anytime! 1212-203-7809.

If this is not of interest I fully understand. Nothing ventured nothing gained.

Best regards.

Joseph Draper
[39 Taunton Lake Road Newtown](#)
50 Sunnieholme Drive, Fairfield

Sent from my iPhone