



## TOWN OF NEWTOWN

### Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee MINUTES

**The Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee held a Meeting on September 25, 2018  
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, Gary MacRae, Neil Chaudhary, Rob Sherwood, Robert Rau

**Absent:** Doug Smith, Bryan Roth, Chandravir Ahuja, Jeffery Jorgensen, Bob Bowen

**Public Attendance:** Ross Carley – Chairman of the FHA

**Also Present:** George Benson – Director of Planning, Kim Chiappetta - clerk

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m.

Chair Deborra Zukowski began the meeting by noting that there was not a quorum so there would be no voting in the meeting.

**Public Participation:** none

#### **Approval of Minutes**

Acceptance of the minutes was tabled until next meeting due to lack of quorum.

#### **Communications**

Deb shared with the Committee that she spoke with First Selectman, Dan Rosenthal, regarding the lack of a budget for the Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee. Mr. Rosenthal said there should be no problem with getting the money necessary to advertise a public meeting. Also, any printing that is required can be done at the Municipal Center.

Deb then reminded members of the historical maps emailed to Committee members for informational purposes and asked that they be attached to the minutes. The first was a topographical map from 1895 and the second was an aerial photo from 1934 showing the development of the Fairfield Hills State Hospital.

Next, Deb noted that she emailed the final version of "Rules of the 2018 Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee" and asked that they be attached to the minutes.

#### **New Business**

Deb introduced George Benson, Director of Planning, who was invited to the meeting to share his knowledge of the campus and its zoning.

#### **Fairfield Hills Adaptive Reuse Zone:**

Mr. Benson began by clarifying that the Fairfield Hills Adaptive Reuse Zone is not a design district, but a re-use zone. The original intent was to reuse as many of the buildings as possible. The original master plan contained a list of the buildings identifying which could be saved and which would be demolished. Included in this was a

budget where there was an expectation to obtain revenue for the Town from the Fairfield Hills campus. As time went on it was found that there was very little reuse options for the buildings. Buildings contained small, unusable rooms and were too large for re-use. The cost of demo or clean-up was too much for private investors. The Fairfield Hills Adaptive Re-use Zone is part of the zoning regulations and is separate from the Master Plan. The district and Master Plan are controlled by the Planning & Zoning Commission, and anything done in the Master Plan Review must be brought before them for review.

The zone has changed since the original version which allowed residential, 55 & older units and multi-family. It now no longer contains any residential. The first amendment (re-write) suggested mixed use be allowed on campus, which was a result of a survey done for the town. Deb noted that she had a version of the document (amendment) as was written on May 31<sup>st</sup> which contains language stating that although this Master Plan does not allow residential in any form, it also understands that not even allowing people to talk about it would not necessarily be a benefit to the community. This language was replaced stating that residential was not allowed in the zoning regulations. This change made by Planning & Zoning to the May 31<sup>st</sup> version was not noted in the changes in beginning of the document. George added that although he did not recall this in the documentation he did recall discussions where the majority of people agreed it should be included as a recommendation. George explained that Planning & Zoning takes the recommendation into consideration and has the ability to make changes. Bob Rau asked what were the arguments regarding housing. George provided an example where Claris Construction proposed a project where 3 buildings would have been demolished and 3 new buildings would have been built containing apartments above commercial. He found this proposal was not liked in public hearings. Bob asked that shouldn't the argument be that Fairfield Hills was purchased to benefit the citizens and the first refusal of use should be to benefit the citizens. George replied that it has been forgotten that the original intent of the Town was to make the money back. Neil Chaudhary asked if it is typical for people to reside on town owned land. George said he was not certain. Ross added that when former First Selectman Julia Wasserman negotiated the sale on behalf of the Town, she testified that the property was intended for some mixed use and that was part of the negotiation. George added that some people wanted the campus as park land which would have been very costly, and added that a large part of the property has been made park land and gave the example of High Meadow. If the property is developed to make some tax income, then you have to look at the fact that developers will not just want to construct commercial buildings. Ross added that every developer that came before the Fairfield Hills Authority (FHA) has proposed apartments over commercial. Rob interjected asking where was the proposed location of 3 buildings that would have been taken down and did that have an effect on the feelings of people. George said the buildings were Shelton, Woodbury & Newtown. Deb recalled that there was a developer who wanted to turn Cochran into apartments. George said that it was the best building to lend itself to apartments as it is one of the newer buildings on campus. George expressed that he doesn't think there should be large apartments, but mixed use should be encouraged. He added that the Master Plan was too defined regarding buildings, and that the campus is not a normal concept for developer.

Deb said that Lila Dean had wanted language in the updated plan recommending that buildings be largely coincident with other buildings. Deb asked if focus is still to replace a demolished building use the same basic footprints. George clarified that the concept was originally to save as many buildings as possible and to build where the prior buildings existed. Today there is not many locations where a building can be constructed without taking another building down. Deb asked if the documented 10% was regarding the building foot print, and George confirmed this is correct. George recapped that 9 large buildings have been removed that equals a total of 187,700 square feet foot print. The Town has built 134,000 square feet with the NYA, Ambulance Garage and Community Center. The Town's goal was to not have any more impervious surface than the campus had initially. The zoning regulations allow from 10% - 20% including buildings, parking lots and roads. The original campus was around 12% impervious surface, and is now at 11.7%. Deb asked if the trail counts as impervious surface, and George replied no.

Deb noted that there is an opportunity to almost double the impervious surface on the campus, and George explained that the storm water system currently in place was designed for the original impervious surface and that going over that amount would require an increase in the storm water system. He then described how the land was originally a large bowl where the infrastructure was installed and then the grounds were filled in resulting in some of the infrastructure 20 – 30 feet down. Rob recommended local mitigation for new construction and George explained that this was done for the NYA, however there are very few areas that allow retrofitting. Rob asked if there were regulations on the campus in regards to the height of the buildings. Deb explained that there is language that recommends not allowing higher than 3 stories. The group then discussed building heights.

Neil asked aside from housing, are there any current rules that are hindrances and was there anything refused because the proposal was not consistent with the master plan? George and Ross did not recall any time where this was the case. George explained that the uses are fairly broad in the zoning regulations. The main consideration should be the concept of what people want Fairfield Hills to become. The plan should be fluid and not restrictive. George recommended members review the original Master Plan, and encouraged a fresh look at it.

#### **Costs:**

Deb raised the following questions documented from the last meeting:

1. One member thought it would be beneficial to know the remaining costs for removal of buildings. George said that there is a document of the costs and would provide it to her. Neil asked Ross if Newtown was mentioned as a usable building. Ross explained that it was the administration building with offices, so it lends the most potential for reuse. Gary mentioned reading minutes regarding the removal of wings on Shelton to reuse the center structure. Ross explained that this would require a new foundation to support center section. Ross add that he would like to mothball Newtown Hall and the duplexes to preserve these structures, and that the roof has been replaced on Stratford for preservation purposes. Deb asked for George to provide the costs for removing buildings.
2. Deb read from past minutes where the Chairman of the Fairfield Hills Authority (Ross Carley) spoke of entertaining people who expressed interest in areas of the property. Ross answered that there are some interests, but the interested parties are asking if the Town can remove buildings or assist in the costs, but the Town does not have funds allocated. Gary asked if Ross could provide the concepts of the type of businesses. George answered that it was a sports facility. Neil asked if in years 2 or 3 (of the CIP) was there any CIP money for demolition. Ross answered that there is no money in the budget. Deb expressed that having 9 new perspectives will add to the conversation. The group then briefly discussed options, and Deb gave the example of relaxing the assumption that new constructions needs to be on a given footprint. Gary mentioned that he attended a FHA meeting where a proposal of a skating rink next to NYA was mentioned. Now he has heard that this skating rink will be part of the existing NYA facility. He asked if this change resulted in freed-up commercial space. The group then discussed the move of the Community Center.

Deb noticed that there is a no trespassing sign on the path to Nunnawauk. George explained that there had been a no trespassing sign and this is because the path leads to Nunnawauk property.

Deb next mentioned the aquifer and asked what types of information the group should consider. George said there are zoning regulations stating what can and cannot be done regarding the aquifer. Deb asked if the Committee needs to consider having less impervious surface in the aquifer area. George answered that this would be part of the review process and would fall under the zoning regulations. Gary mentioned a recent Economic Development Commission meeting minutes noting 100,000 gallon capacity restriction, and added that

this was during discussions regarding Deep Brook (6 Commerce Rd). He asked if this is anything the Committee should be concerned about. George said that there is a limit on the campus, however the campus is not near the established limit and that Nunnawauk and Garner are also tied into the system.

#### **Signage:**

Deb mentioned a topic that comes up from time to time is signage. The concern is with having signage that can be seen from Wasserman Way. George explained that signage regulations exist. Deb gave an example of shifting available property to allow for better visibility of signage from the road. George mentioned that today most people use phones for directions and do not rely on signage. He added that the Fairfield Hills campus has been considered a destination. George suggested integrating commercial aspects into the campus.

Rob asked if the Town has thought of having something like a call for proposals where the Town would obtain proposals of best use. George explained that the property had been marketed before and this is something the Committee could look into. Rob added that the Town could stipulate requirements for the community such as adding a community sports field along with the commercial development. George explained that the issue is still with taking the buildings down. The Town has been in contact with the State trying to get funding and has been trying to get grants. Ross gave the example that if the Town had \$4 million that Norwalk and Stamford could be removed allowing for commercial development.

#### **Considerations:**

Adding to this conversation, Deb gave the example of the Town selling a portion of the land allowing for this money to be used for community related development. George clarified that the Town stipulates what can be done with property, not the State, and that the Committee could explore the possibility of selling a portion of property with community. The group then discussed what would be needed when considering selling the property.

Neil asked how much time remained on the bond and if there were any new possibilities when it's paid off. George answered that this would need to be directed to the Finance Director, Bob Tait.

Rob asked if the Town ever approved Tech Park off of Commerce Rd. George explained that the project was forwarded to the Army Corps of Engineers and as a result was downsized. It was then returned to Army Corps of Engineers for a second review who are currently investigating the possibility of problems with long eared bat which has been spotted in Fairfield County, so they must ensure any development will not be a negative impact. George explained that although the bat could have been identified in only one area of Fairfield County, the entire county is then considered.

Neil asked if CIP requests to remove buildings comes from Fairfield Hills Authority. George explained that requests come from the Land Use office and that they have been removed from the budget.

Deb summarized that the plan for overall costs will be emailed. George asked Kim to distribute. She also asked if George could attend a few other meetings that are on the schedule. The group briefly discussed current infrastructure considerations and that the Director of Public Works will be able to answer any questions. Before leaving, George added that he is always available in his office to answer questions.

#### **Public Communications Channels:**

Deb began by recapping that there is money available for a public hearing. The group discussed when the public hearing should be held. The plan is to publicize that the Committee is collecting information that they will try to make readily available in time for a public hearing in January. There will be a long-term plan for what the meetings will be, and members of the public can attend.

Deb reminded the group of discussions regarding a social media presence, and asked the group for comments or thoughts. Neil said it makes sense to have a page and noted having a group where people can comment may have FOI consequences. Rob asked if someone on the Committee should be in charge of social media. Deb requested Neil perform research regarding social media and present a proposal in the next meeting.

Gary had talked about liaisons in the prior meeting. Deb will be sending out an email asking members to think about where liaisons are needed and to provide recommendations of who could perform these functions. Being that Bob Rau is a member of the EDC, he will cover those meetings.

Deb asked if anything else was necessary to ensure the Committee is as transparent and informative to the public as can be. There were no responses.

**Public Participation**

No longer members of the public in attendance.

**Discussion of Future Agenda Items**

The group discussed the schedule of future meetings and the objective of collecting as much information regarding restrictions and opportunities of the property.

With no further business, the Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee adjourned their regular meeting at 8:45 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk.*

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## 1934 CONNECTICUT FAIRCHILD AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY MAP MASH-UP

Use the following map to view 1934 Connecticut aerial photos for an area of interest in Connecticut. To compare 1934 aerial photography to current aerial photography provided by Google Maps use the opacity slider control. The 1934 Aerial Photography are provided by the Connecticut State Library.

Attention ArcGIS and other GIS software users! The 1934 Aerial Photography layer is available via MAGIC's WMS.

Use the search box below to locate a town or address in Connecticut.

 

*Note: The 1934 aerial photography have been georeferenced and not orthorectified which results in some features not aligning with modern-day aerial imagery.*




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Data included in this Mash-up are from the  
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Special thanks to Benjamin Spaulding at GISDoctor.com for assistance in developing this map mash-up.

## **RULES OF THE 2018 FAIRFIELD HILLS MASTER PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE**

1. **Roberts Rules of Order.** Except as otherwise specifically provided by these rules, all meetings shall be conducted in conformity with the latest version of Roberts Rules of Order.
2. **Quorum.** A Quorum is achieved by a bare majority of current members being present. Note that should membership decrease or increase the number of members needed to achieve quorum may change.
3. **Motions.** All motions, resolutions and amendments related to recommendations to the Board of Selectmen or fulfillment of the Committee's Charge, must pass by at least the number of "yea" votes that make up the quorum. For example, if a bare majority (i.e. quorum) is voting on an item there must be a unanimous vote for a motion to pass.
4. **Right of Postponement.** For Agenda items listed under New Business, a member may feel that the Committee is not sufficiently informed. Under these circumstances, any member of the Committee present may force postponement of the motion until the next meeting as a matter of right.
5. **Postponed New Business Agenda Items.** New Business items on the agenda that are postponed without any discussion should be treated as "New Business" on the subsequent agenda
6. **Discussion of matters not on agenda.** Matters not on the Agenda may be raised by members of the Committee and discussed, but no action shall be taken by the Committee on any such item.
7. **Rules Amendments.** These rules may be amended or temporarily suspended from time to time with a 2/3 majority approval.