

## **Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee MINUTES**

**The Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee held a Meeting on February 13, 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, Gary MacRae, Chandravir Ahuja, Bob Bowen, Rob Sherwood, Doug Smith, Bryan Roth, Robert Rau

**Absent:** Neil Chaudhary, Jeffery Jorgensen

**Public Attendance:** none

**Also Present:** Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Chair Deb Zukowski asked for an approval of the minutes.

*Wednesday, January 9th:*

Deb explained to members that Jeff Jorgenson had updates for the January 9<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes but he was unable to attend tonight's meeting.

Deb moved to postpone approval of the January 9<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes until the next meeting. Gary MacRae seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

*Tuesday, January 22nd:*

Chand Ahuja motioned to approve the minutes from January 22, 2019. Rob Sherwood seconded the motion.

*Deb asked for discussion and noted the following corrections:*

- Page 4 last paragraph under the section 'Write in from Kimberly O'Connor-Shellman' remove "an artisanal market could be a regional draw" and move sentence to last paragraph of prior section.
- Page 4 first sentence in the section 'Charlie Gardner – 47 Walnut Tree Hill Rd' correct last name to Gardner.
- Page 5 second paragraph correct 7<sup>th</sup> sentence from "Jeff noted...." to "Rob noted.....".
- Page 5 second paragraph correct 9<sup>th</sup> sentence from "...giving a \$1.99/year lease..." to "...giving a \$1/year lease for 99 years.

Motion passed with all in favor.

## **New Business**

### **Potential Board of Education use request:**

Deb began by telling members that she, Neil and Bob R. visited with the Superintendent of schools and Chair of school board regarding exploration of alternate education outside of the existing school facilities. Dr. Rodrigue is talking with Superintendents in the region with the goal having alternate education in Newtown that is regionally available which would cut down on costs currently incurred by the town for sending students outside of the area. Towns such as Bethel and Ridgefield would have the option to send their students to the proposed Newtown school facility. This type of facility would require 10,000 sq. ft. First Selectman, Dan Rosenthal, recommended first leasing space while the program is being built. A more permanent space could be obtained at a later time. From what Deb could determine, the amount per student placed outside of the town costs an average of roughly \$80,000. They are currently looking at space on the Fairfield Hills campus, but this is still in the exploratory phase. Bob R. reiterated that this is in the very early stages of discussion, and noted the question of what this will mean to the Newtown tax payers. The FHMPR Committee members will consider if Fairfield Hills is a viable space for this project. Ross Carley added that he showed them Newtown Hall and it's in the best condition out of all of the available buildings. Rob Sherwood and Bob Bowen asked questions regarding student numbers and where they are currently attending school. Deb did not have the information at this time and would report back as it is received. The group discussed available options on campus besides Newtown Hall. Bob R. noted that the space must be adjustable because needs of children change with enrollment. Chand said that adding a school to the location changes the flow and dynamic. There needs to be a comprehensive plan.

### **Recap of Community Center discussion:**

Deb provided members a document summarizing the discussion Doug Smith had with Matt Arienello, Director of the Community Center and Kinga Walsh, Chair of the Community Center Committee. (See attachment A.) Deb commended Doug's work of ensuring the recording was clear by reiterating information. The discussion was generally around how it is envisioned the Community Center will fit into the campus. They envision the Community Center as part of the campus with exterior bathrooms that can be used by passersby and a café that will welcome all patrons of the campus. Events such as outdoor movie nights will be held. They described the Community Center as a destination that will act as the downtown of Newtown where people can meet. Kinga Walsh recommended that the FHMPRC do a survey as the Community Center Committee had received useful feedback with their survey. They are also considering after school programs for kids where students can be transported by bus from their school to the Community Center. Deb noted that there is already bus service from the schools to Fairfield Hills. The cost for such dedicated service could possibly be shifted to help offset costs associated with a loop bus to transport students to the Community Center as well as seniors to the Senior Center. Doug continued that he asked their opinion on mixed use, housing, park, etc. They answered that some commercial space would be beneficial to them as it would attract more people and seemed to be non-committal regarding housing. The Community Center is planning on having their own calendar which will be somewhat robust, and they recognize the benefits of a centralized calendar for the Fairfield Hills campus.

## **Old Business**

### **Review ideas, opportunities, concerns gathered during research phase in preparation for crafting a survey:**

Deb identified the informational meetings that generated many notes and audios, and now the group must figure out what must be asked in the survey. What are the set of questions that they would want the survey to answer? Ross gave his number of years of experience with the Authority and that he has learned that removal of the buildings to allow open space would be a very expensive cost to the town and allowing buildings to

deteriorate naturally is not an option. In the past 10 years, inquiries and recommendations have included mixed use or 55 and older housing. He is not trying to direct anyone, but wanted everyone to be aware of the inquiries received by the FHA.

Deb explained that to make the survey useful it is necessary to determine the types of questions that could be asked when going into deliberation. Gary recommended leveraging past surveys to obtain some information. Deb told the group that survey from 2010, which was extremely extensive, was distributed to the group earlier in the process and can be found in Appendix C. Deb said Neil has extensive experience with surveys and she will be asking him to take the lead. She continued that the survey could ask about best use of the campus which could either mean from a community point of view or from a financial point of view. She gave the example of an artisan village that would be a best use from a community perspective and could draw in millennials. Bob B. noted a flaw in the survey may be that it is only being distributed to Newtown residents so if the objective is to attract people from outside of Newtown the questions may not necessarily be answered. Doug mentioned there may be a skewed response in who typically answers surveys. Chand suggested that there must be a clear contrast in the questions so that there are crystal clear choices. There should be 2 choices for every question. Deb answered that these recommendations were around the mechanisms for the survey which she would like to have Neil in attendance for the discussion. Bob R. expressed concerns with the amount of emphasis placed on the survey and that the people who respond may not be here in 5 or 10 years. Deb said the survey should be considered as another set of inputs just as is the information collected from the developers. Gary said to members that this can be viewed as three legs to the stool. The first leg is the tax dollars, the second leg is the demographic breakdown of who is responding, and the third is the questions what would people like to see and what do they not want to see. The survey can also ask questions like how long you have been living in town, and did you or do you have children in the Newtown school system to better determine demographics. Deb said that the survey done in 2010 had a good grasp on demographics so they may be able to leverage that piece of the survey. The group then discussed taxes and economic drivers. Bryan asked what changes were made to Master Plan as a result of the last survey. Deb said High Meadow was made open space, and that the 2010 Master Plan created a vision that Fairfield Hills be a destination for the community. The group then discussed the length of the survey and how to tease information out of survey. Deb explained that the goal is to launch the survey by end of March, and she asked members to read the minutes and identify what they think would be good and bad ideas to see if the survey can be made substantial enough to provide information from the community that will help in the committee's deliberations. The group then discussed the review and approval process once the Master Plan has been updated.

### **Communications**

Deb read an email from Wayne Addressi who recommended speaking with a professional planning firm, such as Planimetrics out of Simsbury, regarding the campus. (See attachment B.) Deb noted that Planimetrics did a build out study in 2008, and that she referenced the study during the 2010 Master Plan review.

Deb received a second communication regarding a question of the Town's flexibility to trade off one property for another in regards to the rights of development. Deb questioned if this is something that the FHMPRC must concern themselves with or if this is a concern of the Town overall. Neil and Deb will be following up and reporting back to the committee.

### **Liaison Reports**

Gary reported that both Matt and Kinga attended the last Friends of Newtown Seniors Board meeting where there was heightened work going on regarding the programs being offered by the Community Center and Senior

Center to ensure there is no overlap. There was also conversation regarding giving Senior Center members a credit to join the Community Center.

**Public Participation**

None.

**Discussion of Future Agenda Items**

Deb will put all of the financial documents together in one place. She will be emailing them to Committee members asking everyone to ensure there are no missing pieces.

In 2010 there was a document about what has happened on the Fairfield Hills campus, and she would like to bring that document up to 2018.

The agenda for the next 5 weeks will be just the survey.

**Adjournment:**

With no further business, Bryan Roth made a motion to adjourn. Doug Smith seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk.*

# Attachment A

1/24/2019

## Community Center Discussion

FFHMPRC Representative: Doug Smith

Community Center Representatives: Matthew Ariniello and Kinga Walsh

Matthew: 4 Core Focus Areas for Community Center (CC)

- Health and Wellness
- Social Interactions
- Personal Growth
- Creative Opportunities

Conducting program coordinator interviews: asks "What do you envision for outside these walls?"

Matthew envisions:

Growing the use of trails

Having outside programs, like morning yoga etc.

Working with Newtown Youth Academy (NYA) about joint programs

Concern: Parking

Kinga Big Picture question:

How is whatever we recommend going to complement what is already existing.

Early idea: community corner... Make this area a destination, not an afterthought. Make this (nearby area) a focal point for residents and non-residents. Maybe a downtown, but not necessarily a commercial downtown. CC will have cafe area – part of destination. CC was a gift, a place where everyone can go. Door is open to all residents. (Paid portion: Programs/pool.)

Matthew: will be exterior bathrooms.

Doug: Any comments about pedestrian plaza between CC and Municipal center? Inline with your idea about a central meeting place/destination.

Kinga/Matthew: entice people to use all other amenities available at CC.

Matthew: Aside from recreational uses also focusing on creative opportunities, e.g., outdoor movie night. In contact with Cultural Arts Commission about outdoor coffee houses during summer months. While prior focus had been recreation, looking into other options.

Kinga: As resident in town. Lots of sports/recreation focus (Health and Wellness), but there is a whole lot of musical, artistic people in this town, and we need to enhance activities for these groups on the campus. Bring something in, like an art gallery.

Doug: Some kind of after-school programming? Would need a way to get kids from schools to CC.

Matthew: Have talked with Superintendent. There are buses to NYA. Have talked about after-school programs, like yoga, painting, etc.

Doug: What other uses of could property be promoted for?

Matthew: More businesses, though should be beneficial or complementary to the existing uses. Need to think about it more.

Doug: Do people want mixed use and retail? Housing? What types of businesses? Big buildings present challenge of getting development to come in.

Matthew: Better idea when ice rink comes in.

Kinga: Timeline is hopefully going to be open for high school teams in the fall.

Matthew: Possible kiosks on the trail to attract those elsewhere on property to the CC.

Doug: Interplay – both directions, property to CC and CC to property.

Kinga: Community calendar, accessible on the website.

Matthew: different types of multi-media. TV monitors throughout CC. Community calendar, reached out to Newtown Bee to leverage their calendar and share more broadly. Calendar may be out of scope for town.

Doug: How can we help support the CC in our recommendations

Matthew: Take into account what we already have on campus. Looking for what other types of businesses we could attract. Plymouth eyed by Cultural Arts and Parks and Rec. Next best area to focus on is area across from Parent Connection.

Kinga: Suggests use of surveys. Keep in mind that the mob at a meeting may not be as representative as a survey.

Matthew: Would love to be a part of the conversation as it continues to grow. Anything on campus will help the CC grow.

Doug: More public input and committees coming by, would like to have you guys be part of that.

Matthew: yes.



## Attachment B



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

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### FFHMPRC Communications

1 message

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

Tue, Feb 12, 2019 at 4:20 PM

I will be presenting this as a communications at tomorrow's meeting.

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

From: **Wayne Addressi** <waddressi@addressi.net>  
Date: Tue, Feb 12, 2019 at 3:30 PM  
Subject: Re: FFH  
To: Deborra Zukowski <debz.newtown.ct@gmail.com>

Hi Deborra-

Many thanks for your response and efforts of these discussions.

I have tomorrow nights meeting in my calendar and will indeed try to make it.

Based heavily on where the FFH efforts are today and the countless opinions you will indeed collect, it is my opinion to bring in professionals such as the Planimetrics group. I know Ridgefield just hired them again in 2018 for their overall Town planning needs and have in the past <https://www.theridgefieldpress.com/110779-planimetrics-hired-to-revise-town-plan/> My businesses are there so I follow closely what is occurring in Ridgefield.

Important to note: My opinion is that a firm like this should be brought in to add a great deal of help and even added credibility to your final strategy. I would think that Planimetrics would be asked about the happenings around the state, the county and local communities like ours, and of what can be the best way to move forward. Realizing the extremely high level of costs of the FFH property it is far past the time to create a new vision. I wish you all much success.

There is a responsibility on leaders of Newtown to now act for the financial well being of this vast area and town residents. What was the plan when the property was purchased, has not been met, the economics have certainly changed throughout our region among many other reasons to revisit a new strategy.

I would suggest your group looks from this angle:

- Remind us all what was discussed and promised over the past many years.
- What has or has not been accomplished here?
- With Planimetrics guidance - a new plan can be considered. A meeting with them is advised.
- It's time that besides the people and team of your group you have independent professionals guidance.
- Local builders alone and or Brokers guiding this effort may not be the correct method.
- Professional planners will also help you all create an intelligent plan and will give all, a great deal of credibility and support toward succeeding.
- Since FFH was purchased by the Town, a financial impact statement should be prepared as well which can support this call to action.

Hope this all helps and look forward in seeing you tomorrow night. If I cant make it - please feel free to share my thoughts with others.

Wishing you success-  
Wayne Addressi



**Wayne Addressi | President |  
December Hours, Tuesday-Saturday 10-5 or by appointment.  
Registered Jeweler, AGS |**

Addressi Jewelers | [387 Main Street | Ridgefield CT. 06877](#)

Direct 203-438-6549 | Cell 203-241-0437

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On Tue, Feb 12, 2019 at 1:36 PM Deborra Zukowski <[debz.newtown.ct@gmail.com](mailto:debz.newtown.ct@gmail.com)> wrote:

Hey there!

We have finished our background/use research phase and are now moving onto trying to put a questionnaire together for gathering community input. Our next meeting is tomorrow at 7PM at the Town Hall South meeting room (under the police station).

Planimetrics is a great suggestion, but would need more input when providing a plan for the property, e.g., do we want a town center or a cultural arts area, or more of an emphasis on athletics, etc. etc. We, the committee, will talk about forwarding the suggestion of engaging Planimetrics or similar firm for use by the Planning and Zoning Commission (i.e., the official planning body in Newtown), to help envision what the remaining property might look like, given uses supported by the community. That said, any plan depends on there being someone willing to risk the funds.

You are welcome to join us at any time. Meetings are on the second Wednesday and fourth Tuesday of the month, and will typically be at 7pm in the Town Hall South meeting room. While they will be formal again, from this point forward, we will always have two times for public comment, one prior to our discussions about new and old business so that the ensuing conversation can consider such comment, and one afterwards so that the community can immediately provide feedback on the discussions.

If you join us tomorrow, it would be interesting for the committee to hear what your feel is the "mold we're in" and your thoughts of "how to break out" of it.

Looking forward to hearing more.  
Deborra Zukowski

On Mon, Feb 11, 2019 at 3:27 PM Wayne Addressi <[waddressi@addressi.net](mailto:waddressi@addressi.net)> wrote:

Hi Debra,

Can you tell me dates of next discussion on FFH? Ive missed your past discussions. Can I recomend a less formal gathering? Round table talks perhaps?



Anyway, at what point would a professional planning firm such as Planimetrics out of Simsbury be considered to speak with the group? They're a firm worth talking with and a group that has no financial gain. I believe they've worked with Newtown. Would be great to have a new vision considered giving them a blank slate even. They're very connected and perhaps can bring great wisdom.

Hope to be at next discussion and looking for how to break out if this mold we're in.

Wayne Addressi

January 22, 2019

FFH Master Plan Review Committee Research Roadmap

**Development: History, Current Status, Obstacles, and Successes**  
**Uses: Current and Requested**

DATE	TOPIC	INVITEES
Sept 25	Land Use, Zoning	George Benson: Director of Planning
Oct 10	Infrastructure	Fred Hurley: Public Works Louis Carbone: Water and Sewer Auth.
Oct 23	Implementation of Plan Describe process from FHA POV, e.g., Brewery.	Ross Carley: Current Fairfield Hills Auth. Chair Thomas Connors: Prior FHA Chair (via email) John Reed: Prior FHA Chair Don Mitchell: Planning & Zoning Chair
Nov 7	Seniors and Disabled <b>CANCELED</b>	Anna Wiedemann: Comm. On Aging Chair Pat Llodra: Friends of Newtown Seniors Representative Judith Slason: Exec. Director of Nunnawalk Meadows
Nov 20	FFH Adaptive Reuse Zoning	Lilla Dean: Prior P & Z Chair Robert Geckle: 2005 FFH Master Plan Comm. Chair
Dec 5	Cultural, Recreational Uses	Amy Mangold: Parks & Rec Director Carl Samuelson: Asst Director/Parks Edward Marks: Parks & Rec Comm. Chair Laura Lerman: Cultural Arts Comm. Chair
Dec 18	Current Tenants – What works, what could be improved? All tenants were invited.	Malcolm McLachlan: Newtown Ambulance President Mark Tambascio/Dave: Brewery Dave Kingsley: Brewery Dan Rosenthal: First Selectman
Jan 9	Commercial Housing	Chris Hottois: Local developer Bryan Atherton: Commercial Real Estate Christal Preszler: Economic and Community Dev George Benson: Director of Planning
Jan 22	Public Conversation – What is missing? Current thoughts about commercial uses.	
External Meetings	Social Services Depts Newtown Schools Conservation Commission	

Note that the above meetings are intended to provide information/context to the committee membership both to help guide the subsequent public engagement efforts expected in the spring of 2019 and to ensure that past and current experiences and learnings are a part of the final deliberation process.