

Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee MINUTES

The Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee held a Meeting on March 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, Neil Chaudhary, Gary MacRae, Bob Bowen, Doug Smith, Robert Rau, Rob Sherwood, Chandravir Ahuja (arrived 7:16 p.m.)

Absent: Bryan Roth, Jeffery Jorgensen

Public Attendance: Walt Motyka

Also Present: Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Public Participation

Walt Motyka, speaking as a private citizen, distributed a hand out to the group and re-introduced himself explaining that he was on the original Master Plan Committee, and a member of the Fairfield Hills Authority and Economic Development Commission. (Attachment A.) Walt told members he recently spoke with the First Selectman who explained that he does not want campus costs passed onto the citizens. He discussed the need to obtain more information regarding the ice rink and his concerns with parking. He questioned if the campus has a for profit organization, why does the town have to put parking in. Walt recommended that parking requirements be added to the master plan. Walt will also be sending a copy of this document to the First Selectman.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Deb Zukowski asked for an approval of the minutes.

Wednesday, February 26th:

Neil Chaudhary motioned to approve the minutes from February 26, 2019. Gary MacRae seconded the motion. Motion passed with all in favor.

Communications

None.

Old Business

Community Survey Preparation:

Chair Deb Zukowski told Committee members that Neil sent out a scaffold of the entire survey, and then passed the meeting over to Neil. Neil began the discussion with the introduction section of the survey which he

explained would be a portion of the survey that in total should take no longer than 15 minutes. There was a question regarding if the sentence should be removed which requires the person taking the survey to be 18 or older. The introduction will explain that the FHMPRC is doing a 5 year review of what recommendations to provide for updating the current master plan. In the last meeting's review of the prior survey, work mostly focused on questions 7 and 8. The group discussed if past thoughts on the campus should impact the survey.

Committee members reviewed and discussed the following:

- Removing questions that appear to be repetitive.
- Formatting questions in a grid with a 1 – 5 ranking.
- Re-organizing the sequence of questions.
- Purposes of some questions. (Understanding people's attitudes about the property.)
- Providing information to educate survey participants. (Provide what is in currently in the Master Plan.)
- Possibility of a skip pattern. (Route the survey participant to additional questions based upon the answers to a prior question).
- How to best represent costs of building maintenance, remediation, rehabilitation and removal. (May not be able to provide rehabilitation costs as they are dependent upon the intended use.)
- Asking the survey participant if he/she wants the town assume costs or a commercial developer to assume costs.
- Must clarify that a commercial element would more than likely include housing to make the project financially sustainable.
- Inform survey participants of legal risks of building decay.
- Clarify that not wanting commercial development still has an associated cost in maintenance and security of decaying empty buildings.
- Possibility of representing the costs in percentage of tax.
- Possibility of selling a portion of the property.
- Provide a map indicating areas currently reserved for commercial development.
- Provide 3 levels of commercial development: 1) Commercial that brings value to people using the area. (Ex. Coffee shop), 2) Commercial that can provide money for campus upkeep. 3) Commercial that would be an economic driver for the town, potentially reducing the mill rate.
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Committee members agreed that the survey will have 5 sections:

Section 1 – Taking temperature for what exists.

Section 2 – What would survey participants like to see added.

Section 3 – Buildings

Section 4 –Options and Preferences

Section 5 - Demographics

The group reviewed and updated the demographics questions.

Deb told members that they could leave if they needed to and that the meeting would continue past the regular time. She then reviewed her opening draft with the group. (Attachment B) The group discussed updates to the draft including the 5 year Master Plan review and the purpose of the survey.

Neil recommended creating a website for the survey.

Liaison Reports

Liaisons did not have anything new to report.

Public Participation

No additional public participation.

Discussion of Future Agenda Items

Continue community survey preparation.

Adjournment:

With no further business, Neil made a motion to adjourn. Doug seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 9:59 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk.*

Attachment A

WSM

Items for FFH Master Plan revisions should address:

--3-13-19

- Current Parking @ FFH Campus has been identified as a potential problem due to numerous on-going non & for-profit activities"
- There is already a lack of parking spaces at times due to activities at the existing Admin Center and NYS sports center; that will only increase once the new senior center and craft beer facility are opened- and exponentially increase with the possibility of the proposed for-profit ice rink.
- The potential or-profit Ice Rink will put further constraints on seniors easily accessing their all buildings at FHH.

Some solutions as well as requirements on those for-profit functions to be considered and added to the revised Master Plan:

- A senior parking area should be identified and controlled and policed since the existing parking will be impacted by the new activity (Ice Rink)
- Perhaps parking stickers issued to the seniors for their dedicated parking area.
- That designated parking area should be in close proximity to the senior center and central buildings.
- Cost for additional parking areas, providing security of said areas, and parking enforcement should be the total responsibility of the for-profit owner or owners of any enterprise on FHH Campus
- All signage to establish the senior areas supplied and installed by each for-profit owner(s).

Attachment B

Today, the Fairfield Hills Master Plan encourages the following uses:

- Community Culture and Arts including the Municipal Gallery and an annual Arts Festival;
- Community Recreation including walking trails, sports fields, a Community Center (to open in a few months) and events like auto shows and a town carnival;
- Town and Community Services including those available at the Municipal Center, the Newtown Health and Wellness center, a new Senior Center (to open in a few months) and the Newtown Parent Connection offices;
- Open land including protected open space in the High Meadow on the eastern side of the property, and community gardens including the Victory Garden and the Fruit Trail along the walking trail;
- Commercial/Economic including a private gym and ice rink (expected by year's end) and a brew pub (expected by year's end).

There are still three areas that are off-limits to the public because of existing or recently removed buildings that are currently unsafe for use. These areas include the entrance area - between the new community center and the ambulance garage, Kent House - between the Municipal Center and WassermanWay, and the back area- behind the proposed brew pub and the community center. All told, these areas include seven large buildings, four duplexes, and one recently cleared site.

The Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee is seeking to understand what the Newtown community would like to see in these areas, as part of our work to provide recommendations for the Planning and Zoning Commission to consider for updating the current master plan. This survey should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. We appreciate your time and your input.