

Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee MINUTES

**The Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee held a Meeting on May 28, 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, Robert Rau, Rob Sherwood, Chandravir Ahuja, Doug Smith, Bryan Roth

Absent: Jeffery Jorgensen

Public Attendance: none

Also Present: Daniel P. Rosenthal – First Selectman, Christal Preszler – Deputy Director Economic & Community Development, Ross Carley – FHA Chair, Wes Thompson – EDC Chair, Kimberly Chiappetta - Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.

Public Participation

none

Approval of Minutes

Chair Deb Zukowski asked for an approval of the minutes.

Wednesday, April 10th:

Bob Rau motioned to approve the minutes from April 10, 2019. Gary MacRae seconded the motion. Motion passed with all in favor.

Communications

Chair Deb Zukowski began the meeting by reminding members of the emailed listing that identified all areas where the survey was advertised which she will be including in the report. In addition to this list, the survey was advertised at a volunteer table during a volunteer event sponsored by Friends of Newtown Seniors (FONS), and on a sandwich board at the intersection of Queen Street and Church Hill Rd.

New Business

Community Survey Preparation:

Deb turned the meeting over to Neil Chaudhary who began with an overview of the results. Neil told everyone that there were a little over 2100 survey participants, but 300 were not counted as they either indicated they were under 18 or did not live in town resulting in the final count of approximately 1800 participants. He then explained how the survey demographics were compared to the town's Census data in the areas of socio-economics, age and sex. Neil broke out the data by age and by sex but did not see any difference in the results

for those groups. He gave the example that there was no case where one sex preferred something and the opposite sex did not. He did find a slight under representation of the oldest population and recommended that the group may want to look at this closer before decision making; however a 3% point deviation from the population will not affect the overall too much. Deb recognized Gary MacRae for his work reaching the 65 and older population. Neil then reviewed the bar graphed responses for each question in the survey. (See [Survey 2019 - Raw Data](#) for details.)

Deb then displayed the results with bar graphs by age distribution and asked Neil to review. (See [Survey 2019 - Survey Results by Age Distribution.](#)) He explained that there are statistical differences and meaningful differences, and statistical differences may not be meaningful.

Next Deb presented her summary of results. (See [Fairfield Hills Community Survey Results.](#)) The first section, "View on Current Status", identifies the items where 50% or more of respondents feel the campus has the right amount and the items where 50% or more feel the campus is lacking. The next section, "Views on Future Services and Features", identifies all items where 50% or more supported the item. Deb pointed out that there were some inconsistencies in the results and gave the example of 56% supporting a Main Street concept, but not supporting mixed use as is found in the 'Main Street' examples given on the survey. First Selectman, Dan Rosenthal, thanked Committee members for their hard work in creating the survey and compiling the results. He acknowledged the results of the survey but noted that it was not clear as to what would be done with the existing buildings. He understood that respondents strongly oppose housing, but questioned if they understood that this would mean an existing building would be renovated and saved. Although the survey results identify what respondents would like to see on the campus, it does not mean that a developer would find these ideas financially sound. The reality is that some of the survey results do not mesh with actionable items. The First Selectman told everyone that his plan is to continue supporting housing despite the survey, and that he realizes from a leadership standpoint he has a challenge ahead of him to educate the community that if there is any hope of doing anything with the buildings on campus there must be a housing component. He added that he respects the people who have completed the survey, but needs to consider what can be done.

Deb then reviewed her summary of the write-in comments, and explained how she categorized them. There were 740 responders who wrote in comments, around half of which called out what they thought the purpose of the property should be. Out of these responses 60% supported the existing master plan. The group discussed the ideas and recommendations expressed in the survey, some of which were concerns with taxes, traffic or taking away from commercial space in other areas of town. The First Selectman and Christal Preszler explained that there are currently development opportunities due to a historical tax credit. If this historical tax credit goes away, there may be no other opportunities for the existing buildings. The First Selectman further explained his objective at Fairfield Hills is a cost avoidance strategy. This would be done by taking a few buildings off of the town's balance sheet and making them productive generating tax revenue for the town.

The group then discussed the fact that the survey is only one aspect that will be considered when drafting recommendations. They will also consider input from experts during information gathering meetings. Members agreed that the documentation posted on the website should be updated to explain analysis of the data is a work in progress and is only a portion of what will be considered. Deb provided the sample verbiage, "This data shows a summary of what was collected and will be incorporated along with all of the other information gathered during the process into the recommendations for the P&Z".

Deb asked for a motion to create a cover plan that states what she read. Doug Smith motioned. Bryan Roth seconded the motion. Motion passed with all in favor.

Liaison Reports

None

Public Participation

No public participation.

Discussion of Future Agenda Items

Deb told members there were two regular meetings remaining. In the next meeting members will begin to discuss the actual recommendations. She asked all Committee members to re-read the meeting minutes, the Master Plan and review the Fairfield Hills Adaptive Reuse Zone documentation in preparation for the next meeting. Two members will document these recommendations. Updates to the document will be made during the final meeting on Tuesday, June 25th

Adjournment:

With no further business, Chandravir Ahuja made a motion to adjourn. Gary MacRae seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk.*