

**Planning, Zoning and Housing Committee (PZ&H)
of the
Darien Representative Town Meeting (RTM)**

Draft Minutes

Date: May 6, 2014

Place: Darien Town Hall, Room 119

Present: Liz Bacon, Lucy Fiore, Shedd Glassmeyer, Courtney Haidinger, Ted Hawkins, Joanne Hennessy, James Howe, John McLean, John van der Kieft, Rob Young

Absent: Carolyn Bayne, Jose Cepeda, Spencer McIlmurray, Seth Morton,

Guests: John Sini, Steve Olvany

This was a regular meeting of the Planning, Zoning and Housing Committee.

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 pm. Joanne Hennessy, PZ&H Chair, reviewed the agenda. A motion was made to approve the minutes from the February 11, 2014 meeting; they were unanimously approved.

Ms. Haidinger provided an update on **Town Hall Homes and the Heights**.

1. Darien Housing Authority (DHA) sent out Requests for Proposal (RFP) for renovation/redevelopment of Town Hall Homes. Town Hall Homes is comprised of 30 units – half on ground level and half on second floor without elevator access – situated on 2 acres. DHA is currently evaluating a proposal response and considering their options. It appears that the objective is to address deficiencies of current buildings and/or provide more housing units on property. Mr. Sini pointed out that Section 514 of town regulations allows higher density on property owned by the town or DHA.
2. At the Heights, DHA is finishing up the last section and expects all units to be rented or occupied by the end of June. 38 of the original Allan-O'Neill families have returned and are in residence. Landscaping is in progress now. Ms. Hennessy questioned whether there would be more substantial plantings along Noroton Avenue.

Ms. Hennessy reported that the completion of **Mather Center** is getting close. It is coming in approximately \$500k over budget, but the town is receiving additional funds from the State so that Darien taxpayers should not be affected by the overrun.

Ms. Hennessy pointed out that our next scheduled meeting on June 3rd conflicts with a presentation at the Library by the League of Women voters on the **M.O.R.E. Commission** and the coming movement for towns to join a Council of Government (**COG**). The committee agreed to cancel the June 3rd meeting so that members might

attend the Library presentation. Ms. Hennessy gave the background on COGs and SWRPA. A lively discussion on the pluses and minuses of the COG government ensued. Committee members were encouraged to read Jayme Stevenson's May 5, 2014 memo to the Board of Selectmen and watch the Selectmen's discussion on Channel 79 leading up to their vote this week to join the new Western CT COG.

Mr. Sini and Mr. Olvany, members of the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z), briefed the committee on the status and process of developing the **2016 Town Plan of Conservation & Development**. P&Z is currently hearing from several consultants who would be available to shepherd the whole document or work on pieces/sections of it. The Commission has yet to decide how it will use consultants. There is a proposed budget of \$75,000 for this work in the current budget plus a similar amount for next year.

P&Z definitely would like all members of the Darien community to provide comments and be involved with aspects of the Plan which may affect them. The current Plan of Conservation & Development was circulated by Mr. Sini and Olvany as a good model that has served the community well for the past 8 years. Mr. Young pointed out that the Plan is meant to be a design guide, not a rule of law for development. Mr. Sini passed out copies of the State's Town Plan Statutes, Sec. 8-23. Town sewers, traffic, and parking, among other topics, will be important sections in the Plan which will require outside input. Mr. Young requested that a section on bike trails, routes and paths be included in the Plan.

Next we discussed the current state of the **Noroton Heights shopping center** redevelopment plan and several other commercial developments. The **Affordable Housing Trust Fund** was reviewed with Mr. Sini and Olvany. Mr. Olvany is quite familiar with the New York City and Stamford models of development which generally require developers to provide actual affordable housing units, if they are not in the new development, somewhere else in the community rather than simply handing over funds in lieu of affordable housing.

Lastly, Ms. Hennessy reminded members to attend the **RTM** meeting next Monday to vote on the budget for 2014-2015.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:11 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Ted Hawkins, acting PZ&H Clerk