



STAFF REPORT OF MEETING

REGULAR MEETING

Regional Planning Commission (RPC)
of the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG)
City Hall Building 235 Grand St. Waterbury, CT
Cass Gilbert Room
6:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 5, 2016

Attendance: Herman Schuler, Oxford; Tanya Carver (by phone), Oxford; Margus Laan, Plymouth; Nancy G. Clark, Southbury; Jeremy Leifert, Thomaston; James Sequin, Waterbury; Robert Clarke (by phone), Woodbury.

Staff: Christian Meyer, Transportation Planner, NVCOG; Joanna Rogalski, Regional Planner, NVCOG.

The meeting opened at 6:38 PM.

1. Pledge of Allegiance, Roll Call, Introductions, Public Participation

The pledge of allegiance was recited. RPC members, NVCOG staff and the guest speaker introduced themselves. At roll call six (6) RPC members and/or alternates were present. At about 7 PM another RPC representative joined the meeting. A quorum was not obtained for this meeting. The public was invited to make comments. There were no members of the public present.

2. Guest Speaker

Christian Meyer, transportation planner at NVCOG, briefly spoke about the Route 8 & Waterbury Branch Line Corridor Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) & Alternate Transit Modes Assessment Project, more specifically Task 2 of the study which resulted in a draft document describing optimal locations for TOD development in Shelton, Derby, Ansonia and Seymour, and sample zoning regulations and economic tools to accommodate TOD. NVCOG would like to find out from the planners and zoning officials what would make this document more useful to their work. The goal is that there is a toolkit with a model ordinance to facilitate TOD beyond rail oriented communities.

Discussion included the following points:

- Goal is for document to 1) be continually updated, i.e. a living document, and 2) be useful to all NVCOG municipalities.
- Motion for endorsement this evening is premature. Document has not realized its goals.
- Would have preferred to see all seven nodes represented along the Waterbury Branch line, not just the three lower Naugatuck towns.



- A few of the representatives from non-rail towns feel the recommendations in this document do not apply to them. This document gives the impression that transit ends at Waterbury. These towns will hold off comment until the northern part of NVCOG is addressed, e.g. Torrington-Waterbury express bus service.
 - As municipal POCD's are completed, the towns will be able to provide input about their needs for TOD model ordinances.
 - Oxford is particularly interested in what the document has analyzed for Seymour's TOD possibilities, and wonders if rail station relocation will be oriented toward Ansonia or Beacon Falls.
 - State Senate bill 19, which would enable commissions to be established to guide TOD development in towns, would also help identify TOD opportunities and methods to realize TOD development, including housing and transportation.
 - Would be helpful to include case studies of towns who have enacted form-based over the past couple years, for example Hartford and Meriden.
 - Document started with the assumption that municipalities' zoning codes have decades of knowledge baked into it. And it would be difficult to throw that out. So instead of saying oh here's a model code, adopt it and everything will be good, we're saying here's some options that you could adopt as you see fit.
 - NVCOG to draft a memo describing Task 2 of this study.
 - Comment that the document seems geared to downtown areas and providing transportation to people living there and to increase the density of people in the downtown areas.
 - Population facilitates transportation options and population density often determines the affordability of the transportation service. So TOD may come across as pro-density, but CT poses an interesting case in that residents in low density areas, like suburbs, may want access to rail transit and are willing to drive to it. So even though TOD is located in high density areas, it serves populations from varying residential densities.
 - Towns with private transit service, like Peter Pan buses, are holding off comment on this document.
 - NVCOG is looking into inter-city bus services.
 - TOD is about the relationship between land use, transportation and density. For example, if a town desires open space preservation, TOD ordinances may allow for higher density development around transit nodes and less development of open space and agricultural lands.
 - Without the proper density, transportation just doesn't work without subsidy.
 - High density housing doesn't always equate to more affordable units. When public transit is considered an amenity, housing prices often increase.
3. Discussion: follow-up to February 2016 discussion on housing choices in Connecticut



NVCOG asked for feedback regarding the presentation by Katy Shafer, deputy policy director at the Partnership for Strong Communities (PSC). The PSC handouts regarding local information were useful. Meeting minutes were informative.

A short discussion followed regarding two pieces of legislation: CT House Bill 5363, Act Concerning Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure, and federal bill HR 3700, Housing Opportunity through Modernization Act of 2016. Information and links to the legislation will be forwarded from NVCOG. HB 5363 would alter the definition of median income to include the state median income. HR 3700 would ease restrictions on FHA-backed financing on condominiums, from 50% owner-occupied to get FHA-backed loans, to 35% owner-occupied. The changes in median income affect the developer and town contributions to develop affordable housing.

4. Water Use Subcommittee formation – update

- NVCOG staff recommends RPC hold off on the formation of a water use subcommittee since there are several efforts underway at the state and regional levels to collect information and create plans for water usage and drought ordinances.
- Collecting data on water supply, quality and usage already underway by Milone & MacBroome for Water Utility Coordinating Committees (WUCC)
- WUCC convened by Dept. of Public Health. NVCOG is represented on the western region committee by Aaron Budris. First WUCC meeting in the next couple months – will have fuller report at next RPC.
- Current Drought Plan under review
- Watershed Based Plans being developed
- Water supply is super-regional issue – much of NVCOG region’s water supply originates from outside NVCOG boundaries.
- As plans develop important for municipalities to be made aware of them and of their rights and responsibilities, and to provide feedback to the committees drafting the plans. Suggest entire RPC or COG, not just subcommittee, address this.
- Actionable by RPC - – RPC may recommend to Council that all towns adopt a drought ordinance
- NVCOG to send RPC links to various plans being drafted by state and regional agencies.

5. Administrative Items

- a. Approval of February 2, 2016 Meeting Minutes (Motion) – since a quorum was not achieved, no motion could be made to approve the meeting minutes.
- b. Correspondence
 - NVCOG sent an email to RPC members asking for their input regarding the NVCOG Regional Profile for 2015. Document is meant to help towns with grant applications. Profile to be published in mid-April.



- NVCOG is drafting a Public Participation Policy document which will guide public participation for regional plans. An email will be sent asking NVCOG town planners and RPC members to provide the name and contact information of local community groups. Policy will also include an environmental justice aspect to it and identify public participation strategies. Business and social service groups are also desired.
- c. Referrals
Comment made that NVCOG is doing a good job on distributing referrals to the RPC members.

6. Roundtable - Points of Interest/Local Activities

Thomaston – Jeremy Leifert, Land Use Administrator

Five different zoning amendments are being considered, some just clean-up related others overhauling farming and agriculture regulations to make it easier to obtain a permit for new uses and new farms. Section regarding non-conformities is being rewritten to be more straightforward, especially concerning the duties of the Zoning Board of Appeals. Zoning regarding lighting has also been cleaned up.

Oxford – Herman Schuler, Economic Development Director

The POCD from 2007 has begun to be updated. Much economic development activity: a couple companies are building larger facilities, a beer and wine distributor is expanding. Grading has begun for the power plant being built next to the airport. In the town center there is a mixed use development with 150 apartments (three stories with underground parking), a green, Goodwill and a bank. The Enterprise Zone has helped to bring in major companies.

Question was raised regarding extending bus or rail service to the airport, and creating a TOD node there. Route 67 planned to be extended; it is a major commuting route with 20,000 cars per day passing the airport entrance. Airport does not service commercial or passengers, but there are a lot of workers there. There's a plan for a hotel and other large developments at the airport. CT rides may be an alternate for of transportation for workers at and near the airport. A group of employees can lease a van at a highly reduced rate and carpool every day. There's a primary driver and a secondary driver in case the primary driver can't do it. It can live at a commuter lot or in someone's driveway. It's a much lower cost option if you have 6 people coming from Southbury to a job in Oxford, they can drive together and share the costs. As you talk to the big companies in the town and they mention that their employees need service, CT Rides is an interesting service that might be helpful.

Waterbury – Jim Sequin, City Planner

Public hearing regarding package store drew a lot of interest. Excavation has been approved at the east side commercial area. Porter & Chester Institutes are moving from Watertown to Waterbury, and will be located on a bus line. Signage is a difficulty since last year's Supreme Court ruling, Reed vs. Gilbert, that signs cannot be categorized and only regulated for size.



Different signs have different purposes and the extent of the Supreme Court ruling will be fleshed out with test cases

Plymouth – Margus Laan, Town Planner

Next week there will be a public hearing about the moratorium on gun ranges.

Southbury – Nancy Clark, Planning Commission

Theater site is being dug up in preparation for foundation. Eversource will be taking down trees along RT. 67 because the trees are a hazard to the wires. Farmers' market begins the first Thursday in May.

Woodbury – Bob Clarke, Zoning Chair

Tomorrow there will be a public hearing for a proposed 12 lot subdivision to be located at the north end of Main St. Town approved a referendum to acquire Aquarion parcel of 248 acres which will provide open space off Main St. with frontage on Route 64. The American Institute of Architects recommended a committee be formed addressing business and economic development; tonight there is an open meeting concerning its formation. Planning is considering three proposals: 1) a right to farm, 2) a discontinuance of certain roads in town, and 3) Verizon line protection. Woodbury will not be considering signage issues until a new sign ordinance, reflecting the Supreme Court's Reed vs. Gilbert ruling, is written. On May 10th there will be a public hearing for zoning regulation changes, new fee schedule and home occupation and uses.

7. Other

Question regarding the progress on the Chase Brass site. The site is progressing nicely. Expansion built, and waiting to hear from a private company about a six acre site. One lot in the re-subdivision is still available. Unsure what is happening with the rail crossing.

Question of whether the Stevenson Dam in Oxford has changed ownership. Dam was sold to a Canadian company.

8. Adjournment

On a motion by Jim Sequin, seconded by Bob Clarke, the meeting was adjourned at 8:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted by
Joanna B. Rogalski
Regional Planner, NVCOG