

# Capitol Region Council of Governments

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## MINUTES OF REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

January 19, 2012

### ATTENDANCE

#### Members and Alternates

Sandra Bobowski  
Lamont Aheart  
Al LeFebvre  
Jeff Ollendorf  
Brad Pellissier  
David Evans  
Bill Hogan  
Sue Errickson  
Thomas Manning  
Patrick Kennedy  
Janet Ramsay  
Horace Brown  
Andy Kidd  
Karle Profe  
Jeff Daniels

#### Town

Hartford  
Vernon  
Bloomfield  
Farmington  
Somers  
Canton  
Ellington  
Tolland  
Bolton  
South Windsor  
Windsor Locks  
Manchester  
Manchester  
Windsor  
West Hartford

#### Others Present

Mary Ellen Kowalewski	CRCOG
Emily Moos	CRCOG
Stuart Popper	Andover
Chris Duerksen	Clarion Associates
Craig Richardson	Clarion Associates
Stephen Sizemore	Clarion Associates

Chair Sandra Bobowski called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

#### Adoption of Minutes: September 15, 2011

A motion was made by Sue Errickson and seconded by Brad Pellissier to adopt the minutes of the November 17, 2011 meeting. The motion was passed unanimously.

#### Sustainable Land Use Code Development Project: Project Overview and Workshop Session – led by Project Consultant, Christopher Duerksen, Clarion Associates Senior Counsel

Emily Moos, Senior Planner and Policy Analyst at CRCOG and project manager for this project, provided an introductory presentation on the project stating that the model land use code development effort is a part of the larger Sustainable Knowledge Corridor project being undertaken by CRCOG stemming from the \$4.2 million Regional Sustainable Communities grant that CRCOG has received from HUD. Ms. Moos stated that Clarion Associates, the nationally acclaimed planning firm selected to lead this project because of their background and expertise across the country in drafting model sustainable land use codes. Ms. Moos informed the RPC of the project schedule and the details of this kick-off visit with the consulting team.

Chris Duerksen gave a presentation to RPC members as stakeholders on the Sustainable Land Use Code Development Project. Mr. Duerksen's presentation outlined the definition of sustainable land use codes and why they are important for the future of our communities. Citing numerous U.S. and Connecticut facts about public health, the environment, food, fuel and biodiversity, Mr. Duerksen explained that current local programs do a great job at addressing sustainable energy and fuel use, tree planting, recycling, etc. they are still missing a focus on development patterns.

Mr. Duerksen noted when examining codes in the Capitol Region, his team will be looking at the three paths to sustainability which are the BIG approach: Barriers, Incentives and Gaps. He stated that the codes analysis which is in the first phase of this project will produce a report that summarizes ways to remove barriers, create incentives and fill regulatory gaps to create more sustainable codes. Mr. Duerksen reviewed several examples of this analysis in the issue areas including Health/Safety, Climate Change and Housing Choices.

Following the formal presentation, the Clarion team, led by Craig Richardson engaged in a discussion with commission members as stakeholders on key local sustainability issues, current local best sustainability practices in the Capitol Region and implementation issues. A summary of comments is as follows:

### **Bloomfield**

#### **Priorities:**

- Energy efficiency and conservation.
- Compact, mixed-use, and transit-oriented development patterns.
- Housing affordability and diversity—need for starter homes.
- Local food systems/food security.
- Natural resource protection.

#### **Things they are working on:**

- Spurring development/redevelopment in Griffin corridor—linked to University of Hartford (note: this area was subject of a CROG Northwest Corridor Transportation Study).
- Continuing development of bike paths.

### **Somers**

#### **Priorities:**

- Compact, mixed-use, and transit oriented development patterns—emphasis on how to do higher density.
- Question regarding how to do conversion of large homes into multi-family without impacting neighborhood character.

#### **Things they are working on:**

- Solar on High School and elementary school roof.

### **Canton**

#### **Things they are working on:**

- On Farmington River. Are working on a hydro power project at the Collins Company.
- POCD defines seven different areas suitable for instituting sustainable development practices.
- Project to establish electric charging stations in the area.

### **Manchester**

#### **Things they are working on:**

- Implementing mixed –use through form based zoning at the Manchester Parkade.

#### **Comment:**

- Reliance on property tax for municipal income is what drives development choices and patterns. If want we to change development patterns, we need to change the property tax system.

### **Hartford**

#### **Things they are working on:**

- New Public Safety Complex—are installing fuel cells that will power the facility, with excess energy sold back into the grid.
- Protection of single-family neighborhoods from business (non-profit and for-profit) encroachment. Sometimes institutions are competing with families to buy homes. Conflicts in neighborhood result.
- Use of CORMU Zone for sites or building areas.
- De-densification in certain areas.
- Already have installed geothermal in at least one affordable housing development.

### **Tolland**

#### **Priorities:**

- Compact, mixed-use development with neighborhood compatibility standards—how not to conflict with environmental protection (proposed village center in proximity to important marsh area).
- Affordable housing—in-law apartment design standards

#### **Comments:**

- Need broader public education on these issues to gain public support
- Neighborhood compatibility built into codes for mixed use areas might help the public understand that impacts will not be negative to their properties and neighborhoods.

### **Bolton**

#### **Comments:**

- These are all good things to do, but none of it is related to zoning.
- Obesity is based on personal choices and the nature of our food system - zoning can't change these things.
- Solar is a nice idea but too expensive for citizens to purchase and install on their own unless subsidized in some way.
- Parents often drive children to school because of the environment on the bus or on their walk.

### **Vernon**

#### **Priorities and Comments:**

- Have some mass transit, but not enough. Vernon is basically a car community.
- Have lots of recreational trails that are well-used, but people have to drive to them. Do not have strong network of sidewalks in town.
- Have had an increase in multi-family development, but it is unaffordable.
- State has law to enable affordable incentive housing zones as an overlay district, to allow for increased density (the HOMEConnecticut Program).
- Alternative energy is an important issue, but still has limited application due to cost. Creative financing assistance might help.

### **Farmington**

#### **Priorities and Comments:**

- Economic competitiveness and resiliency—dealing like many towns with office park vacancies. Property tax policy drives development in region.
- Community health and well-being—PZC supports sidewalks in new developments, but there is neighborhood opposition due to burdens of ongoing maintenance, which lie on the homeowner. As a result, pedestrian connections in town are weak.

### **Windsor Locks**

#### **Priorities and Comments:**

- Working to allow for compact, mixed-use development on Main Street. On NHHS Rail line—working to have station moved downtown.
- Babylon Recycling operation expanding—concerned about environmental controls.
- Working to create an airport overlay zone.
- Habitat protection—town bought waterworks property for open space.
- Public safety and sidewalks: Route 75 a highly-commercial state road by airport without sidewalks. Workers come to work by bus and it is a dangerous pedestrian environment, as they walk to their jobs.

### **West Hartford**

#### **Priorities and Comments:**

- Now that the New Britain to Hartford Busway is happening, town needs to plan for TOD at two West Hartford stops. Since we will have a large investment in the busway, will need to make it attractive and accessible
- Interested in how to create energy efficiency incentives for large reuse projects
- Anything that helps on bike and pedestrian issues would be beneficial

### **Report on Zoning and Subdivision Referrals**

Emily Moos gave the report on the zoning and subdivision referrals, including a supplemental memo distributed at this meeting. Sue Errickson made a motion to approve the report as presented. Patrick Kennedy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

### **What's New in My Town – An Opportunity for Members to Report on Local Planning and Development Activities of Interest to the RPC**

Municipal reports this month included:

- 1) Hartford – Associated with I-Quilt's Winterfest, Hartford has opened a free skating rink in Bushnell Park open to the public. The rink has attracted many visitors from in and around Hartford.

### **Other Business**

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.