

EAST LYME PLANNING COMMISSION

EASTLYME PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

FILED

Public Workshop, January 29, 2020. 7:00 PM

February 3, 2020 AT 11:39 AM/PM

East Lyme Town Hall, Upper Meeting Room
108 Pennsylvania Avenue, East Lyme, Connecticut

Braelee Strawn ATC
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

CHAIRMAN: Michele Williams
RECORDING SECRETARY: Sue Spang

PLANNING DIRECTOR: Gary Goeschel II

CALL TO ORDER 7:00

ROLL CALL

Present: Michelle Williams, Chairman, Kirk Scott, Rosemary Ostfeld, Rich Gordon, Norm Peck

Absent: Peter Lynch, Lawrence Fitzgerald

I. 2020 PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE (POCD) PRESENTATION

M. Williams thanked the public for the large turn out and interest in the POCD. She informed the public the POCD is mandated by state statute to be updated every 10-years by the towns in CT. She stated if the POCD is not amended the town will not be eligible for state grants. M. Williams informed the public that the POCD is a vision statement for where the town wants to go in the next 10-years and how they want to manage their resources and future development. M. Williams stated there will be recommendations in the POCD but they will have to go through the normal processes any other regulation or ordinance would go through.

The state is requesting all updated POCD's to include sections on sustainability and resiliency and to identify areas where the town plans on installing sewers and areas of sewer avoidance.

M. Williams presented a timeline, outline, education and outreach of the POCD.

II. OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC FORUM GUIDELINES

M. Williams read the guidelines for participation in the public forum

III. OPEN FOR PUBLIC FEEDBACK

G. Goeschel read into the record a letter from Gretchen Spartz, 38 Hope St., stating that aquaculture belongs in the POCD but she believes aquaculture should not be in the Niantic River. She also wants Oswegatchie Hills preserved.

Geoff Maynard, 9 Woodland Dr. is happy with the towns progress and would like to see the continued development and revitalization. He would like to see more consideration for development of the downtown and thinks some of the properties need to be updated. He would also like to see a recreation center for children. J. Maynard stated the pool at the high school is rundown and always has issues as well as broken gym equipment, he would like to see these issues fixed.

Ed Lilienthal, 21 Haigh Ave., stated he is concerned about the massive traffic congestion from Niantic to Flanders in the next 10-years. He does not think the answer is more roads and parking lots but bike friendly community assets. E. Lilienthal stated statistics show bike friendly communities increase business, increase property values and attract young professionals.

John DeSantis, 7 Corey Lane, asked that an emergency evacuation plan be included in the POCD. He

suggested a helicopter landing area when there is an emergency and traffic is backed up.

Deb Moshier-Dunn, 7 Plant Drive, Waterford, Save the River-Save the Hills (STR-STH) read a board approved letter stressing water quality should be a priority and development on the Oswegatchie Hills should be limited. She stated low impact developments standards and low impact best standards be adopted for any development near a stream, wetlands and Niantic River. D. Moshier-Dun stated there should be a mandatory pump out for septic systems every three years. The town should continue efforts to purchase the Oswegatchie Hills property and other open space which would protect the water quality of Niantic River. The town should expand sewer systems, especially in the Saunders Point area. Resiliency and protection of the coast should be addressed.

Thomas Hace, 43 Riverview Rd., stated that zoning seems reactive instead of proactive. He stated the town is caught in a cycle of intense development both commercial and residential and people who have lived in town end up paying the price. People who are developing should be paying an upfront cost so the town does not have to keep bonding. Developers should provide road infrastructure or greenways. T. Hace stated he serves on the agribusiness committee in town and stated there should be a trade system and ask that someone who is going to develop farm land should buy another equal area in town suitable for farming.

Sue Bowes, 61 Pennsylvania Ave., Remax, stated when she started selling houses the town was very desirable but when she looks at the development it scares her. She is against the Type 2 aquaculture in the river because the river is one of the towns best assets and she said it will have an effect on business, recreation and residents. S. Bowes wants to make sure the village of Niantic keeps its charm and should be developed that way by encouraging boutiques, restaurants and other areas that make it walkable.

Dick Waterman, 11 Lake Ave. would like to see the POCD support the arts and culture of East Lyme by funding \$2000.00 for 501 (c)(3) organizations. He supports the development of commercial aquaculture in the Niantic River. He stated that the Samuel Smith Farmstead be organized as a commission. The Samuel Smith Farmstead, The Brookside Farm Museum and the East Lyme Historical Society should have a seat on the East Lyme Historic Properties Commission.

Rich Steel, 23 Rose Lane, would like to see permeable ADA compliant walkways in town. The conversion of town vehicles to electric should be considered. R. Steel thinks a trolley service connecting Niantic and Flanders would be a good idea. Rain gardens and walking paths would be of use. He suggested local business could put planters on street corners for beautification. He would like to see the villages of Niantic and Flanders be more integrated. Walking paths throughout town with plaques for education on the history of the town would be nice.

Douglas Schwartz, P.O. Box 7274, Groton, stated the POCD should consider where solar plants should be placed. He informed the members that East Lyme has one of the worst issues of runoff from a solar farm impacting a stream. Solar farms should be placed on rooftops such as COSTCO. The state continues to push solar farms and developers are flooding into the state to make money on these farms. D. Schwartz stated there is no way to decommission the panels and when they are no longer viable they leave behind toxic waste. During high wind events like a hurricane the panels will lift and blow away, possibly catch on fire releasing toxic chemicals. He suggested putting language in the POCD as a way of regulating solar farms.

Mike Dunn, 9 King Arthur Drive, Friends of the Oswegatchie Nature Preserve, informed the members of the benefits of open space, he will be providing a study for the appendix of the POCD. He said that even though many acres have been preserved in the Oswegatchie Hills area, it is not good enough. There are 236 acres to the north which has been tied up in litigation and has a mile of frontage on the Niantic River and should not be developed because of terrain and characteristics of the property. This area has been identified as open space for over 30 years and should be noted in the POCD.

John Lombardo, 2 Hillcrest Rd., would like to see more farming and open space that diversifies the economic base of the town. The town should look at demographics of the future. He stated the ages of

people moving into the area are getting younger and the town should plan for younger people and their lifestyle which is not suburban models. J. Lombardo suggested partnering with towns around East Lyme for some services.

Sally Uden, 15 Beaver Brook Rd., East Lyme Agricultural Business Group Subcommittee, described the various types of agriculture in East Lyme. She stated if there was more agriculture in town then we would be less reliant on outside sources, especially in an emergency. There are 53 farmers and 2000 acres in East Lyme which help local residents and contribute to clean water. S. Uden mentioned the fishing industry which attracts people to town and helps keep the waters clean, she stated aquaculture should be encouraged. Open space cost less than residential development, more people equals more costs.

Tom Kall, 80 Grassy Hill Rd. stated all lands north of Interstate 95 should be protected for aquifer recharge. He stated the water is a stratified drift aquifer and starts in the north end of town. A few years back the town started buying water from New London which is highly treated. In return for buying the water from New London the town has to supply a certain amount of water in the winter. T. Kall suggested an ordinance limiting the use of fertilizers near aquifer zones, require certification of operation of septic systems, limit paved, impervious surfaces, protect the Four Mile River aquifer and protect beavers.

Ron Luich, 13 Eno Lane, President of the East Lyme Land Trust, stated the land trust had been awarded DEEP grant money for open space purchase. He stated it takes approximately 5 years to acquire land for open space. R. Luich informed the members of other properties the land trust has bought for open space. He stated the land trust has been approached by solar farm developers offering lots of money to install solar farms, the land trust has decided not to allow solar farms on their properties. He stated protecting drinking water should be a priority.

Barbara Harris, 24 Fairhaven Rd., wants to see open space and coastal resources protected. She lives on a tidal marsh and has seen many changes over the years due to climate change. Fairhaven Rd. has become very busy because people use it to get to the Black Point area, this also creates trash along the road which she has noticed is a problem on other town roads. B. Harris also stated that the phragmites should be better controlled.

Kelly Streich, 20 Brook Rd., suggested that the POCD include what has been dropped and what has been added in the POCD. She stated the Pattagansett River estuary is highly developed and the wetlands in the estuary are a unique habitat. The town should protect these areas and consider low impact developments, increased setbacks and a nature center behind the middle school. There should be zoning regulations concerning solar farms.

Doug Dubitsky, 690 Boston Post Rd. N. Windham, stated he represents farmers and landowners in East Lyme. He stated farmers are always looking forward and are hard workers who have kept their land as open space for generations. He stated that if a farmer wants to leave land to his children and they want to develop it they should be able to. D. Dubitsky stated that the town should not designate people's property as open space therefore limiting what the farmer can do with the land.

Kate Steel, 23 Rose Lane, suggested integrating the seniors in town with the youth. She also stated there is a large Chinese community in town and they should also be integrated into the community.

Barbara Johnson Low, 3 North Rd., would like the community to be more walkable. She stated that buildings in town could be zoned to allow up to three stories and mixed use should be encouraged. By allowing retail on the lower levels and residential on the top two floors this would encourage a walkable community.

Tim Londregan, 109-111 Main St., Niantic Bay Shellfish Co. stated there is a vibrant waterfront with a long history of fishing and aquaculture. He stated his strong support for keeping aquaculture in the POCD. T. Londregan would like to see the support of aquaculture in the current POCD remain.

Ruth DeLuca, 10 Bronson St., stated that natural resources are the charm of the town. She stated the town should consider funding of open space and educate residents on the harm of fertilization to the waterways. R. DeLuca stated in the past, the town had set aside a small amount of funding each year for the purchase of opens space, they no longer fund open space. She stated the future depends on the health of its natural resources.

Chris Hoy, 124 North Bride Brook Rd. would like to see condos, and apartment limited. He stated the town cannot keep up with the maintenance and upkeep that comes with the increased development.

Kyle Corey, 75 Holmes Rd., stated the number one priority should be preservation of coastal resources. He stated development is out of control and the traffic is getting much worse. It takes more equipment and taxes to maintain the town and roads.

John Lombardo, 2 Hillcrest Rd., stated East Lyme is no longer a small town but everyone wants that small town feel. He feels the town should consider a fund to purchase farms or buy development rights to help the farmers.

Rich Steel, 23 Rose Lane, would like to see compost pick up, a community garden and he would like to see a grocery store in Niantic.

M. Williams thanked all who came and contributed to the conversation and the POCD.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: (Scott/Ostfeld) to adjourn at 8:45. Vote: Approved Unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sue Spang,
Recording Secretary