

**Minutes of Regular Meeting
Ad-Hoc Committee on Residential Development
March 2, 2005**

Members Present: Bill Eccles, Chair Richard Lee
 John Losty, Vice Chair Cynthia MacDonald
 Vin Avino Randa Nesman
 Ralph Duell Carla Peck
 Neil Johnson Greg Pinto
 Marianne Latimer

Also Present: Linda Farmer, Director of Planning and Community Development,
 Roseann Gottier, Ken Hankinson, Sally Balukus, Jan Rubino

Chair Bill Eccles called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. in the Hicks Memorial Municipal Center Council Chambers.

Minutes of February 16, 2005 were approved.

Mr. Eccles summarized on a flip chart the concerns e-mailed to him after the last meeting:

- Quality of Education
- Traffic
- Visual Landscape
- Environment
- Commerce
- Economics
- Land Use
- Quality of Life
- Foster Growth
- Number of Houses per Year

Mr. Eccles then read a personal statement summarizing why he and his wife had moved to Tolland. His top reasons were:

1. Location
2. Quality of Education
3. Quiet area lacking hustle and bustle
4. Visual Landscape

Mr. Eccles noted a few suggestions for maintaining these qualities and suggested that the group break “residential growth” issues similar to these into smaller pieces to define what those are and suggest ways to address concerns.

Ralph Duell asked if legislation would be required to levy fees on development similar to what is being done in Massachusetts to preserve land. Ms. Farmer replied that, yes, enabling legislation by the State of Connecticut would be required.

Mr. Eccles asked for the group to address land use and to brainstorm by attaching desires to items on the list that had been prepared in an earlier meeting. (List distributed.)

Carla Peck voiced her opinion that Tolland can not have 100 new houses per year. She observed that Tolland's population from the 1990 to 2000 census grew 19.5%, and the statewide average for this timeframe was 3.5%. Her concern about growth involved the number of new homes, and she suggested that the town should control the number by regulation.

Vin Avino said his first concern is environmental issues such as septic systems, well water and watersheds. He noted that Tolland's unusual topography may eliminate many acres from development. Mr. Avino suggested that the growth in number of new home would be market driven.

Linda Farmer clarified what Tolland's current regulations would allow.

Ken Hankinson gave an example that if half of Tolland's potentially available 5,040 acres could be developed, that it could result in 1000 new houses. He supported the idea of having a formal build-out analysis completed. Ms. Peck observed that those numbers would not include smaller parcels that could also potentially be developed.

Marianne Latimer asked for clarification on the types of GIS information that Tolland has developed and wondered if planning groups have enough information to make informed decisions. Neil Johnson agreed that natural resource information needs to be made available.

Richard Lee noted that developers are required to provide detailed studies, but that the town is not willing or able to pay for such detailed reports. He brought up the example that Bob Stuart recently prepared for Greg Pinto on the financial impact of new homes. Mr. Lee thought that several residents that he heard from had not believed the results of that study. Mr. Duell added that he personally followed up with an informal survey this week and verified that the cost of new homes in Tolland is a wash. Ms. Peck stated that oftentimes Tolland residents move from a smaller existing home to a new one in Tolland, and that the report missed the impact of families moving into town to occupy the existing houses.

Mr. Eccles steered the discussion to the list of items to maintain the classic look of New England and preserving the environment. Mr. Hankinson suggested looking at the issue from another angle, namely looking at specific regulations and how they could affect land use, quality of life, etc. Ms. Farmer anticipated that the Planning and Zoning Commission would not be adverse to the Ad-Hoc Committee coming up with either specific or general directions to evaluate.

The discussion next focused on the economics of development. Mr. Pinto said that if the supply of housing is squeezed, the price goes up. He observed that the largest gap in the real estate market is from non-homeownership to starter homes, and cited southwestern Connecticut as an example. Mr. Johnson countered that southwestern Connecticut's housing stock was high in price due to its proximity with NY City, and suggested as an alternative to look at communities such as Granby and Simsbury that have managed growth better.

The group went through a discussion on managed growth:

- Type
- Rate
- Density
- Pattern

Several members of the committee agreed that housing variety, including condos, apartments, duplexes, over-55, high density, village, and 3-4⁺ bedroom homes are all important. Mr. Johnson suggested letting the economics of the market drive new housing stock, allowing for clustering of new housing, allow condos as a means of providing new affordable housing, and existing housing would provide a range of affordability. Ms. Farmer relayed the information that there may also be some interest in allowing residential development in the gateway district. The group generally agreed with the idea of balancing high and low density housing.

Availability of mapping was again brought up. Linda Farmer pointed out that the Town's GIS consultant was working on some of the data and that it would soon be available. Discussion included information on soils, groundwater, open space, details and scales of mapped information.

Ms. Peck suggested the topic of farming and agricultural land use.

Mr. Johnson suggested breaking out into discussion groups for various topics. Mr. Eccles decided that the group was not large enough and he would rather the discussions include the entire Ad-Hoc Committee.

Several members of the group voiced the opinion that residential growth is an issue, not necessarily a problem, and that ways to manage growth should be reviewed.

Ms. Farmer said that she hoped to have Glen Chalder of Planimetrics attend the March 16, 2005 meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Latimer