

**TOWN OF SOMERS
SOMERSVILLE MILL STRATEGIC PLANNING AD HOC COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, October 11, 2016
6:00pm
Selectmen's Conference Room
Town Hall**

Call to Order:

Chairman Brad Pellissier called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Members Present:

Members present included Chairman Brad Pellissier, Vice Chairman Tim Potrikus and Committee Members Joe Iadarola, Tim Keeney, Erik Ness, Evan Plotkin and Ralph Williams. Also present were Town of Somers Open Space and Trails Committee Chairman Ann Moses, First Selectman Lisa Pellegrini (recording) and special guests: Michael Lambert-DEEP Bureau Chief Outdoor Recreation, Mike Emmons- Scantic River Watershed Association (SRWA) President, Peter Bryanton-Town of Enfield Community Development Director and Bill Lee- Town of Enfield Councilman.

Discussion regarding Recreational Development with the Town of Enfield and State of Connecticut:

Chairman Pellissier welcomed everyone and round the room introductions were made. He then asked Tim Keeney to begin the meeting with recap as to why all guests were invited. Mr. Keeney began by referencing the Ad Hoc Committee Report regarding the recreational and public access potential for the site, as well as the potential for connecting trails within the Scantic River Greenway. To understand issues regarding recreational development he invited individuals associated with the Enfield Powder Hollow Park to discuss the advantage and challenges associated with recreational development.

Mr. Keeney introduces DEEP Bureau Chief Michael Lambert and asks Mr. Lambert to provide a brief background of his experience which includes 2 years with CT DEEP and 21 years in parks service in North Carolina. Mr. Lambert spoke at length regarding the desirability to interconnect trails and how the state and towns can partner to create/improve public recreational areas. He also spoke at length regarding available grant programs and specifically mentioned the CT Recreational Trails Program Grant which provides funding for planning, design and restoration/construction of trails. This is a matching 80/20 grant with applications due in December. The committee believes this this is an opportunity the Town may consider applying for. Ms. Moses recommends the committee look 5 years into the future for vision of the desired project as the process takes years.

The group discussed local trails, interconnection points and the use of trails as mitigation techniques for floodplain areas. Mr. Keeney asked Mr. Lambert if the State would be interested in our area and he replied yes as it appears to be an opportunity to connect

trails and provide recreational access for both local and regional use; however the Town should be prepared for an influx of visitors and increased usage stating “if you build it they will come”. Maintenance, security and parking plans should be reviewed prior to development to insure desired outcomes.

Enfield Councilman Bill Lee shares with the group the challenges Enfield faced when Powder Hollow Park became an area wide attraction for local and out of state users. The park is owned by the State with Enfield maintaining the area. Enfield faced increased vandalism, security and trash disposal issues that threatened to close the park and had some officials consider buying the site from the State. Instead, improvements in communications between town and State were made with Enfield expanding its capacity in ownership of the trails with greater financial commitments and strong volunteer involvement. Analysis of the issues determined parking was a problem. As the area became a whole day destination, parking expanded beyond the original limited amount allocated. In addition, sight lines were blocked for law enforcement thus preventing “eyes on the area”. Issues are being addressed, but the experience is a good primer for other communities to learn from. The group discussed passive recreation vs destination recreation, as well as linear parks which facilitate movement and parking concepts. Mr. Plotkin asked why weren’t fees charged and the Mr. Lambert responded that DEEP does that when services are provided, however the park was considered passive recreation. Discussions continued regarding having a plan to not only protect the area, but enhance the use and economic development of the area. Committee members consider the mill site to be an extension of the Mill Pond area and further discussion ensued.

Mr. Peter Bryanton is introduced as the “defacto brownfield expert” for Enfield and asks the Committee to think about the revitalization of Thompsonville and the Freshwater Pond area when considering revitalization of the mill site. Stresses visibility of an area is key.

Mr. Emmons leads discussion regarding linear trails and mentions that there are no issues as mentioned above with Bailey Road Trail or on linear Scantic east and west trails. It is because the linear nature encourages movement.

Open Space and Trails Committee Chairman Ann Moses uses the mention of linear trails connection to segue in the work the Open Space and Trails Committee is doing, sharing project plans for the use, maintenance and development of trails and discussing the importance of volunteers and community partners. Education and engagement of community interest ensure proper use of trails and recreational areas. She believes success in reducing vandalism is achieved by having public accessibility in areas where you know you want extra eyes on. Community sponsors and support are integral in all areas but also play a special part in funding opportunities.

Mr. Bryanton asks Committee if a formal concept has been developed. He mentions Complete Streets Program in Enfield and believes that is something that Somers might want to follow up on.

Grant Process Update:

Ms. Pellegrini updated the group as to the following:

- Ownership of the Mill takes place on October 27, 2016. Closing documents have been completed and final documents are ready to be signed by both the Town and the State.
- The Town continues to meet with GEI regarding the development of bid specs for demolition, as well as the necessary permits. All necessary permits must be in place before demo can begin and the Town must bid out the demo work as per DECD grant guidelines.
- The Zoning Commission will hold a public hearing on November 21 to discuss the proposed Planned Development District Regulation for the area. Committee members are encouraged to attend and the draft regulation will be forwarded in advance to members to review.

Committee discussion regarding site uses/development and methods of public outreach:

Chairman Pellissier begins discussion by stating the importance of finding partners in development process. Mr. Iadarola believes part of the committee's job is to set out a vision for development. Mr. Plotkin discusses the importance of a concept plan. Mr. Ness believes concept is important as it connects to remediation efforts of the site. He notes PDD is important aspect in development. Mr. Iadarola notes the Plan of Conservation and Development is another important aspect. Discussion continues with mentions of initiating requests for proposals, economic development incentives and the use of salvaged items to preserve/celebrate historical significance. Mr. Williams asks for draft of PDD to be sent to members for review prior to November 21 Public Hearing. Mr. Keeney believes the Town should apply for additional grant funds to complete Phase III Environmental Studies.

Future Meetings:

The next meeting date will be Monday, October 24, at 6:00pm. Mr. Iadarola has invited Windsor Locks Economic Development Director Patrick McMahon to the next meeting. Mr. Plotkin will be inviting a representative from Winn Development.

Mr. Williams made a motion to add "Approval of Minutes" to the agenda, seconded by Mr. Iadarola. A unanimous vote followed.

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Keeney made a motion to approve the October 24, 2016 Somersville Mill Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee Minutes, seconded by Mr. Ness. The motion passed with all members voting "yes" with the exception of Mr. Williams and Mr. Plotkin abstaining.

Adjournment:

Mr. Iadarola makes a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Williams and with all in agreement the meeting is adjourned at 7:48pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Pellegrini, Recording

Minutes are not official until accepted at a subsequent meeting.