

**UNAPPROVED**

**Town of Westbrook  
Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)  
Development and Infrastructure Strategies  
Workshop**

Monday, March 15, 2010

7:00 P.M.

Multi-Purpose Room, Mulvey Municipal Center, Westbrook

**MINUTES**

**Welcome and Overview of Tonight's Purpose**

Mr. Jason Vincent of Planimetrics welcomed the public attendees and members of the PoCD Steering Committee. Mr. Vincent outlined the steps of this workshop, which will focus on managing growth and supporting the community. The public attendees were randomly seated at several tables for the prepared exercises, with the goal of obtaining more participation.

**Overview of Exercises and Ground Rules**

Mr. Vincent explained the envelopes that were distributed to each person at the table. They contain color-coded documents to identify the topics for this exercise: • "Supporting Our Community" and • "Guiding Growth". In essence, how is Westbrook doing today to address housing and development, and infrastructure and/or community facilities? The exercise includes ranking the topic with a letter grade from A to F, and suggestions for the town's future vision, priorities and strategies.

**Individual Worksheets**

Mr. Vincent explained the three parts of the exercise: Each attendee will first fill out a worksheet, working independently on a topic, then discuss together with the people at their table, and finally, there will be a group discussion of the findings, which is the purpose of the white document, to summarize the results.

**Group Work**

Mr. Vincent further instructed that each table select a volunteer to take notes, and then the group will review individual worksheets, ultimately summarizing a group worksheet. A volunteer at the table will be the speaker. The groups can note their consensus or disagreement.

The attendees at the tables continued with their individual and group exercises, while some of the Steering Committee Members circulated among the tables providing information if necessary.

**Group Report-Outs**

Each table had a representative to verbally report the results of their findings, describing how Westbrook is doing a good job or not doing a good job, including the level of ranking and what the town should do with respect to vision, priorities and strategies.

**Discuss Results**

The speaker from each table provided comments on their topic, while Mr. Vincent outlined these results on a presentation board.

**Discuss Results** (Cont'd)

The following comments were offered from groups identifying items on the sheet, "Guiding Growth":

A Good Job --

- Working towards providing affordable housing.

Not a Good Job --

- No consistency in the Zoning Regulations.
- Lack of design standards.
- Streamline the permit process.

Vision and Strategies --

- Provide more multi-family development.
- Improve the Town Center streetscape.
- Enhance the aesthetics to the town center to provide opportunities for jobs and attract more people.

The following comments were offered from groups identifying items on the sheet, "Infrastructure/ Community Facilities":

A Good Job --

- Education.
- Recreation.
- The Town Hall facility.
- The Town Library.
- Water Resources.
- Dump Cleanup.

Not a Good Job --

- Sewer Avoidance.
- Lack of pedestrian-friendly walkways.
- No tax incentive for small businesses.

Vision and Strategies --

- Enforce sewage pumping.
- Adopt a regulation to require parking to be set back from the road.
- A teen center/recreational facility.
- Provide an architectural water feature, such as a fountain in the Town Center.
- Improve the appearance of the Marina District.
- Increase vegetative buffers along Route 1.

**Discuss Implementation**

Jason Vincent initiated the group discussion pointing out the many comments regarding the Town Center. He opened the discussion with questions on how to identify ways to improve the Town Center. The workshop attendees offered the following suggestions:

- Tax incentives for businesses to refurbish existing structures.
- More uniformity with the buildings.
- More uniformity with the signage in the town center.
- Address the traffic congestion.
- Extend the town green out to the Church.
- Expand the Town Center to the south where the playing fields are located.
- Develop Trolley Road as part of the Town Center.
- Possible need for a historic preservation committee.
- Research resources to improve existing properties.
- Develop Zoning Regulations that require design standards and enforce design changes.

**Discuss Implementation** (Cont'd)

Additional comments offered from the public suggested that the center is not a traditional town center being that the library and post office are not in close proximity to the town center. Another suggestion was to develop a new town center around the Town Hall. Other ideas offered that might attract people to the town included the creation of a skating rink, coffee shop, visitor center, and public restrooms. It was noted that the speed of traffic needs to be reduced to make sidewalks more welcoming to pedestrians, and that the sidewalks are not contiguous along Route 1. Also, that a grassy area or landscaped buffer be required between the sidewalks and Boston Post Road. It was suggested that the types and sizes of businesses coming to town should be taken into consideration, noting that additional retail or businesses would increase the traffic. Another resident cited that many of the buildings in the town center were in place prior to the adoption of zoning regulations; consequently, a lot of existing conditions cannot be changed.

A discussion ensued with the acknowledgment of the success of The Lee Company. Mr. Leighton Lee provided a background history of the company and how it came to be located in Westbrook. Their future plan is to continue their campus-style development at their Corporate Headquarters on Pequot Park Road.

Mr. Vincent noted that with all the comments being offered about the Town Center, there is a consistent desire to maintain a small town character. Also recognized was the need to build up the importance of estuaries and marshlands. It's clear that a Master Plan is necessary to come up with a vision of what the townspeople would like for a Town Center. Another issue is how to implement changes to Westbrook while forecasting future demands.

Mr. Vincent ended the meeting explaining the "Wild Card" box in the back of room. On the way out the door, anyone can use a "Wild Card" to express ideas or issues they feel are important, and may not have been addressed during this workshop. He noted that the sign-in sheet is a voluntary way of keeping people informed if they choose to provide an email address. The town's website provides all the informational booklets that have been discussed thus far. Updates will be forthcoming. Anyone with comments or questions is encouraged to email Jason Vincent or Town Planner Meg Parulis.

**Adjournment**

The public workshop adjourned at 8:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy J. Rudek,  
Recording Secretary