

**TOWN OF SALEM
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, JULY 27, 2021 – 7:00 P.M.
SALEM TOWN HALL – CONFERENCE ROOM 1**

PRESENT

John Gadbois, Vice Chairman
Carl S. Fontneau
Thomas Reith
Walter Volberg
Michael Flugrad, Alternate
Jennifer Lindo, Alternate

ABSENT

Vernon Smith, Chair
Margaret Caron, Secretary
Diba Khan-Bureau

ALSO PRESENT

Town Planner Justin LaFountain
Selectwoman Liaison Susan Sullivan

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman Gadbois called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Alternate Member Commissioners Flugrad and Lindo were seated for Commissioners Smith and Caron, respectively.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. PUBLIC COMMENT: *none*

4. PUBLIC HEARING: *none*

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S):

a. Meeting Minutes: July 20, 2021

M/S/C: Fontneau/Lindo, to approve the July 20, 2021 Planning & Zoning Commission Regular Meeting Minutes. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0-1, all in favor. Voting in Favor: Commissioners Gadbois, Fontneau, Lindo, Reith, and Volberg. Voting in Opposition: None. Voting in Abstention: Commissioner Flugrad.

5. OLD BUSINESS:

a. Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)

The Commissioners reviewed and discussed the highlights of the results of the POCD Survey. A total of 277 responses were received which, in comparison to the number of responses received by other towns of similar size for similar surveys, is acceptable. Of these responses, items of note included:

- Q1 How long have you lived in Salem?
141 respondents have resided in Salem for 20 or more years
- Q4 What factors influenced your decision to locate in Salem?
191 respondents indicated the Rural Environment
116 respondents indicated the School District
Commissioner Reith commented on that, not only did a large number of respondents move to Salem for the School District, but it has also been able to maintain their budgets and not raise the town's taxes allowing them to not only attract but maintain the residents.
- Q7&8 How many school-aged children (K-8) live in your household?
230 respondents did not have school-aged children attending public school
269 respondents did not have school-aged children attending private school or are homeschooled
Chairman Smith will be requested to obtain the number of children who are homeschooled or are attending private school.
- Q12 What is the age of your head of household?
123 respondents were age 41 to 64
105 respondents were age 65 or older
0 respondents were between the ages of 18 to 24, inclusively
The overall demographics of the town will be investigated. Commissioner Fontneau noted that the survey responses are skewed towards long-term residents and residents ages 41 and over.
- Q17 Which of the following represents your total household income?
23 respondents indicated their total household income as being under \$50,000
The number of residents with an income of under \$50,000.00 may be underrepresented. Commissioner Fontneau stated his intention to note the lack of allowing various factors to designate affordable housing, e.g., the high income to housing cost ratio.
- Q18 How would you describe your current employment situation?
93 respondents are Retired
- Q21 Do you believe Salem has enough business development?
169 respondents stated No
- Q24 What businesses would you like to see more of in Salem?
147 respondents stated Grocery and Restaurants

Commissioner Fontneau noted that, given the population of the town, it might be unreasonable for the residents to expect such businesses.

Q25 Where in Salem would you like to see more business development occur?

163 respondents stated the Route 82 near Route 11

149 respondents stated the Intersection of Routes 82 and 85

Q26 How important is the acquisition of additional open space for public use?

116 responded Very Important

109 responded Somewhat Important

Commissioner Fontneau added that the town has approximately 24+% of permanently protected open space, which is not usual. Discussion ensued regarding whether the residents are aware of the amount of open space in the town and how much of the open space is publicly accessible.

Q27 Do you think that any of these services/features are insufficient in Salem?

74 respondents stated Sidewalks

The practicality of sidewalks with respect to their construction and ongoing maintenance was raised. Selectwoman Liaison Sullivan added that the overall theme of the survey results appears to be the respondents' wish to have places where they can eat, walk, and, above all, be connected and suggested the possibility of considering connecting various key locations as a way to enrich people's lives.

Q29 What types of housing would you prefer more of in Salem?

153 respondents stated Single Family with Large Lots

Q30 Do you believe Salem's land use policies are welcoming to all individuals?

77 respondents stated Other.

A significant number of the respondents felt that the policies were restrictive for business/commercial-type developments.

Q33 Considering the ongoing reductions in State education funding, should Salem explore regional opportunities for sharing some school central office functions like superintendent, finance office positions, etc. to maintain education quality and control increasing budgets?

136 respondents stated Yes

Q36 Is there anything else you would like to add about the direction that you see Salem moving in, or a direction you would like to see Salem move in, on any issue?

This question received 139 responses

Town Planner LaFountain recommended the Commissioners review the varied responses.

Commissioner Fontneau noted that the responses are similar to that of the last POCD survey, e.g., the preference of single-family residences on two acre lots and for more open space and businesses. In response to Vice Chairman Gadbois, Town Planner LaFountain stated that he does not expect any significant changes in the land use statutes that would affect the POCD.

The POCD assignments were reviewed and possible goals/implementation steps were suggested:

Chapter 2, Vision Statement/Goals: Commissioners Caron & Fontneau

Chapter 3, Natural Resources: Commissioner Khan-Bureau

Goal: Register the town to participate in Sustainable CT, a voluntary certification program for towns to earn either a silver or bronze category by meeting a certain number of environmentally-friendly achievements. The program may open the town to future grant possibilities.

Implementation Step: Board of Selectmen to pass a resolution stating the town's intent to participate in Sustainable CT

Goal: Strengthen the commitment to maintain the protections to the Eightmile River Watershed Zone and buffer

Implementation Step: Recommend that the Inland Wetlands & Conservation Commission extend their jurisdiction from 75' to 100'

Implementation Step: Recommend that the Inland Wetlands & Conservation and Planning & Zoning Commissions request funding to update literature sources on stream buffer width, minimums for agricultural extension, and stormwater infiltration by the tree canopy and understory from the Eightmile River Watershed Coordinating Committee

Goal: Assess the present levels of Open Space, either for wildlife habitat or public recreation use. Attach the 2007 Open Space Plan as an appendix item.

Implementation Step: Suggest that the Open Space Committee and Inland Wetlands & Conservation Commission review and update the Open Space Plan

Goal: Updating of map (currently in progress)

Chapter 4, Agriculture, Forest, Open Space: Commissioner Khan-Bureau

Chapter 5, Historic, Archaeology: Commissioners Smith & Volberg

Chapter 6, Economic Development: Commissioner Fontneau

Commissioner Fontneau reported that the Economic Development Commission has been discussing the possibility of suggesting changes to the current zoning map. Realizing that much of the land that is currently designated as highway commercial is impeded by the topography of the properties, they plan to suggest designating other properties that are easily accessible and undeveloped.

Chapter 7, Municipal Facilities/Services: Commissioner Flugrad

Goal: Recommend to the Board of Selectmen to consider unmet needs of Salem's senior citizens

Implementation Step: Consider outfitting at least one (1) public building as an emergency warming, electric charging station, or shelter.

Implementation Step: Consider need for a future Senior Center

Implementation Step: Consider establishing a local transportation van

Goal: Urge the Board of Selectmen to consider future uses and acquisition of town-owned land; conduct an inventory and present uses of the land and examine the feasibility of creating new road linkages to existing town or State roads to, for example, provide alternate routes in preparation of any road closures.

Goal: Establish a new well site for Salem School (possibly the Zemko property)

Goal: Encourage the Board of Selectmen to consider and enact programs offering incentives to create more affordable living units for younger and older residents.

Implementation Step: Add a budget item to create a fund to develop community water and septic systems for affordable housing units.

Implementation Step: The Board of Selectmen and Planning & Zoning Commission work together to review changes in the housing stock, possible changes to the regulations, or incentive grants to increase the number of affordable living units.

Chapter 8, Housing Stock, Population: Commissioner Fontneau

Goal: Encourage the town to participate in the Southeastern Connecticut Community Land Trust, a nonprofit charitable organization which assists towns and "holds land for development and stewardship of permanently affordable housing,...."

Goal: Document the numbers, types, and diversity of residential homes in Salem and assess future needs.

Implementation Step: Work with the Town Assessor to extract current housing data and assess the population cohort changes.

Commissioner Fontneau has received and conducted a preliminary review of the data received from the Assessor and Tax Collector.

Implementation Step: Consider changes to the town's Zoning and Subdivision Regulations to increase possible starter, age-restricted, and rental housing units. Changes to consider include reducing the minimum lot size for single-family residences, relaxation of ownership requirements for accessory apartments, reduction of minimal home size, and changes per the State's Accessory Housing Unit Regulation (House Bill 6107).

Goal: Make changes to increase affordable housing in town.

Implementation Step: Implement Salem's Affordable Housing Plan (in process)

Implementation Step: Encourage more development of Age-Restricted Housing to provide housing to an older population seeking to downsize.

Implementation Step: Support the Board of Selectmen in obtaining State grants to provide community water and septic systems to help incentivize developers to construct affordable age-restricted housing

Commissioner Fontneau proposed setting a Public Hearing for the Affordable Housing Plan for additional input and to help finalize the section.

In response to Commissioner Reith, Town Planner LaFountain stated that, to the best of his knowledge, he is not aware of any tax relief related to housing for the town's elderly residents. The DD Form 214 allows veterans to receive a minor tax abatement.

Chapter 9, Transportation, Road Network: Town Planner LaFountain

Chapter 10, Recreation, Trails: Commissioner Gadbois

Alternate Commissioner Lindo volunteered to review, proofread, edit, and/or provide any possible suggestions the Commissioners might need for their respective sections.

Town Planner LaFountain will e-mail the relevant sections of the POCD, which will be editable and can be used as a template, to the Commissioner Liaisons.

Vice Chairman Gadbois tasked the Commissioners with presenting a draft of their respective chapter(s) at the Commission's next regular meeting.

6. NEW BUSINESS: *none*

8. ZONING ENFORCEMENT OFFICER'S REPORT/INLAND WETLANDS AND CONSERVATION COMMISSION REPORT – *no report*

9. TOWN PLANNER REPORT

Town Planner LaFountain reminded the Commissioners to review the Zoning Regulation changes and recommended setting the Public Hearing date for the Affording Housing Plan at their next regular meeting.

10. CORRESPONDENCE: *none*

11. PUBLIC COMMENT: *none*

12. PLUS DELTAS: *none*

13. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: Lindo/Volberg, to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Agnes T. Miyuki, Recording Secretary for the Town of Salem