

**TOWN OF SALEM
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2021 – 7:00 P.M.
SALEM TOWN HALL – CONFERENCE ROOM 1**

PRESENT

Vernon Smith, Chair
John Gadbois, Vice Chairman
Carl S. Fontneau
Diba Khan-Bureau
Walter Volberg
Dave Knopf, Alternate

ABSENT

Thomas Reith
Steven Shelley, Alternate

ALSO PRESENT

First Selectman Ed Chmielewski

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. PUBLIC COMMENT:

First Selectman Chmielewski expressed his support and is looking forward to working with Chairman Smith and the Commission. He also commended them on their hard work and efforts on the town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), including engaging and working together with the town's other boards and commissions for their input.

Chairman Smith informed the First Selectman that they would be requesting a letter of extension generated by his office to the State.

6. OLD BUSINESS:

a. Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)

A packet containing a hard copy of the POCD was delivered to the Commissioners so that they can edit the document and hand them to the respective authors of the individual chapters for their final edits.

Chapter 2 – Vision Statement/Goals & Objectives (Commissioners Caron & Fontneau)
Commissioner Fontneau reviewed the process by which the chapter was created and the contributions of former Commissioner Caron (forward, introduction, and census data) and Town Planner Justin LaFountain (table). He has since added information regarding the changes in population and age distribution and the growing need for starter homes and age-restricted housing. Commissioner Closius agreed with the growing need for

starter homes, adding that changes in employment availability, e.g., Pfizer and Electric Boat, were/are also a factor in the changes. Commissioner Fontneau added that such Zoning Regulations changes as the minimum net buildable area have also made it difficult for individuals to build new single-family residences.

Discussion ensued regarding the demographics of those who responded to the survey and its accuracy in reflecting the needs of the town. A note will be included that, while differences in the data presented throughout the document exist due to the varying data sources, their vision for the town remains the same.

Chapter 3 – Natural Resources (Commissioner Khan-Bureau)

Chapter 4 – Agriculture/Forestry/Open Space (Commissioner Khan-Bureau)

Commissioner Khan-Bureau presented and reviewed the changes and additions made to the revised chapters, based upon the input of the Inland Wetlands & Conservation Commission and Town Planner.

In response to Chairman Smith, Commissioner Khan-Bureau stated that climate change is a scientifically proven phenomenon. Significant changes in the climate are evidenced by the growing occurrences of flash floods, the deluge of rain, warming, and the like. She confirmed that the discussion revolving around climate change is in relation to its effects in Salem. Chairman Smith stated the different aspects of the discussions surrounding climate change, including the politics of climate change and climate shifting, an ever-occurring process. Commissioner Khan-Bureau stated her credentials and professional background, adding that she has been studying and is published on the subject of climate change, specifically as related to the Eightmile and Farmington Rivers. She stated that, while the climate does naturally change over time, there is clear evidence that, since the onset of the industrial revolution, there has been a definite shift in the environment and ecosystem as a result of these manmade elements. She did not feel that the subject matter was a political issue. Chairman Smith stated that he is not arguing the veracity of climate change, but merely stating that it is a political topic and wished to ensure that the document does not address the issue in a political manner. Commissioner Fontneau stated his background and agreed with the effects of climate change. The POCD may include strategies in how to mitigate and/or deal with the effects of climate change on the environment, including infiltration, better water management, and application of different standards. He has drafted three-and-a-half pages of notes for consideration to be amended in the chapter(s).

Commissioner Khan-Bureau exited the meeting at 7:28 p.m.

The Commissioners continued their discussion regarding climate change and the importance of ensuring that the document is specifically written for the town. It was

agreed that the document should be based on factual information, information gathered from the townspeople, and helps guide the town for the next ten years.

Commissioner Fontneau reviewed the items in the 2010 POCD that should be corrected:

- ensure that references are included in the updated figures
- updating the photographs
- wetlands fines should be eliminated as it is unrelated to planning & zoning
- suggestion of a tri-town management plan, which should involve input from the Gardner Lake Authority
- sewer avoidance
- updating the name of the Riparian Corridor Overlay Zone to the Eightmile River Watershed Overlay District

Chapter 5 – Historic, Archaeology (Commissioners Smith & Volberg)

The chapter will be maintained as is, with additions. Chairman Smith proposed his additions to the chapter, including the etymology of the term “Salem” (a biblical term), defining the word “Tory”, and a paragraph on the Congregational Church of Salem. Commissioner Volberg warned against including any religious connotations to the meaning of the word “Salem”. Chairman Smith suggested the possibility of adding that the population of the town nearly doubled when the now-defunct Route 11 project was presented. Commissioner Knopf also questioned whether the Town of Salem is still considered a farming community, noting that there are currently very few farms in Salem, and proposed changing it to a rural country community. Chairman Smith will contact Art Winakor or David Wordell regarding any additional information that could be included in the chapter.

Chapter 7 – Municipal Facilities/Land/Services (Commissioner Fontneau, former Commissioner Flugrad and former Selectwoman Liaison Sue Sullivan)

Feeling that the previous draft included items unrelated to land use issues, Commissioner Fontneau presented a draft of the chapter that he had taken the liberty of rewriting. The revised chapter includes a list of the buildings and services, that would be beneficial for developers who often search for information regarding the town’s infrastructure in the town’s POCD. Commissioner Closius wished to ensure that elements in the previous document are not loosely disposed of in the 2022 POCD.

Chapter 9 – Transportation, Road Network (Town Planner LaFountain)

Suggestions will be made for the chapter, including the addition of the round-a-bout.

Goals

Commissioner Fontneau stated that an example of the chart for the goals is a hybrid of Commissioner Gadbois’ and the Town Planner’s versions. He proposed including fewer goals that are more realistic to be completed within the given time period. A brief

discussion was held regarding the location of the goals, which would relate to each of the chapters in the document. Concerned with the disposition of the goals stated in the previous POCD, Commissioner Closius volunteered to review the status of the previous goals and determine the need to either maintain those goals or note the reasons why those goals were dispositioned.

Photographs to be added to the document were briefly reviewed and discussed, including aerial photographs and photographs from town events.

In the interest of time, the Commissioners were tasked with reviewing the chapters and providing any input to the individual authors between the meetings.

13. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: Smith/Volberg, to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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