

**TOWN OF SOMERS  
PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

**PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING MINUTES  
DECEMBER 6, 2012  
7:00 PM TOWN HALL**

**I. WELCOME**

Jeff Bord, Director of Public Works/Town Engineer explained the purpose of the meeting. He explained the importance of updating the POCD plan every 10 years in order to receive state funding grants.

**II. INTRODUCTION**

Clifford Bordeaux, Vice Chair of the Planning Commission introduced POCD members present at the meeting: William Salka, Greg Genlot, and Adam Van Wingerden (all from the Planning Commission). David Palmer, Board of Education, Tom Mazzoli, Board of Finance, Jill Conklin, Zoning Commission, Karl Walton, Conservation Commission, Kathy Devlin, Board of Selectman, Rick Cheney and David Reed represented the Economic Development Commission.

**III. DEMOGRAPHICS**

Jeff Bord reviewed demographics of the town, not including the of the prison. He covered population, average age, median household income, median home value, and cost of living.

**IV. ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE 2004**

Lisa Pellegrini, First Selectman spoke on accomplishments of the town since 2004. The following accomplishments were reviewed and explained to the audience with a slide show presentation. The slide show featured pictures of these accomplishments:

- Additional Open Space-495 Acres
- Water Mains Installed-Egypt Rd., Field Rd. & Sunset Dr.
- State Police Relocated to the Old Firehouse
- Expanded Library
- Somersville Street scape Improvements
- Battle Street Sidewalk Construction
- Senior Center Parking Lot Reconstruction
- Solar Panels installed at Fire Station, Elementary School, & P.W.
- Energy Efficient Lighting installed at Town Hall and Public Works
- New Recreation Field Constructed at the Field Rd. Park
- Maple Street and School St. Reconstruction
- Ninth District Rd., Sokol Rd., & Main Street Reconstruction 2013
- Town Hall Parking Lot-Reconstruction 2013

**V. LIBRARY UPDATE**

Francine Alloisa, Library Director made a presentation regarding the library. In the fall of 2009 the library applied for a \$500,000 state grant that the new library would be adequate for 20 years. With this building program the library has doubled in size with close to 20,000 sq ft. The Blake Community Room, story time room, study rooms, new shelving areas, and the new teen and children library areas have been nice additions. Francine reviewed the new technology the library has acquired. She reported the most important need to the library now is to maintain the space, keep it clean, keep up with repairs/contracts, and plan for funding for up to date technology.

The demand for technology is growing and there is a need for upgrades to software. She mentioned it was important to keep up with what the Somers schools were doing such as getting i pads, etc. She said the library has a strong need for a professional staff person to work with the teens after school. There is also a need for a technology coordinator.

The library will continue to loan E-readers. Large print collections are in high demand due to the growing senior population. She said more programs are needed for Seniors and Families with young children. The library is in the process of establishing a committee to review past and present plans.

## **VI. SCHOOLS**

David Palmer Jr., Board of education Chairman made a presentation regarding the Somers Public Schools. He reviewed completed facilities renovations/projects, new technology programs, accomplishments of the schools, and future projects planned.

One of the major pushes is to equip the whole student body with i pads over the next few years. There is a two phase program in place to accomplish this by 2015. The Board of Education will work closely with the Board of finance to accomplish this task.

The school system has won a number of awards in the areas of robotics and tech ed. There has been an expansion of Virtual High School Curriculum. There has been continued growth in CMT/CAPT test scores in the past several years. Somers High School SAT scores are above state and national averages. The schools continue to work diligently to keep up to date math and literacy curriculum s.

Future projects planned include roof repairs on all school buildings, parking lot repair for SHS, renovation/redesign of athletic fields in concordance with the Civil Rights Review, and a curriculum expansion across all grade levels to meet student/society needs. The state is also looking at implementing a full day kindergarten within the next two years.

## **VII. FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Tim Percoski, Association President spoke on behalf of the Somers Fire Dept. He reviewed the recent impacts to fire and EMS calls, accomplishments over the past decade, and planning/operation concerns. He explained the need for more career staff (paid firefighters) due to the reduction of volunteers and growing population. The expanded housing developments in remote areas with limited water supply has affected the ability for the firefighters bring in adequate

water quickly. They often have to shuttle water from other places. Expanded housing in Woodcrest has significantly increased EMS call volumes.

Accomplishments include an additional fire tanker, a second ambulance, upgrades in training services, and the implementation of a Duty Officer to respond to weekend and night calls. Mr. Percoski proposed futures needs such as two additional fire stations in town to serve remote areas and smaller satellite stations to house one or two trucks/ambulances. He explained that in Tolland County, Somers covers the largest area with a single station per sq. mile with over 10,000 residents ( this number includes the state prison population).

Mr. Percoski explained the need for replacement of multiple fire apparatus that exceed the NFPA age standards of 25 years. Regular replacement of ambulances is every 5 years and there is also a need for an aerial apparatus (ladder truck). Somers currently relies on surrounding departments and this cause a 10-15 minute delay in response time.

## **VIII. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Dave Reed spoke on the business community. Mr. Reed discussed the new small business that have come into town. In the last year and a half, thirteen new businesses have come into Somers. Three have grown, three have been lost due to the economy. There is potential for four more businesses to come. He discussed the possibility of rotary bringing in a corn drive and Helio Sage bringing in the Solar Project. These will add to the financial growth of the town. He discussed the tourist attraction of horses. Specialty shoppes are also a unique business Somers provides.

Mr. Reed briefly discussed making a an anti-blight ordinance. He stressed the importance to adding to the grant list so overall the town can keep taxes stable.

## **IX. PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Barry Mornahan- 119 Maple Street spoke regarding keeping the Scantic River clean. He felt the town should be concerned about. He feels th town is in danger of losing the Scantic River if it is not preserved properly. He feels an anti blight ordinance would  
would be great for the town to implement for preservation of properties of the town.
2. Ann Kirkpatrick- Florida Rd. -Asked if there was any plan or schedule for improvements on on the 190/83 intersection.
3. Jan Lake- Lindell Drive- is interested in seeing a way to get to the parks. She would like to see more bike paths and sidewalks.
4. Jett Ladd-Gave a presentation on open land use and taxation of land in the town.
5. Scott Sten- 119 Root Rd – Feels strongly against giving the town a portion of their earnings from selling land.
6. David Pinney- 214 Maple St.- Feels the town needs to be more proactive to support economically viable working farms and about supporting agricultural lands.
7. Nancy Barret-Scantic Valley Farm- Discussed the 40% land tax is too much. She also felt the questions on the survey were leading.
8. Britt Collins-54 Avery Rd.- Felt open space was very important. Discussed how farmers get a different rate for their land. Needed clarification on the 40% land tax.
9. Lorraine Weatherly- 219 Billings Rd.- Against the 40% being taken away.

**10.** Tom Clark- 175- Mountian Rd.- ask about the 40% tax. He had concerns on the amount the town was taxing those selling/dividing land.

The commission members addressed the above mentioned concerns and answered questions regarding land use, open space and regulations on selling land. The commission also briefly discussed new developments/subdividing land in the town.

Jeff Bord closed the meeting and suggested more comments could be sent via email or in writing. The meeting ended at 8:45 pm.