



# TOWN OF WOODBURY

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## Board of Selectmen Joint Land Use Meeting

*Saturday, February 15, 2014 ♦ 9:30 a.m.  
Shove Building*

### MINUTES

Present: Bill Butterly, Martin Overton, Michelle Ecsedy, Brian Miller, Barbara Perkinson, Mary Tyrrell, Bob Clarke, Joel Serota, John Lagadie, Dick Leavenworth, Joe Donato, Claudette Volage, Susan Cheatham, Wayne Anderson, Alex Desorbo, Jeff Sherman, Gail McTaggart, Beverly Deickler, Eileen Denver, John Chamberlain, and Alissa DeJonge

First Selectman William Butterly convened the meeting at 9:34 a.m.

Brian Miller, Town Planning Consultant, introduced Alissa DeJonge, Vice President of research for the Connecticut Economic Resource Center. CERC is a private nonprofit group funded partially by the state intended to promote economic development throughout the state. Mr. Miller noted that several of the Town's boards and commissions were represented at the meeting.

Ms. DeJonge summarized the Middle Quarter District Market Feasibility Study, the process, and some of the key findings of the report.

The purpose of the report was to explore the economic feasibility of the 7.6 acres site in the Middle Quarter District. The Town of Woodbury was interested in what could be done to enhance this part of town. CERC looked at other broader economic development possibilities while keeping in mind the Town's overall character, demographic trends, as well as what is going on economically taking into consideration any limitations of infrastructure and thinking about the cultural and historical assets.

They first looked at a demographic snapshot of the town. Who is currently living in the town and what the trends have been over time. Commuting patterns, who's coming into the town on a regular basis and what residents are traveling to every day? They looked at a current economic profile to get a sense of the industries that are in Woodbury and conducted a retail gap analysis. Since there are so many retail establishments, they wanted to see if there were any gaps that could be filled. This information was shown to the POCD and they received some input back from them, conducted surveys of realtors and residents to see what events they are attending and what they see as the real assets of Woodbury. CERC also found recent legislation that could benefit the town and worked on potential scenarios that could benefit the town.

About half the adult population of Woodbury holds a bachelor's degree or more. It has a high median income level and overall high housing values. They also found that the population is aging. The trend is there are fewer younger folks in town and it seems as though fewer people are able to afford the assets here. Growth occurred in those over the age of 50 and resulted from the resident population aging as opposed to moving into town. In looking at commuting patterns they determined that Woodbury is the net exporter of workers, more people travel out of town than people come in to work here. The economic analysis reflected that the top employment sectors of Woodbury

residents are education; healthcare and social assistance professional; scientific and management; and retail trade. The unemployment rate is lower in Woodbury than that of Litchfield County and Connecticut. Retail Gap analysis reflects retail expenditures of Woodbury residents. They were able to find areas where there is a surplus and a gap in retail areas.

An on line survey of residents and real estate professionals was conducted. Responses to what people found most appealing about Woodbury included the community, open space, quietness, charm, architecture and beauty of the Town. The survey also asked what people would like to see more of downtown, the response being more clothing stores, coffee shops, art galleries/studios/supply stores. Town events are well attended by people who took the survey.

An act concerning the New England scenic trail was passed in legislature establishing a Connecticut antiques trail. It requires the DEDC to establish a Connecticut antiques trail and to identify and market sites where antiques are sold. Legislature talked about signs leading people to these sites and creating a website. It was stated it must be done with available appropriations, however there is no funding. This will require more advocacies amongst towns that are interested in having this created.

In summary, the assets found for the town of Woodbury included antique stores, destination retail, New England charm, village center, well-educated and wealthy residents and access to nature. Challenges included a sluggish economy, lack of public water and sewer, which can limit the types of stores and industries that come to town, the access to highways can be seen as a challenge, constraints in the historic district, little growth in the younger population and vacant property in the downtown area.

There are differing opinions of the residents. Some want to keep the status quo and don't want to alter the quiet nature of the town, development could infringe on the small town feel. Others feel it's important to increase the tax base so the residents don't have to bear the entire burden and it would be nice to have access to more services and retail within the town. Growth doesn't mean Woodbury has to lose its character; it depends on the types of stores that are brought downtown.

CERC feels it would be very advantageous to utilize what already exists in the Town and lay some groundwork for future growth. Due to the current economic status there is less of a demand for development, the Town should approach development in a phased approach looking at what it has within its control to spur demand and then look for outside development opportunities once the economy turns around. The first phase is to bring in more visitors to the Town. Create more excitement about Woodbury and this will bring more people to current establishments. That should in turn attract the interest of developers and other retail owners.

Step one is creating interest in Woodbury. Use the Middle Quarter property to host events to draw in more visitors and support existing retailers. Create destinations for visitors, by expanding the town center connecting attractions all along Main Street. Suggestions included widening sidewalks, additional lighting, making downtown cohesive or adding a bike lane for access to nature. Advocate for the antiques trail legislation to spur tourism in town. Then step two would be to consider development opportunities, keeping in mind the Town's overall character. It was determined that by adding retail establishments such as limited service restaurants, drinking places (upscale wine bar or beer tavern), coffee or tea houses, clothing stores or art galleries/studios/supply stores these establishments would complement what exists in town. Ms. Dejonge summarized that Woodbury has unique assets and is positioned as the gateway to Litchfield County; however, Woodbury will need to create attractions and events that draw in visitors before retail development can occur. The town should complement its current assets and attractions when considering retail opportunities, seeking retail that will complement its New England charm

providing services for its residents and visitors. Ms. DeJonge clarified this would incorporate just north of Middle Quarter for now.

Mary Tyrrell expressed that they need to investigate sidewalks stating that sidewalks drop just as you hit the retail spaces and feels that the sidewalks should be continued past the fire station and up towards the condominiums to promote walking access to these areas.

Joel Serota stated that this is a question of specialized event marketing and upscale retailers will trigger growth. This can be done by having a real strategic plan without destroying the culture of the town. You need to make the town a destination town. Having the upscale retailers will trigger sustainable growth. They need something unique that separates Woodbury from the other New England towns.

First Selectman Butterly asked if CERC had looked into changing the zoning around that area. Ms. DeJonge responded that they did not look at zoning, that they wanted to figure out what the people were looking for in town, but stated that would be an excellent next step. He also asked her to elaborate on water and sewer. Ms. DeJonge noted that some businesses would not come because there is no water and sewer, so the town may not be able to get a large restaurant, but based on the retail gap analysis, that may not be what is needed at this point. It would limit if the town was looking for some larger opportunities. First Selectman Butterly questioned the attendees if they felt that if there were sewers that it would be better.

Mary Tyrrell stated that she felt there was a sewer avoidance plan in Woodbury because of the types of water and land that Woodbury has. In order to protect it and the cost involved it is not something that the town wanted to invest in. Ms. Tyrrell stated that you'd need a large parcel of land to utilize it and need discharge points, a sewer plant, which the town does not currently have. First Selectman Butterly questioned if sewers were here, would it be further protection of the aquifer?

Joe Donato stated that the septic tanks of small restaurants are pumped "almost daily." That's a problem, it smells and the systems are being overworked.

Russel Barton stated you either want growth or you don't want growth. If you provide sewers you are opening the door for larger development. He agrees that when you discharge water into the ground that is over an aquifer, you have another problem.

It was questioned if some of that is the landlord's responsibility to make upgrades to their properties. The new systems being installed are to protect the aquifer. People who own real estate and retail have an obligation to update and maintain their systems in such a way that enhances what's available to them.

Dick Leavenworth offered the cost of adding sewers is extreme because of the terrain. Installation costs would be significant and the return, unless we radically amended the towns zoning regulations, would not be great. Woodbury would be adding another high cost item that would require maintenance.

Russ Barton stated that it is limited what can be brought in due to the zoning regulations and the amount of water discharge allowed and that the health department needs to get involved. If you bring sewers in, it helps the town by keeping the aquifer clean.

Bob Clarke suggested that if they were able to hook up to the Heritage septic or sewer plant, it would take off the burden of building or maintaining a plant, suggesting that they could take it only through the Middle Quarter. The initial expense would be high, but would be paid for with revenue bonds and ultimately would be a pay back.

It was suggested that they talk to the small towns/communities that already have these systems. There are significant cost burdens.

It was clarified that the discussion regarding sewers was referring just to the Middle Quarter District. The purpose of the discussion was to get a feel for what people want. If enough people felt they wanted to take a look at what the cost is, it would be worth pursuing further.

Selectman Overton stated the other thing to consider is that if these systems fail on a large scale, and you have access to a sewer plant, DEEP will make the town connect to it and pay for it. Installation could be from a grant, but thereafter you lose control. Mr. Overton feels that part of the solution to Middle Quarter is a package facility for that entire district that allows it to develop fully according to current or proposed zoning and that's part of the solution. A package facility has a capacity; it treats on site and has a discharge meeting state and federal regulations. Not having a good sewer system is a "deal breaker."

Once connected to a sewer and septic system, its maintenance free and people are generally happy to be connected.

Mr. Leavenworth stated that storm water management is another thing that needs to be taken into consideration. There are also historic pollution sites that need to be looked at.

Gail McTaggart offered that Southbury has a strong sewer avoidance policy. She guessed that there will be a lot of concern from Southbury residents about bringing something all the way down from Southbury to Middle Quarter. There's an impact on these properties if there is sewer service.

There was a discussion on the reworking of the Middle Quarter district so that it encouraged a more pedestrian accessible site. Drainage areas could be made more like rain gardens, sidewalks into these facilities could be increased, work could be done on the crosswalks to create more of a park your car and walk amongst those businesses. If made into more of a pedestrian area it would decrease traffic in that area as well. Eileen Denver noted that the POCD did recommend that.

How to implement the Plan of Conservation and Development recommendations relative to Middle Quarter is the subject of the meeting. Selectman Overton feels that the Middle Quarter was very poorly planned as a commercial district. Planning of that district needs to happen as a whole, not parcel by parcel. The town is going to have to put up a significant amount of money or make it available to put in a package plan and access the property owners and do that kind of development otherwise nothing is going to happen. The analysis has been done, but now what to do is the hard part. Things in the way of implementation include sewers, parcel divisions, zoning and the way it's been developed in the past. They need to decide what they're trying to accomplish, speak to the people that are going to buy into it and figure out what they're willing to do. There is huge potential that could put Woodbury on the map.

Ms. DeJonge offered that is exactly where they are, they should take the report and figure out what they want to do now, what they can do for the next steps to happen.

Brian Miller stated that the reports were initiated before he got to Woodbury. He felt that by concentrating on the Middle Quarter District, this report could give them the 20,000 foot view over it, but it's not the end of what they need to do. Regulatory changes are needed. If the Town wants to enhance the Middle Quarter and provide for future development that people really like, that's what they need to look at. They need to look at the circulation system, waste disposal options, look into the costs and economic benefits, what's going to happen, what might

happen and what are the alternatives. Now they need assignments, they could parcel out zoning, circulation (pedestrian), wastewater disposal and any other issues they need to look at. Circulation was briefly touched upon, noting that when new development comes in, sidewalks go in front. As others come in, they get tied in to what's going on within the development, so that people can park and walk around.

Dick Leavenworth offered that they need to consider Main Street and how making a left turn is difficult and the possibility of putting in additional turning lanes. The traffic capacity with increases in development will potentially cause a three lane road.

The term "limited service restaurants" was clarified. These would be less of a sit down style restaurant, more of a counter service type of establishment. The data showed there weren't enough of those types of those restaurants in the region. Alissa DeJonge explained the technique used to come up with this information.

John Chamberlain felt that this report was creating an apparent need where one doesn't exist. It was clarified that once you bring in more visitors, put in some niche retailers; you may want to consider another sandwich shop.

Wayne Anderson questioned if the 29 residents interviewed gave the data for the need for more sandwich shops. The retail gap analysis and the surveys gave them the data. Although the sampling was small, CERC took information from the POCD and realtors, as well.

Trends are showing a sluggish economy, so CERC didn't want to come in with what industries to put in Middle Quarter. Phase one is to get people into town, encouraging events, advocating for legislature and then once more people are visiting, then phase two. The data shows there's an opportunity for something like a sandwich shop, but it doesn't say the opportunity is there now.

Woodbury's Plan of Conservation and Development is very similar to what was shown in the study. Everyone seems to be in agreement to maintain the culture and historic value of the town. They need to look up at 20,000 feet and take the right steps and resolve challenges. There needs to be a real start, the next step. Claudette Volage felt that they need to start by looking at the sewage issues.

Brian Miller offered that the POCD committee's next step should be to parcel out and look at all these issues. Not everything will have a cost and some things can be done at the same time. The sewers issue will be costly and will take time, research and money; however, Zoning needs to be looked at and won't cost anything. They can proceed independently.

Selectman Overton feels the town will need to have some sort of role in implementation, doing it won't happen unless the town is involved in the development stage.

It was discussed that they really need to package and do things correct from a sewage standpoint, how to treat it, really look at it and do it right. Once you dig up the ground, you disturb the pollution.

John Chamberlain referred to the town of Kent and how it has developments on both sides of the main road. There's a development in the back so you can park and walk. He questioned what they are going to do with the empty building coming from Southbury into Woodbury. What are they going to do with Carmen Anthony and West Chevrolet, they are there, how will they tie in? He felt the area that they should concentrate on is where Ovens of France and Gepettos are.

There was discussion that the property owners would need to want to make the sewer changes and make it more pedestrian friendly if that's what the goal is. Would they be willing to work together to do this and what could the town do to help them get them there?

The POCD is in place to do what they are talking about. They have to start with a plan, it has to be "blessed by the POCD," even if it's an addendum to the plan, otherwise you can't go to the state for money. There's a process and there will be state money to support it.

What the town gets is an increase in tax base and a more stable economy; everybody else gets an increase in property values and income. People can be encouraged by incentives.

Joe Donato said the BEDC has tried to get people together, but that the Town needs to get the word out that businesses should be a part of this.

Mr. Barton said that this meeting has been meaningful. They want to join and have participation. Sidewalks are a fine idea. They need incentives to bring people into the town.

Gail McTaggart stated that Russ Barton's property is a model of how something can work. It's a low impact development that has the rain gardens. There are regulatory incentives that are there. She feels it's great if they can make it a package facility for sewer, low impact, keeping the character of the town.

Barbara Perkinson hopes that the POCD subcommittee reforms. Their focus was on the Middle Quarter. She noted that you may not get a total response from a survey; that you physically have to go talk to owners and ask what will make business thrive there. That's the direction the committee was heading, trying to determine what they can do to help these businesses survive.

Selectman Ecsedy noted that they have skipped step one, creating an interest in Woodbury. Noting there was quite a bit of conversation on step two; she asked the group for any new ideas for getting visitors into town.

Susan Cheatham noted Middle Quarter has no focus, it's a bit haphazard. The number one thing would be aesthetics. They need a focus to go to the business owners to say what they are looking at. Right now they are at all different angles and need a place to start.

Middle Quarter is the "gateway to the town." They need to move forward and start implementation.

First Selectman Butterly stated that they went to Simsbury and got good insight and ideas, since they are a similar town with a similar situation. They haven't put the committee back together yet; because they are trying to figure out which way to go while making sure it works and is fair for everyone. They need to put an emphasis on it and get some volunteers to work on it.

It was noted that Woodbury has the longest stretch of historic district in the entire state of and that Simsbury didn't have that issue. If they have a group solely focus on Middle Quarter, it will be good. Until they say what they want to happen, there will be no focus.

It was stated that the BOS will make recommendations on how these committees should work out in the next few weeks and any input that is received before that would be appreciated.

There was brief discussion that the BEDC should put together a town-wide calendar so that businesses and organizations can plan. Things could be set out and advertised together. If events in town were scheduled, other events could be scheduled around those dates to bring more people in and through the Town.

First Selectman Butterly thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 11:16 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Anne Firlings  
Administrative Assistant, Land Use Office

RECEIVED & FILED  
IN WOODBURY, CT

This 18<sup>th</sup> day of Feb 2014  
at 1:06 o'clock P  
Judith T. Reed  
Town Clerk