

Town of Ashford

Established 1714

Michael J. Zambo
First Selectman

**PUBLIC HEARING
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2015, 7:30 P.M.
KNOWLTON MEMORIAL HALL
25 POMPEY HOLLOW ROAD, ASHFORD, CT 06278**

Zambo called the Public Hearing to order at 7:30 p.m.

Present for the Public Hearing/Special town Meeting were Michael Zambo, William Falletti, Ralph Fletcher, Ruth Cutler, Nord Yakovleff, Jeffrey Silver-Smith, Cathryn Silver-Smith, Anthony Patocchio, Cindy Moeckel, Janet Bellamy, James Reviczky, William Becker, Art Talmadge, Sherry Simpson, Tim Rourke, Steve Morytko, William Darcy, Richard Williams, Raymond Fenn, Michael Gantick, Loretta Wrobel, Doug Jenne,

1. Public comment regarding the proposed POCD (written comments submitted by attendees are attached to these minutes)

- Janet Bellamy thanked the POCD committee for their efforts in putting together this draft document and presented comment on mapping inconsistencies (pages 72 and 73 of the draft POCD) and her concerns regarding provision of town services and possible pollutants generated by businesses that might locate in areas targeted for commercial and industrial development.
- William Becker expressed his concerns relating to the introduction of commercial and light industrial businesses on the town relating his experiences in those sorts of businesses over the years. He commented on costs associated with the expanded infrastructure necessary to support increasing commercial land uses.
- Anthony Patocchio thanked the POCD committee for their efforts in putting together this draft document. Mr. Patocchio's written submission relates to technical comments and corrections, and mapping discrepancies. The bulk of his comment regards the I-84 interchange Special Planning Area as portrayed in the POCD draft document in relation to the 2014 revisions to the Planning and zoning regulations.
- Cathryn Silver-Smith thanked the committee for their work and requested a definition of "light industry."
- Richard Williams reported that the intent was to encourage non-impact types of business, e.g. warehousing.

- Cathryn Silver-Smith clarified a statement on page 10 of the draft, explaining that the town's budget is presented at the annual town meeting which, by ordinance, automatically adjourns to referendum. Ms. Silver-Smith requested that the list of capital improvement projects be expanded to include not only equipment purchases, road maintenance and work performed at the Ashford School, but also major DPW purchases, revaluation, major fire department purchases, and various town projects. She recommended the deletion of a statement contained in the last paragraph on page 11, *to wit*, "It remains critical that the town allocate adequate funding to support a sound pavement and road surface management program to ensure a safe and reliable road network."
- Ruth Cutler thanked the committee for their work and gave a brief background regarding her work on the 2005 POCD. She requested that priority forest and agricultural areas (depicted on page 73) be redrawn in a less arbitrary fashion to include large tracts of state and privately owned forest land (Armitage, Natchaug). Ms. Cutler suggested that the plan should include the encouragement of the creation of linkages between public access lands.
- Steve Morytko would like to see a section devoted to infrastructure and resources and discussion concerning things that do not yet exist (e.g., sewers, dams, flood control). He noted what he considered a bias toward the expansion of commercial/industrial development in the Executive Summary and further noted that the necessity for provision of services and infrastructure that would be required to support the expansion was not considered. Mr. Morytko stressed the importance of keeping the needs of the town in mind when attempting to attract business development. He considers the Wagon Shed Property Special Planning Area section (pages 32 and 33) to be assumptive and premature.
- Tim Rourke thanked the committee for their work and expressed concern regarding combining Warrenville and West Ashford into one Special Planning Area.
- Bill Becker related that in his opinion, any statements regarding lowering taxes by increasing the commercial/industrial tax base are flawed and should be removed from the POCD. Mr. Becker most businesses coming to Ashford would fail unless that business happened to be a bar.
- Susan Eastwood thanked the committee for their hard work and requested several changes to the energy portion of the POCD (pgs 67-69) and the addition of the Clean Energy Task Force's goals.
- Anthony Patocchio reiterated that he considered a bias toward commercial/industrial development to be the prevailing theme in the POCD draft and that it would be wrong to push the commercial/industrial development concept forward until there is a clearer idea of what will be beneficial to the town.
- Ralph Fletcher thanked the committee for their hard work and presented his comments on the draft. Referencing page iv of the POCD draft document, Fletcher stated that the Board of Selectmen did not officially form or appoint an "Our Town – Our Future" *ad hoc* committee. Fletcher echoed other observations relating to the fact that the Wagon Shed property is privately owned and that the only reference to that property in the POCD should be related to its inclusion in a special planning area. He also noted that the picture appearing on page 63 does

not represent the glassworks or Buck's Pond Sawmill. Fletcher encourages the PZC to use the POCD as a planning tool because it seems that we are only concerned with zoning.

- Tim Rourke asked what the next step in the POCD process is. Jeff Silver-Smith, Chairman of the PZC informed the audience that the PZC would review comments received at this meeting and will hold their public hearing on Monday, December 14, 2015 in Knowlton Hall at 7:00 p.m.
- Silver-Smith reminded the audience that the POCD has nothing to do with the PZC regulations revised in 2014. The POCD document is only a plan for what ideally can be considered to further Ashford's growth. It will be a document reviewed by the PZC on an annual basis.

Zambo thanked everyone for coming and voicing their opinions and reminded the attendees that the Planning and zoning Commission would hold their public hearing of the POCD draft on Monday, December 14, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

2. To receive public comment on a proposed ordinance exempting all horses and ponies from personal property taxes regardless of their use.

- Zambo presented a brief explanation of the purpose of this ordinance proposed by the Agriculture Commission and enabled by Public Act 14-33.
- There was brief discussion regarding how horses and ponies are valued. Cathryn Silver-Smith stated that the value of a horse or pony rests in the eye of the beholder. Art Talmadge, Chairman of the Agriculture Commission, advised the hearing participants that horses are considered livestock and therefore are classified as agricultural.
- According to the Ashford Assessor, exempting all horses and ponies from personal property taxation results in a revenue loss of \$260.73.
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Zambo adjourned the Public Hearing portion of this meeting at 8:40 p.m.

The agenda for the Special Town Meeting is as follows:

Zambo called the Special Town Meeting to order at 8:40 p.m.

1. Falletti moved the election of Michael Zambo to the position of moderator for this meeting. Becker seconded the motion which passed by voice vote.
2. Falletti moved acceptance of the following ordinance:
In accordance with Section 1 of Public Act 14-33, and notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (68) of section 12-81 of the general statutes and section 12-91 of the general statutes, as amended by this act, the Town of Ashford hereby exempts from property taxation horses and ponies of any value. This ordinance to become effective 15 days after publication in a newspaper having circulation in the Town of Ashford.
Fletcher seconded the motion which passed by voice vote.
3. Adjournment at 8:45 p.m.