

Stakeholder Meeting Summary

Sustainability and Resiliency

February 13th, 2023

Attendees:

Jon Mullen - Planning Director

Mark Wujtewicz - Planner

Rory Jacobson - FHI Studio

Nick Campbell - FHI Studio

Jane Adams - Harbor Management Commission

Jim Bartelli - Director of Utilities

Gary Schneider - Public Works Director

Jill Stevens - Assistant Director of Utilities

Discussion Notes

What are Waterford's strengths?

- Schools have geothermal
- Wastewater and Sewer system is built out, no plans for expansion
- Where municipal sewer exists - required to tie in

What are the issues in Waterford that need to be addressed?

- Reject rates for recyclables is approaching 25%, should be around 15%
- Most roadways are concrete drainage set up, can't do road diet due to strict development of concrete curbs
- None of the pump stations within the flood risk zones are cast in place stations. If pump station floods, the controls/control panel are the concern. Changing the location of the controls is an addressable fix. Raising the wet well is the only other option

What needs does your organization have that the Town could respond to?

- Not enough staff, not enough funding for anything green
- Aggressive preventative maintenance plan
- MS4 permit process is a big issue and Waterford lacks the staff to address it

What plans does your organization have over the next several years that could impact the Town?

- Have an honest discussion of the town buildings and the maintenance/staffing components, two schools that are unoccupied
- There is a proposal to enhance water pressure In quaker hill area where the state minimum is not met for pressure. proposal In this year's CIP, different methods to accomplish that goal. rehabilitation of existing systems, Issues with pipe, replaced some but did not receive funds to replace the rest of It

What is your vision for Waterford, in what ways could or should it change over the next ten years?

- Each department puts together capital project together Individually, no tying plan back to proposed capital project schedule. Waterford needs to set priorities and limits of dollars/budgets, need to break down silos so that funding streams can be created and a unified work plan/development can move forward

What could the Town do in the next couple of years to support your organization and/or your vision?

- Utilities: aggressive preventative maintenance plan, ongoing project
- Building and pump stations are okay. Infrastructure not within the paved roadway that are not accessible, 50 year old system, need to strongly consider/realign the Infrastructure
- Need the leadership of the POCD to Implement a greater vision than It currently has, where the aesthetic experience of the water is actively preserved by the town, without Impeding some of the water development that could occur. Benefits to having shellfish and oyster farming, town should actively embrace how It wants to maintain the visual experience of the coast line. Suggestions for limiting Impermeable surfaces around buildings/structures, that would seem to help with Infiltration and runoff of fertilizer and other pollutants
- Each department puts together capital project together Individually, no tying plan back to proposed capital project schedule, setting priorities and limits of dollars/budgets. Need to break down silos so that funding streams can be created and a unified work plan/development can move forward
- Rain barrels/composting, trying to use the resources with care to reduce runoff.
- There is not a lot of regional coordination, few contracts out there regionally to handle storm cleanup, etc. Hazard mitigation plan spearheaded by SECCOG, not connected with the other towns to make It a full regional plan.
- Encourage onsite retention of stormwater to reduce MS4 permits.

- Include EV space requirements In regulations, best environmental practices should be used to ensure that developers are making their buildings better
- MS4 Is a big Issue and lack the staff to handle It/address It
- Need maintenance plans for facilities, and need enforcement of the green building/Infrastructure plans

Stakeholder Meeting Summary

Public Facilities and Infrastructure/Land Use and Transportation

February 13th, 2023

Attendees:

Jon Mullen - Planning Director

Mark Wujtewicz - Planner

Rory Jacobson - FHI Studio

Nick Campbell - FHI Studio

Karen Barnett - Planning and Zoning Commission

Jim Bartelli - Director of Utilities Commission

LT. Ferland - Waterford Police Department

Tom Giard - Superintendent of the Schools

Ryan McNamara - Director of Recreation and Parks Department

Jill Stevens - Utilities Commission

Discussion Notes

What are Waterford's strengths?

- Waterford provides a lot of services not seen in other communities, trash pick up, beaches for example, sidewalk maintenance
- Good school system, vast majority of kids take the bus

What are the issues in Waterford that need to be addressed?

- Where the sidewalks end before the beaches, connecting down from Great Neck to the beaches and access
- Not a tremendous amount of housing where large populations of children would walk. heavy traffic with distracted driving, makes road crossings difficult
- Geometry of local roads with state roads that require state attention/push the state to restructure some of these, would require taking properties/structures, major concern is intersection of state and local roads
- There is no capital improvement plan for town facilities
- Many neighbors spoke up about lack of ability to walk the parkway, issue of who maintains the sidewalks. no destination to walk to, low traveled pedestrian road
- Accessibility to some areas of town is a challenge for police and emergency services

- Overall lack of staff and resources available to accomplish major projects and maintenance

What needs does your organization have that the Town could respond to?

- Traffic light outside of Park Lane Middle School
- Enrollment down 6% in schools, lose about 20 kids per year
- Some locations such as beaches and parks need connectivity to Internet locations for elimination of cash transactions
- Vacant school properties: once they cease being a school they get turned over to the town, no plans for the board of ED to do anything
- Lack of staff and resources for consistent maintenance

What plans does your organization have over the next several years that could impact the Town?

- Community/parks and recs: community center has not been updated since 2005. AV, nuances need to be reconfigured. looking at changing the footprint of the garage in the center of town in conjunction with civic triangle plan, swap presences to have different uses in the center of town
- Nevins Cottage, should work closely with the Historical Society

What is your vision for Waterford, in what ways could or should it change over the next ten years?

- Staffing Issues: growth and development for the growth of Waterford. expand the police unit with the creation of a dedicated traffic unit to enforce traffic rules. Accidents on route 85 with the overpass, lots of minor accidents from front to rear. 395 and 85, multiple interchange
- Need a vision for the Town's municipal buildings, seems like there is no plan
- Several plans for connector roadways to connect Clark Lane to 85, connect the parkways into Broad Street, just plans and nothing has been progressed.

What could the Town do in the next couple of years to support your organization and/or your vision?

- Need more funding available for basic maintenance of buildings
- Would like to see more bike lanes or bike paths
- Pump stations could be used as hubs for Internet and broadband

Stakeholder Meeting Summary

Open Space, Environment and Conservation

February 14th, 2023

Attendees:

Jon Mullen - Planning Director

Mark Wujtewicz - Planner

Maureen Fitzgerald - Environmental Planner, Conservation Commission

Rory Jacobson - FHI Studio

Nick Campbell - FHI Studio

Karen Barnett - Planning and Zoning Commission

Jane Adams - Harbor Management Commission

David Lersch - Waterford Land Trust

Katie Lund - Connecticut National Estuarine Research Reserve (CT NERR)

Tali Maidelis - Conservation Commission

Deb Moshier-Dunn - Save the River, Save the Hills

Maggie Redfern - CT College Arboretum

Larry Tytla - Waterford/East Lyme Shellfish Commission

Jamie Vaudrey - Niantic River Watershed Committee (NRWC)

Discussion Notes

What are Waterford's strengths?

- Access to the Niantic River and Jordan Cove
- Waterford Land Trust
- Various commissions and regional committees dedicated to Improving water quality

What are the issues in Waterford that need to be addressed?

- Diminution of water quality and species over the years, would like to see more ambitious projects to improve water quality for shellfish - anything to Improve water quality
- Desire to clean the tributaries
- No body that addresses the cumulative Impact of docks
- More attention to not breaking up the wildlife corridors, protect ecosystem over the small sections. Protect animals as well as the flow of nutrients, is there enough natural area to filter the nutrients
- Many chain based moorings, there are modern alternatives that are less destructive

What needs does your organization have that the Town could respond to?

- POCD to articulate landward and waterward view scape of the visual carrying capacity,
- Conservation commission is only advisory, the lack of any dedicated money on the towns part during development, there is no line item for open space

What plans does your organization have over the next several years that could impact the Town?

- We encourage more education for private property owners, encourage native planting to stitch the landscape back together. Encourage plants that are beneficial to the ecosystem. Idea of a pollinator pathway, by connecting habitats together

What is your vision for Waterford, in what ways could or should it change over the next ten years?

- Areas to save: Clam Lane and Pember Roads in Waterford that parcels next to them that filter water into Niantic, one is industrial zoned, two sellers who are motivated in the area, and a lot of parcels along Stony Brook. Pember Road is maintained by CT DOT, unclear about future of Woodlands Land Trust property, and parcels would go a long way to protecting riparian buffers.
- Need wetland/marsh area protections - opportunity to recognize significance of those areas in flood management, SECCOG creating a flooding mitigation plan that identifies the climate component/significance
- Mechanism exists through the Waterford Land Trust to accomplish the same goals that have not been met by prior POCD - how can these be accomplished

What could the Town do in the next couple of years to support your organization and/or your vision?

- Maintain access to the Niantic River and Jordan Cove, there is public access to both of those resources. Declining water quality/eel grass, water quality down brooks. Accessible coastal water is important to protect
- Shellfish commission, public water access to the river that are open to shellfishing by the public, lot of NIMBY where locals don't want people parking. Diminution of water quality and species over the years, would like to see more ambitious projects to improve water quality for shellfish - anything to improve water quality
- Beaches being destroyed by pollution, wakes from boats, evaluation of many factors ie, human interaction, human use, number of boats. Desire to clean the tributaries
- After storms and high tides, tides have increased substantially, protect areas by protecting the forests
- Nobody that addresses the cumulative impact of docks - one is fine, many are not. Proliferation of boat lifts, need a big picture analysis of the waterfront

- Protection of open spaces is critical, want to encourage/allow development but needs to be balanced and in specific locations to not break up the wildlife, protect ecosystem over the small sections. Protect animals as well as the flow of nutrients, need natural areas to filter the nutrients
- Promote the use on native plants in residential and commercial landscapes, these will be beneficial to the environment, and help with bird migration, Land Trust is small and limited in its ability to do things, Land Trust could use more support

General Discussion

- There is a diversity of trees in Waterford, we have seen more animal life, coyote, bears
- If we keep forests intact, and protections of core forests will keep the animals in the forests and not in our backyards as much, Waterford should look at their zoning and rezone things to protect clean water
- Like POCD to articulate landward and waterward view scape of the visual carrying capacity, when individuals discuss the coastline, that it includes the broad vista of what they are seeing, and that the POCD could incorporate a statement of objective that does not undermine development. Not residential, but more along the line of what is going on waterward, aquaculture, perhaps in articulating a vision of what to maintain, it would not be desirable to have surface cages or nets, where it does not visually impair the vista on the water
- Trying to seed the Niantic River with oysters, commercial aquaculture is a non-starter
- Along Waterford harbor. aquaculture in the Thames River has not been as impacted as in the Niantic. POCD should articulate what should be maintained in terms of the visual capacity and beyond
- Eel grass and shellfish can co-exist, our policies say we can't have aquaculture in eel grass, and the process of putting cages on the bottom harms the river ecosystem, the spreading of scallops and oysters in the Niantic River, aquaculture is part of the development, the visual piece is important but how do you do it sustainably so that people are not overloaded by the appeal of the fishing equipment
- Waterford Harbor Management has a mandate to preserve eel grass, any development would be vetoed by harming eel grass.
- Eel grass is going to be in other areas where there are other uses that it spreads naturally and we are restoring eel grass to bring together an eel grass commission. no easy issues, but this is when we can improve water quality in streams and on the coast
- There are two different sets of rules based on who drew a line down the center of the river, need regional rules that are uniform

- There is some opposition to expansion of aquaculture in the community, feeling that why should one Individual or one business profit from the river
- We can all agree that there are valuable resources on the water, competing uses on how they are preserved and how they are used and how to balance use and Impact on the water resources
- Need to err on the side of conservation around tributaries and waterways
- Good diversity In the forests of Waterford, there Is forest fragmentation, how do we encourage more education for private property owners, Is that just the level of potential development or encourage native planting to stitch the landscape back together. vegetation and breeding bird surveys have benefited from stitching of the land back together, how do we encourage plants that are beneficial to the ecosystem. Idea of a pollinator pathway, by connecting habitats together
- Engineering ways to minimize docks and pilings, hard engineering to prevent erosion
Need to be sensitive along the shore to any development that Is happening
- Should leave native plants and species Intact whenever possible
- Conservation commission Is only advisory, the lack of any dedicated money on the towns part during development, there Is no line Item for open space- need to add one
- Goals from the 2012 POCD have not been achieved, no one acted on them, agency to help open space In town, people don't want Increases In their taxes, potential to create a greenway trail to encourage support for conservation, could have wildlife
- Route 11 corridor as potential greenway- the proposed pathway of the road that was never built
- Upgrading access to properties Increases appeal of land/property value
- State law allows for reduction In property taxes - public act 490

Stakeholder Meeting Summary

Housing and Community Services

February 14th, 2023

Attendees:

Jon Mullen - Planning Director

Mark Wujtewicz - Planner

Rory Jacobson - FHI Studio

Nick Campbell - FHI Studio

Tom Girard - Superintendent of Schools

Dani Garman - Senior Services

Christine Johnson - Library

Discussion Notes

What are Waterford's strengths?

- Offer a lot of programming at community centers that are comprehensive programs that are above and beyond what neighboring towns are capable of offering. looking at non-traditional areas, e-sports, beyond the big 4 (NBA/NFL/MLB/NHL)
- Schools are an attractive lure for people. Good school system, 17 different languages spoken
- Waterford allows multi-family housing, and is not concentrated in just the town center
- Waterford is an inclusive community but not a lot of diversity
- Top rated ADA accessible beach

What are the issues in Waterford that need to be addressed?

- Not a lot of senior housing available, some new market rate units are coming online, though not necessarily affordable
- No set requirement for affordable units in new developments, left to the developer to decide
- Lack of diversity
- Need more rental units
- Quaker Hill feels disconnected, focus has been on the Civic Triangle

- Housing: young residents want to raise families and live in the community but are unable to, not a lot of rental opportunities in Waterford, not a lot of affordable units for young adults
- 20 years of flat budgets
- More programming for jobs right out of high school, more thought and planning about what they should do, looking at more workforce development

What needs does your organization have that the Town could respond to?

- Library: *library is not ADA compliant*, have a large enough facility but do not provide equal service, not very walkable, better connections for folks to get around. library cannot create a space for teenagers to enjoy, it is not as attractive as it could be.

What is your vision for Waterford, in what ways could or should it change over the next ten years?

- The creation of a town authority/program to manage acquired property to provide affordable housing units through Waterford, as identified in the Affordable Housing Plan for Waterford.
- Vision for Crystal Mall - potential housing units, mixed use facilities
- Expand ability for residential units in certain commercial areas
- Need more options for affordable housing, working with P&Z to finalize language for accessory dwelling units. ADU's are built primarily for family members

What could the Town do in the next couple of years to support your organization and/or your vision?

- Waterford needs senior housing, to keep seniors, locate services close to them
- Consider requirements for affordable housing component on any new large scale development
- Identify industries in the area that we have and tailor programs to meet those needs
- Vision for Crystal Mall - potential housing, mixed use facilities, certain commercial areas in Waterford that allow for residential, should there be more zoning districts that allow residential
- Allow residential uses, but only single units of commercial/retail. when we rezoned civic triangle, we allowed for multi-family with commercial component, with the idea being to expand services/uses allowed in civic triangle to encourage support for Waterford
- Regional job workforce, some starting salaries are too low, need for workforce housing to encourage pipeline

Stakeholder Meeting Summary

Sustainability and Resiliency, Energy Usage

February 15th, 2023

Attendees:

Jon Mullen - Planning Director

Rory Jacobson - FHI Studio

Kevin Girard - Energy Task Force and Waterford RTM

General Discussion Notes

- Energy Task Force was developed in October 2022 as a response to the need for better information regarding energy usage in the Town. (Some issues surrounding Natural Gas installations at two sites.
- Waterford should consider utilizing solar, geothermal, and heat pump technology with any new municipal project, Town should be making better use of renewable energy sources
- Better education is needed for residents regarding green energy technologies
- Zoning is prohibitive of solar in some applications
- Town could provide information to residents- EPA and Energy Administration handouts
- High demand for EV charging stations, could be installed at Town Parks, beaches, library, etc.
- Waterford should do whatever it can to keep Millstone going, it is a job producer, taxpayer and energy source
- More scientific information should be shared with residents, very political

Stakeholder Meeting Summary

Economic Development Meeting

February 15th, 2023

Attendees:

Jon Mullen - Planning Director

Mark Wujtewicz - Planner

Rory Jacobson - FHI Studio

Ivy Mellow, Ivy's Simply Homemade

Mary Millaras, Millaras Piggery

Kristyn Neal, Dream in Color Marketing

Paul Whitescarver - Southeastern CT Enterprise Region, SeCTer

Discussion Notes

- Waterford is supportive of businesses and asks people what they want. Town staff always patronize local businesses whenever possible
- Grant process went smoothly, but if there had been a more streamlined process for getting the funds at the end that would help
- Town could use more social media interaction with businesses, maybe an online list of Waterford's businesses/websites on the Town's website. Many people do not know all of the businesses that are in Town
- Adaptive reuse would be suitable for many properties, do not develop greenspace when there are existing properties that could be repurposed
- Town should continue the communication and promotion of businesses
- Civic Triangle Plan to connect the municipal uses and develop language for zoning changes to enable such improvements. Want residents to be able to spend money in Waterford and not have to leave Town to get an ice cream or go for a sandwich
- Aesthetics of businesses are important, business owners need to maintain properties, there are design guidelines and a design review board
- Mago Point - location suitable for village type improvements
- Waterford is not eligible for many of the funds communities like New London or Groton qualify for
- More home occupations, working to expand the list of allowable home occupations due to rise in this type of use

- Childcare services, there is a shortage across the state
- Affordable housing needed and could be mixed use model

Stakeholder Meeting Summary

Cultural and Historic Resources Meeting

February 23rd, 2023

Attendees:

Jon Mullen - Planning Director

Mark Wujtewicz - Planner

Rory Jacobson - FHI Studio

Rob Mooney - O'Neill Theater

Robert Nye - Municipal Historian

John O'neil - Historic Properties Commission, Design Review Board

Jeanne Shelburne - Friends of Harkness

John Steffian - President, Friends of Harkness

Kristen Widham - President, Waterford Historical Society

Discussion Notes

- Waterford lacks a sense of Identity, there is disconnect between the different villages, need more cohesion, need a reason to visit the different areas
- Zoning changes could be pursued to promote more village type uses and create more of a vibrancy
- Need better education to residents about what is allowed in the districts, many residents are fearful that they will be unable to do certain things to their properties. Living in a historic district is not viewed as a benefit in Waterford the way it is in other communities, there is no sense of historic pride
- Signage and identifying features of historic areas is lacking
- Could consider more community events to engage residents
- Historical Society is working with elementary schools to provide activities to engage local students
- The Town should invest in the historic structures that it owns, many are falling apart
- Town should consult a historical consultant when making building changes, renovations
- Challenging to get volunteers
- Should consider using historic bridge structure (from Mago Point Bridge) to create public artwork, similar to what was done in Stonington

- Waterford needs a grants writer to pursue funding, there is a lot of money out there, just need to be able to tap into it. Also need better website development for the Town that connects all the different resources, social media presence, etc.
- Zoning changes for Mago Point area have eased up regulations, allowing for things like Food Trucks. Zoning really can influence a lot
- Design guidelines for each village could be helpful, Town Beautification Committee has evolved into the Historic Properties Commission
- Waterfront public access is one of Waterford's best assets