

Wallingford POCD Steering Committee
Regular Meeting
Thursday, January 29, 2026
6:00 p.m.
Room 315
Town Hall – 45 South Main Street
MINUTES

Chairman Fitzsimmons called the second Steering Committee meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.

Present: James Fitzsimmons, Planning & Zoning Commission; Jeffrey Kohan, Planning and Zoning; Brian Miller, interested citizen; Jesse Reynolds, Town Council; Dave Anderson, Parks and Recreation Commission; Joann Hummel, Social Services, Wallingford Senior Center; Anthony Barcale, Economic Development Commission; Amy Torre, Zoning Enforcement Officer, Kevin Pagini, Town Planner and Jacob Robinson, Colliers Engineering & Design.

Mr. Pagini stated that this meeting will cover updates on public feedback sessions.

Mr. Robinson shared a PowerPoint presentation. He reviewed the timeline, progress so far, and shared that there are already almost 200 responses to the survey. He added that they are doing a land use analysis. He reported that he discussed the due date with the State Planning Director and received approval for a two-month extension. The State Planning Director indicated that it wasn't a hard deadline to have the new plan in place when the prior one sunsets. It's important that the Town is working on it. He reviewed the next phases and expects a final draft to be ready by the end of May.

Mr. Robinson reviewed key findings and feedback from the first public meeting and the survey. Focus groups are continuing, as are pop-ups at the Farmer's Market and sporting events. He stated that the focus groups have been done with existing organizations. They are also meeting with department heads and individuals. When asked what response he expected from the survey, he replied that 200 responses are pretty good, but he would like to see 600 responses. He thought the 40 participants at the first public meeting were impressive.

Affordable housing is a top concern at the public meeting. Other key takeaways were the need for balance in development, a more inviting town center, traffic issues on Rt. 5, lack of multimodal transportation, preservation and maintenance of parks and trails, and conservation of water resources and open space. He noted that the majority of survey respondents so far were from the eastern and western portions of town, which are mostly single-family homeowners. Information on the survey will go out in February with the electric bills, with a link to the website, and distributed by the senior center.

Paper surveys are available at the Planning and Zoning office. A suggestion was made to distribute it through the YMCA as well. The plan is to wrap up the survey by the end of February.

He reviewed takeaways from the survey on the top values, top priorities for future land uses, and top development priorities from feedback so far.

He reviewed key takeaways from focus groups, including cooperation between businesses, coordinated promotion of cultural and historic assets, the need for family-oriented businesses and attractions, maintenance of recreation and open spaces, and the need for affordable housing. One example was sporting events would bring families and business to town.

It was noted that feedback is currently being shared with Department heads.

Regarding preliminary Existing Conditions key findings, limited single-family housing is a concern, including the need for senior housing. There was a suggestion to hold public hearings on housing development to dispel the fear. It was noted that there has been a 60 – 70% increase in the cost of housing over the last 20 years. Mr. Robinson reminded the group that there is an affordable housing plan that was created in 2022, but the State has new legislation that is doing away with the individual plans and doing them on a regional scale instead. Mr. Pagini added that the Town meets with the Regional Council of Governments quarterly. The Housing Growth Plans are due in 2029, and the analysis of developable land starts late in 2026. The plan will give growth requirements by region in 2027. The POCD should line up with the Housing Growth Plan.

Mr. Robinson reviewed the preliminary key findings for Development and Transportation. Wallingford's town center is special with pedestrian infrastructure, parking, and housing. Utility rates are a great benefit. There is a need to connect the Town Center with Rt. 5 and a need for more family-friendly events. A suggestion was made that downtown be more dog-friendly. Train services don't meet residents' needs, and transportation from the train station is difficult. Mr. Pagini noted that Engineering wants to do a full Town sidewalk study as part of the POCD. A comment was made that downtown is difficult to navigate by wheelchair. Another comment was that most bus stops don't have shelters, and bus schedules should have better hours to encourage ridership. There was a comment that there is no bus service in existing deeply affordable housing areas. Another comment was that a pedestrian or bicycle linkage doesn't exist from the east side of town to the west side. Trains stop traffic and divide the town. Mr. Pagini reported that he has discussed solutions with the appropriate departments, but it is difficult to get funding. We can put recommendations in the plan. He suggested a Complete Streets Feasibility Study.

Regarding preliminary key findings for Services and Resources, the utility rates and emergency services were highly rated. There was a concern about school infrastructure and reinvestment. There was a question on programming and public space. The impression is that there is only one big community event to attract people downtown to support local businesses and create community pride. Comments

were made that there are several community events in Town. Promotion and information about the events were noted as the issue. We need a consistent way of getting information out to all audiences. Do we need a formalized marketing campaign? Events aren't always connected to local businesses. Possible vehicles included Wallingford Magazine, Wallingford Adult Education, Utility mailings, and Government TV.

Regarding preliminary key findings for the Environment, Mr. Robinson mentioned old mill sites that may require remediation, as well as the need to maintain and preserve open spaces. Low-impact development was also mentioned near open and conservation spaces. Mr. Pagini reported that he met with Representative Jeff Bourney, who suggested: better connect existing open space; aim for 21% open space; centralized trail maintenance group; reinstate biannual meetings of the Water Division, Mayor's office, and Conservation Commission; better inventory of open space; outline potential open space. Mr. Robinson noted that there are only two part-time staff dedicated to maintaining open space and recreational space. The work often falls to volunteer groups.

A comment was made that much of this is dependent on money, which doesn't come from the Town. We are dependent on State and Federal grants. It was suggested that a professional grant writer be part of this process. Mr. Pagini replied that the Town's grant writer has been involved, but we may need another one. Mr. Robinson noted that they keep funding in mind when they write the POCD and identify what fits with existing funding sources. A comment was made that the most tangible part of the plan is to identify what is needed to advance the community. Mr. Pagini reported that the Town has received funding for a Yale Avenue and Route 5 study. We should be able to add recommendations from that.

A comment was made that there is a lot of open space and reservoir property with no public access. Other Towns allow access to hikers and birdwatchers for a fee. We need a conversation on this option. It's also hard to find trail maps. Mr. Pagini reported that they are discussing a GIS specialist position.

Mr. Robinson shared the ongoing Land Use District Analysis and the seven identified districts. They are identified by demographics, land uses, and what makes them different. For example, District 1 has 1/3 of the Town's population and higher property values as well as higher household income. This district is mostly residential with some recreational and open space. Mr. Robinson asked the committee for feedback on the most important land use issues for each district.

A participant asked how this POCD is going to be different from the prior one. Not a lot has changed. We want to see prioritization of a couple of major issues, since we can't do everything. What are the roadblocks to implementing the plan? What will get more single-family houses? The bullet items in the current POCD are too generic. We need more specifics on how we can get it done. There was an implementation committee, but it didn't carry through. We need a project plan and timelines.

Mr. Pagini replied that we wanted to cover the whole town this time. There will be higher and lower priorities. Mr. Robinson agreed that there were no specific recommendations in POCDs from the 2010's. Most plans are more generic. He promises this one will get more specific. He asked for input on areas that might have been missed in the past.

District 1 suggestions

- Better sidewalk systems
- If high school is no longer there, what will land use be
- Lack of commercial services (grocery, restaurant)
- Flood zone
- Mostly preservation or residential
- Difficult intersection (Parker Farms, Hope Hill, Highland)

District 2 suggestions (some of Rt. 5)

- Think about harmonizing access. Mr. Fitzsimmons noted that new zoning regulations help by having inner connections to get traffic off of Rt. 5.
- Rt. 5 in North Haven has a lot of residential development. There is potential for this district. Residential is now allowed, but there are other issues that the Yale Avenue/Rt. 5 Study will help with.
- The new housing bill requires allowing residential use on property zoned commercial. We may need to look at Upper Rt. 5 for potential housing.
- Housing is a need in each district.

District 3 suggestions (South Colony)

- Lights and traffic are a problem
- Would need a light at the CT Fresh Produce Market intersection if there is more development
- Mr. Pagini reported that they are working with DOT to try to put housing there.
- Talked of Gateway Corridors
- Don't want to silo development in the center districts.
- Look at a better connecting train station to Main Street.

There was a question on transportation and Town Center – how are the train station land use changes going? Mr. Pagini replied that the regulations are in place, but the owners are not willing to sell small parcels. The State is looking at doing housing in the train station parking lot.

There is a new application for a grant to refurbish the old train station. Mr. Pagini asked if there is any interest in developing the Brother's lot behind the old train station. It is owned by the town.

District 4 suggestions (Town Center)

Mr. Fitzsimmons noted that we have the incentive housing zone already, but need a similar promotion for downtown. Mr. Pagini noted that some of the water infrastructure in the area is not conducive to large development.

Any uses to add?

- Skate park
- Parking northwest of Center and Main is chaotic. Need to coordinate the lots like what was done on the south side.
- Mr. Pagini noted that there is a full plan to update parking lots between Meadow and Williams Street. If people feel that would be beneficial, feedback is helpful.

District 5 suggestions (more residential, north of downtown)

- Is it designated a historic district? It would be a nice tourist destination if we spruce up the park and make it more useful. Maybe connect the park with the pool.
- Mr. Pagini noted that a master parks plan is underway.

District 6 suggestions (primarily watershed)

- Better access to open space

District 7 suggestions (industrial gateway)

- People unhappy
- A lot of vacant buildings – can they be housing?
- Also mixed-use development with minor retail– low impact.
- More walkable spaces
- Look at what’s going on in Cheshire. This area is very similar.
- Farm land in IX above Barnes Industrial – need a comprehensive study.
- Also, a gateway area
- Remote from the rest of town
- No restaurants near hotels
- Can’t have a gas station because of the watershed
- Priority district to study.

Mr. Robinson thanked everyone for their input and outlined the next steps. This committee will meet again in March, and there will be a public meeting in May to present preliminary findings. He welcomed additional comments.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl-Ann Tubby
Recording Secretary