



# TOWN OF THOMPSON

## Planning & Zoning Commission

815 Riverside Drive  
P.O. Box 899  
North Grosvenordale, CT 06255  
PHONE: 860-923-9475  
E-MAIL: [zeo@thompsonct.org](mailto:zeo@thompsonct.org)  
[planner@thompsonct.org](mailto:planner@thompsonct.org)  
WEBSITE: [www.thompsonct.org](http://www.thompsonct.org)

Minutes – Special Meeting  
Thursday, March 4, 2021 at 6:00 PM  
ZOOM Meeting

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Topic: Public Hearing - Adoption of PoCD  
Time: Mar 4, 2021 06:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82187825594?pwd=YUNPcGNSUHE5bGh3VDA1cWNlNGpEUT09>

Topic: Public Hearing - Adoption of PoCD  
Date: Mar 4, 2021 05:48 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Meeting Recording:  
[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/xuU0Fp76u9CFoWAKjUfLb9hJ-vl8SFehwPu5rQP-Y0P92H\\_Sr0sW4v02xKaRP7FO.bwL3DylDfPj3ytE2](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/xuU0Fp76u9CFoWAKjUfLb9hJ-vl8SFehwPu5rQP-Y0P92H_Sr0sW4v02xKaRP7FO.bwL3DylDfPj3ytE2)  
Access Passcode: 6t79.y0u

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, Seating of Alternates  
Joseph Parodi-Brown                      John Lenky                      Brian Santos  
Alvan Hill                                      Dave Poplawski                      Randy Blackmer  
Michael Krogul joined the meeting at 6:37 PM  
Seating: Alvan Hill was seated for John Rice, Dave Poplawski was seated for Robert Werge Sr,  
Brian Santos for Christopher Nelson  
Absent: Missy Desrochers, Robert Werge Sr., John Rice, Charlene Langlois, Christine Chatelle,  
Christopher Nelson  
Staff Present: Tyra Penn-Gesek, Planner, Gloria Harvey, Recording Secretary
2. Review and Discussion on PoCD  
Meeting and Log-In information is posted on the Town of Thompson Webpage,  
<https://www.thompsonct.org/planning-zoning-commission> “Agendas”

Document is posted on the Town of Thompson Webpage:  
[https://www.thompsonct.org/sites/g/files/vyhli5076/f/uploads/final\\_draft\\_2020\\_pocd\\_0.pdf](https://www.thompsonct.org/sites/g/files/vyhli5076/f/uploads/final_draft_2020_pocd_0.pdf)

Joseph Parodi-Brown pointed out that the words Public Hearing did not appear in Item 2 of the agenda. However, it did appear at the top of the agenda document, on the town’s website and in the newspaper as a Public Hearing. Tyra will verify legality with Attorney Roberts and if he agrees that the Public Hearing Notice at the top of the Agenda, as well as on the Town’s website and in the Villager Newspaper for two weeks is legal then we can consider it resolved. **Attorney Roberts replied on March 5, 2021 that the procedure was legal.**

Chairman Joseph Parodi-Brown opened the Public Hearing on PZC Application #21-03 on the PoCD at 6:07 PM.

Ken Beausoleil, Selectman, 21 Walker Drive, Quinebaug, CT commented that the PoCD is a great document and is updated very well and there are a lot of things already accomplished on it, and hopefully over the next 10 years there is a lot more we can accomplish and continue to move in a positive direction. He pointed out one of the things missing from the PoCD was on the Education side. The Town became an Alliance District which means that we are underperforming and that should be included in the PoCD as something we need to correct. There were no further comments from the public.

**Brian Santos moved and John Lenky seconded the motion to close the Public Hearing. Hearing no discussion on the motion, the Chairman called for a vote and said a “Yes” vote will close the Public Hearing. A “No” vote will leave it open.**

**John Lenky-Yes**

**Alvan Hill-Yes**

**David Poplawski-Yes**

**Brian Santos-Yes**

**Randy Blackmer-Yes**

**Joseph Parodi-Brown-Yes**

**The Public Hearing is closed.**

3. Discuss PoCD and Possible Action

Brian Santos asked Selectman Beausoleil if future planning for the schools involved development of solar, and upgrades to the schools. Selectman Beausoleil said the mission of the school is to educate the children and has nothing to do with the facility. Having a strong education system is a way of attracting business and people into the town. In order to do this the Town needs to overcome being an Alliance District.

To clarify Selectman Beausoleil’s comment, Tyra said spoke to the Superintendent of the Thompson School System, expressed Selectman Beasoleil’s concern, and said that the challenges to the education system need to be acknowledged in the PoCD. Following this conversation with the Superintendent, a subsection was added to the PoCD and one of the additions shows the development of the separate career tracks. Tyra agreed with Selectman Beausoleil that the status of an Alliance District is not emphasized in the section on education in the PoCD.

John Lenky commented that something needs to be put in the PoCD so the town can get the education system up to acceptable standards over the next 10 years.

Joseph Parodi-Brown compared the language from the draft in December 2020 and the final draft that is posted and also expressed concern that no mention was made of the district being an Alliance District. It also talks about funding challenges as to how Thompson compares to other Alliance Districts, which he thought was a substantive addition.

Tyra stated with the PoCD in general, are the arguments that are advanced to support the various concepts, like education. One of the things that comes up constantly is that adding families and kids is going to detract from or degrade the schools. When the schools are under capacity the amortization of costs are not good. In general, at the capacity a school is designed for, the per student cost must go down. The more kids there are in a program, more can be offered to them, which justifies enriching curriculum.

Brian Santos commented that options lead to opportunities. Options for students means educational paths, extracurricular activities, local sports and recreation which bleed into opportunities to go to better schools. A better business presence in Town and a cultural center will also create an opportunity.

Tyra commented that the PoCD is a guidebook and the implementation and planning is what the Planning and Zoning Commission will do based on the concept that the PoCD is adopted. There are action items proposed but the strategy is Commission work, work of elected officials, work of the staff. The PoCD exists to illustrate concepts and philosophies and that's what the Commission will adopt.

Joseph Parodi-Brown commented that the Commission received the PoCD draft in December 2020 and the only substantive change was in response to Selectman Beausoleil's comments adding the schools' status of the Alliance District. Tyra stated that there were also adjustments to the Section on the Building Committee, Emergency Services in the Ambulance section, and the Education section.

**Building Committee: Section 4.3, Page 25**

The Building Committee is made up of eight appointed volunteer members, overseeing major capital projects in Thompson at the request of the Board of Selectmen. The committee is not a permanent, standing body; rather, it is periodically constituted by the Board of Selectmen to oversee specific projects. A side-effect of this structure is that the Building Committee is, by its nature, a managing body rather than a planning body and no single, long-term master plan for projects under the committee has been developed. It is recommended that the Board of Selectmen either restructure the Building Committee as a permanent committee, expanding its mandate to include long-range planning or constitute a separate volunteer advisory committee to develop a long-range (10 year) plan for major municipal capital projects. It is also recommended that the resulting 10-year plan be published on the Town website.

**Fire and EMS: Section 5.1, Page 36**

Thompson's ambulance and emergency medical services are operated out of the Community Fire Station. Unlike the firefighters, emergency medical responders are a paid, professional organization. The relationship between the fire station and the ambulance services has existed in this arrangement for many years, but it does create additional challenges for both organizations. As has been previously noted, the condition of the stationhouse itself is substandard for its purpose, and it is too small to properly house both services. Over the years, the possibility of uncoupling the ambulance from Community Fire has been raised; but the ambulance corps lacks the capital that would be legally required for them to relocate to a stand-alone facility. Further compounding this obstacle is the very nature of the income structure for ambulance service providers. Income from direct billing for services makes up roughly 60% of the corps costs. Of the remainder, roughly 30% is provided by the Town, and another 10% is drawn from private donations or fee-for-service detail work (e. g. staffing large public events). Insurance reimbursements typically cover slightly less than half of the charges incurred on a medical emergency call, and the corps is limited in its legal ability to pursue arrears from those on public insurance. In short, Thompson's emergency medical service providers stand as another example of dedicated employees providing an essential public service on a shoestring budget. In the pursuit of more efficient funding structures for the volunteer fire departments. It is further recommended that attention be given to potential strategies to uncouple the ambulance corps from Community Fire, in a manner beneficial to both organizations and the Town.

**Challenges and Opportunities for Education in Thompson: Section 14.5, Page 121**

A challenge implied in the student data cited in Section 14.2 is the retention of students in the transition from middle school to high school. Thompson Public Schools was designated one of thirty- three Alliance districts in December 2017 due to low student achievement outcomes on state assessments. During the FY 17/18 and 19/20 school years funds were awarded to help support a district wide improvement plan. To date, that

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funding has allowed the district to add reading specialists, purchase laptops for all students and fund professional development activities for faculty and staff. Due to legislative language in the Alliance regulations, Thompson does not receive an annual grant allocation like the other Alliance school systems. The members of the BOE and our local state representatives continue to advocate for equitable funding for Thompson schools. Despite the acknowledged challenges, TMHS has several outstanding programs that have been developed to meet the particular needs of the Town's students:

- Career Pathway Programs
  - Arts and Entertainment
  - Business and Finance
  - Computer Science and Information Technology
  - Manufacturing and Engineering
  - Health Services
  - Law and Public Safety
- Art & Music Education
- College Board Advanced Placement Course Expansion
- USDA Farm to School Grant Program

Tyra commented that she believes the PoCD is a good document and gives a lot more substance for all the Town's Officers, Commissions and Departments. The guidelines are in place. The thirty plus people who worked on the PoCD set up a good platform to incorporate the concept. She feels confident that the Planning and Zoning Commission will keep those principles in mind.

**Brian Santos moved and Alvan Hill seconded the motion to adopt the PoCD as posted in its final draft on the Town of Thompson Website.**

### **Discussion on the Motion to Adopt the PoCD followed:**

Randy Blackmer asked if the motion to adopt the PoCD should include "upon confirmation of the legality of the Public Hearing by Attorney Roberts. *Attorney Roberts responded on March 5, 2021 that the procedure was legal.*

Joseph Parodi-Brown expressed his gratitude to all the people who are acknowledged on Page 6 of the PoCD for all their work on it. It truly was a collaborative effort and he expressed his gratitude to all those who participated.

Hearing no further discussion on the Motion to Adopt the PoCD, the Chairman called for a vote. A "Yes" vote to approve the Plan of Conservation and Development (PoCD) as published on the Town of Thompson website. A "No" vote to reject its approval.

John Lenky-Yes

Alvan Hill-Yes

David Poplawski-Yes

Brian Santos-Yes

Joseph Parodi-Brown-Yes

Michael Krogul-Yes

Randy Blackmer-Yes

The Plan of Conservation and Development has been voted to be adopted with an effective date of March 4, 2021.

4. Adjournment

John Lenky moved and Randy Blackmer seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 6:51 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Gloria Harvey, Recording Secretary*