

POCD NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

As part of the effort to gather public input for the 2013 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), the POCD Steering Committee welcomed all interested residents to participate in a series of [SEVEN NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS](#). Residents from the various “neighborhoods” were invited to attend to come discuss their neighborhood’s environment and natural world, history, roads, and possibilities for present protection and future planning.

The concept was coordinated by Steering Committee Member Madeline Jeffery, of North Stonington Citizens Land Alliance. North Stonington was marked off roughly into seven parts. Each area held its own Neighborhood Meeting, with several residents from the associated roadways and other interested people taking part in the gathering. The concept hoped to create a very personal, fresh and direct means of communication with North Stonington residents and also to help identify what elements of North Stonington’s character, natural environment, history, etc. need to be protected; what needs to be changed or improved and ultimately what they envisioned for this place – the Town of North Stonington.

Meeting 5 was cancelled due to a snow storm, but residents from that area were invited to join Meeting 6. Approximately 135 residents attended the six meetings. The following pages are summaries of the notes taken at the meeting and of the written comments received.

<u>MEETING 1: THE PENDLETON HILL ROAD NEIGHBORHOOD</u> was held on December 5 at The Pendleton Hill First Baptist Church
<u>MEETING 2: THE THREE LAKES: BLUE, BILLINGS, AND WYASSUP NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING</u> Was held on Monday, January 7, 7:00 pm at Camp Wightman, Baptist Campgrounds, Billings Lake.
<u>MEETING 3: THE WYASSUP ROAD NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING</u> <u>DATE & TIME:</u> Monday, January 14, 7:00 pm <u>LOCATION:</u> The Grange, Wyassup Road.
<u>MEETING 4: THE COSSADUCK HILL NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING</u> <u>DATE & TIME</u> Wednesday, January 30, 7:00 pm <u>LOCATION:</u> The Grange, Wyassup Road.
<u>MEETING 5: MYSTIC ROAD NEIGHBORHOOD</u> <u>DATE & TIME</u> Cancelled due to storm <u>LOCATION:</u> Village Congregational Church, Main St.
<u>MEETING 6: BOOMBRIDGE ROAD NEIGHBORHOOD</u> <u>DATE & TIME</u> Wednesday, February 20, 7:00pm <u>LOCATION:</u> Village Congregational Church, Main St
<u>MEETING 7: THE VILLAGE</u> <u>DATE & TIME</u> Monday, February 25, 7pm <u>LOCATION:</u> Wheeler Library, Main Street

PENDLETON HILL NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING – DECEMBER 5, 2012

Area: Pendleton Hill Rd (North of I95), Tom Wheeler Rd., Princess Ln. and all of laurel Glen neighborhood, Clarks Falls neighborhood, and Rte. 184 from Rte 49 to RI boarder.

24 residents attended in addition to Madeline Jeffery (coordinator of the neighborhood meetings) and Juliet Leeming, Town Planner. Five of the 24 residents are currently affiliated with a NS board or Commission. Six additional residents, who were not present at the meeting, submitted written comments for consideration. Madeline conducted an interview with Anna Coit prior to the meeting. Bruce Fellman moderated the meeting.

The Pendleton Hill neighborhood contains three districts: Laurel Glen, Clarks Falls and Pendleton Hill. There are at least 30 cemeteries, ancient road markers designating the Pawcatuck River mileage, the historic Palmer Farm and the only State Scenic Road designation (Pendleton hill Rd).

The following is a summary of the written responses received followed by a summary of the notes taken at the actual meeting.

Beginning with what you have...What do you like and love about where you live right now? *(Listed in order of popular response)*

- Tranquility/privacy/ The quiet/ Low traffic
- Rural Character (stone walls, rural roads, etc)
- Natural resources (the woods, functional natural ecosystems, foliage, wetlands, ponds, waterfalls, plants)
- Operating Farms/ ability to buy local produce
- Wildlife/Wildlife habitat
- Night Skies
- Public Open Space/Trails/Nature preserve etc.
- Great neighbors/ Community
- Regulatory controls to limit development (i.e. 2 acre minimum lot size)
- Varying topography and lot sizes/ Variety of architecture/ Diversity in age of residents
- Being able to heat with wood

How can we protect it?

- Encourage and support local conservation organizations in their purchase of open space/land- Put more land into conservation or pass your property on to someone who will care for it and appreciate its beauty.
- Discourage housing developments.
- Create or encourage neighborhood crime watch efforts.
- Enact and enforce strict Wetlands regulations.

What do you think would make your road, or living along your road, a better place to live and work? Is there something that should be eliminated or reworked?

- Lower speed limits/tackle speeding problem/more patrols.
- Nothing! (Fowler Rd, Sleepy Hollow Rd.)
- Work on attracting new business to the Exit 93 area.
- Purchase of open land by town or conservation organization.
- Maintain Stone Walls.
- Increase social opportunities/community.
- Keep areas for hiking, biking and horseback riding.
- Keep a good mix of houses and farms.
- No more signs or stop lights or street lights (Pendleton Hill Rd).
- Good road maintenance/ Keep culverts clean.
- Work on eliminating noise issues (i.e. guns, motorcycles, traffic)/ Sound barriers along I95.

What plans can you see this neighborhood making its future? What do you envision for this very neighborhood you call home?

- Attract Business to the HC Area/Revitalize area/"Too many empty buildings in such a small town."
- Preserve more land.
- Support farms.
- Ability to give a parcel of land to the kids (family compound?)
- Prevent large housing developments and inappropriate development.
- Revitalize church, parish house, and surrounding homes in Clarks Falls/Get Clarks Falls Grist Mill running again.
- Put a plan in place to protect the beauty, rural character, dark skies, and peace and quiet - (in reference to preserving Fowler Rd).
- Protect Pendleton Hill Rd. as an important wildlife corridor.
- Work on reducing the speed along Rte 49.
- Keep Pinewoods a dirt Road.
- Preserve the rural country setting.
- Hold a semi-annual neighborhood clean-up to keep the beauty and get to know the neighbors.

OTHER NOTES FROM THE MEETING:

Things to protect and preserve:

- Maintain public access to all cemeteries and put *cemetery protection* back into the Zoning regulations
- Preserve our water quality (drinking water)
- Preserve the Dark Skies. Some feel there should be restrictions on all lighting including lighting on residential properties.

- The Clarks Falls area has prime agricultural soils which must be preserved. No farms = No food.
- Farms, with their large tracts of unspoiled land help keep the rural feel of the town. They help keep the roads rural and scenic. Many feel we owe farmers a debt of gratitude for this, while others think NS needs to promote the farms, not subsidize them. Farming is a business like any other business.
- Maintain the stone walls, especially along the roads. Also need to preserve the trees and pasture behind the walls. This adds to the natural setting and helps protect the dark skies.
- Keep dirt roads and resist paving and curbing. Many feel if you improve the surface of the road, you increase the traffic and the speed at which cars travel.
- Keep encouraging good signage.
- People enjoy the peace and quiet.

General comments:

- Need more cell phone towers
- Need access to water and sewer to attract new businesses to the HC area. If the right businesses were permitted, it would help lower people's taxes in most people's opinions. Most did not object to increased development in the HC Zone. They actually felt this is where development should locate and that we should be a little more aggressive in our efforts to attract business.
- People upset with the difficulty of getting burning permits. This makes it hard to clear brush to maintain their land or clean up after storms etc. Many want to see fewer rules and more of a promotion of good stewardship of land... i.e. encourage not require.
- Perception still exists that the Zoning regulations are too restrictive and the process too complicated or burdensome which makes NS seem "business unfriendly." There is also a notable antagonism towards town government, regulations, restrictions on private property, and town officials and local representatives. Some voiced a preference for a Town manager/Town Council form of government as they felt they would be better represented.

Excerpts from Interview with Anna Coit (104 yrs old):

North Stonington should consider itself with a slightly different treatment. Rural means the sounds and smells of animals. Rural is absolutely doomed unless certain areas are considered special. Rte. 49 is special and a historic district could be created there. NS can set the example for other towns. There are a few basic historic things to concentrate on. Anna felt the Palmers should give the Grist Mill to the Historic Society.

The stonewalls are a very important part of North Stonington and shouldn't be called fences.

Other written comment:

One resident envisions a future with higher taxes that force people to sell their large tracts of lands and even move away. The people who then move here may put demands on the town that never existed before to upgrade and change the simple ways of the past that drew people here in the first place.

THE 3 LAKES NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING – JANUARY 7, 2013

AREA: **Wyassup Lake:** Wyassup Lake, Armstrong, and Murphy; **Blue Lake:** Patricia Ave, Lakeside Dr., Nina, Polly, Alvina, Loretta, Cathy, and Cheryl; **Billings Lake:** Billings, Cedars, Mountain, Legenwood and Coal Pit.

25 residents attended in addition to Madeline Jeffery (coordinator of the neighborhood meetings) and Juliet Leeming, Town Planner. Three of the 25 residents are currently affiliated with a NS board or Commission. Four additional residents, who were not present at the meeting, submitted written comments for consideration. Hilaire Cote moderated the meeting.

The following is a summary of the written responses submitted as well as additional notes taken at the meeting itself.

Beginning with what you have...What do you like and love about where you live right now? *(Listed in order of popular response)*

- Rural atmosphere and quiet wooded seclusion
- Scenic views- water views
- Abundant wildlife/diversity
- Recreational opportunities: Boating, hiking, trail riding, fishing, walking, biking, skating, tubing - Beach association and raft
- Green Space and rugged rural terrain/ rocks and woods
- Quietness of the lake
- Healthy lakes, good water quality and proximity to State and other protected land
- Safe environment
- Functioning neighborhood association
- Good relationship with Camp Wightman
- Clean air and darkness at night
- Community aspect of living on a lake/friendly neighbors
- Dirt roads and trees
- Modest houses
- Sparse population/privacy

How can we protect it?

- **Manage weeds!!**
- Ensure safe fish/fishing
- Monitor the building by the lake/Limit residences/Enforce Building Codes and Zoning
- Require green space if developed/ Preserve Open Space
- Attend meetings and be involved
- Do all that is possible to protect and maintain the wildlife habitats and watershed
- Do not allow commercial activity around the lakes

- Use natural fertilizers instead of pesticides and poisons
- Make a conscious effort not to litter and to keep own yards free from clutter/maintain property

What can make you neighborhood a better place to live in? What can be eliminated or reworked?

- The lake needs to be maintained. There is a serious problem with invasive weeds.
- Monitor and maintain water quality and lake water levels/ keep lakefront clean and safe
- Enforce existing Zoning regulations (Seasonal v Year Round, lot size, nuisance)
- Restrict speed boats and ban ATVs on lake roads
- Dirt roads need maintenance (grading, winter maintenance etc.)
- Fix the numbering system for the houses. The numbers are illogical and are a safety issue as emergency response is hampered by the poor numbering.
- More and better marked trails around the lake and through Patchaug Forest
- Better mail delivery (mailbox ½ mile from house)
- More police presence (in neighborhood and boat launch)
- Sight-lines at Billings/Cossaduck Hill Rd intersection dangerous.
- Resolve the dispute between M Coen and the residents of the lakes with deeded access to the beach.
- Build a municipal sewer system that all lake residents can hook up to (i.e. a centralized package plant)
- Allow storage buildings on undersized lots
- To teach everyone to be respectful of the lake and the other people living around the lake.
- Clean up the litter and control speeding

What plans should be made in the future? What do you envision?

- Keep it the same. Do not allow commercial activity in the Lakes Neighborhood.
- Solve the weed problem. Monitor motor boat engines for foreign weeds
- If Camp Wightman were ever to be sold, town should buy it and keep as a recreational area.
- Having a town recreation area on a lake would be nice, but the area could not support the increase in people and traffic. Therefore, the Hewitt Farm should be utilized as such.
- Improve boating regulations to be fair and equal to all people using the lakes. Possible prohibition of gas powered watercraft on the lake. Prohibit jet skis
- Cooperative efforts to maintain the lakes and forests. Allow the Lake associations the final say in all decisions pertaining to the lakes and surrounding properties. Create and maintain functioning neighborhood association and hold yearly meetings. Hold beach association meetings too.
- Maintain the existing trails and increase walking trails from Blue Lake to abutting conservation lands. Clean up trash on trails
- Explore the possibility of a community well and sanitation solutions that would be applicable to the unique nature of the area.
- Stock the lake with fish
- Create a picnic area on peninsula near boat launch

- Encourage ALL lake residents to keep their waterfront properties clean and with as little clutter as possible. Enact regulations requiring property and building upkeep.
- Keep lake properties seasonal (at least enforce seasonal properties).
- Keep a constant stream of communication and keep up the neighborhood get-togethers

Additional notes from the meeting:

One of the primary issues identified by all in attendance was the problem with invasive weeds. Many solutions were discussed from the use of chemicals to drawing down the lake periodically to kill the weeds. It was agreed that the State had some responsibility to maintain the health of the lake and that property values were directly affected. Other issues raised that relate to the health of the lakes were the problems with older septic systems. Some felt that the Town should explore the possibility of a centralized package plant that residents could hook up to. Others felt we should require that residents have their systems pumped every two years. Still others did not like the idea of increased regulations, but felt that residents could simply be better informed and should be encouraged to maintain their systems properly and limit things like fertilizer use on lawns as they can have a negative impact on the lake. Some suggested giving year-round status to seasonal residents if they upgrade their septic systems.

There was discussion about creating a tax district for Billings and Wyassup lakes similar to the Blue Lake tax district to raise money for the maintenance that needs to be done. People vote on issues and are then taxed accordingly. Others felt that the town benefits greatly from the taxes generated from the lake properties, but that the lake residents see little benefits in return.

Safety issues raise ranged from speeding to poor sight lines ant certain intersections. Residents would like to see the houses renumbered for better emergency access and would like a greater police presence.

Trail preservation was discussed. Members of the Conservation Commission present stated that they maintain trails, but need help! They have approached many organizations to help, but none have agreed. Some suggested the creation of a Trail Association; others suggested that the Town hire someone to oversee trail maintenance. Avalonia also does some trail maintenance.

With respect to protecting the lake itself, some suggested that we require a better buffer between the houses and the lakes. A vegetated buffer would protect water quality and would also give the lakes a more rural feel (from the prospective of boaters).

There was a general consensus that it is not another layer of rules that is needed, but simply a better awareness of all the issues that affect the lakes and the neighborhoods that surround them. People also felt that they had little say in some of the work that is done in the area such as the maintenance of roads and the trees abutting the roads.

This group was very passionate about their neighborhoods. The lakes are special and are a real asset to the Town. Their health and beauty are of great importance to the residents who enjoy them and the community aspect of living on a lake is unique and wonderful. Many of the residents who attended the meeting have lived in town for over 20 years with some having been associated with NS for over 70 years.

WYASSUP ROAD NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING – JANUARY 14, 2013

AREA: Wyassup to Babcock, Wyassup Lake, Armstrong, Murphy, Grindstone Hill, Hangman Hill, Reuteman, Chester Main, Babcock, Hewitt and Bergius.

37 residents attended in addition to Madeline Jeffery (coordinator of the neighborhood meetings) and Juliet Leeming, Town Planner. 10 of the 39 residents are currently affiliated with a NS board or Commission. State Representative Diana Urban was in attendance as well. Three additional residents, who were not present at the meeting, submitted written comments for consideration. Roy Kerlin moderated the meeting.

The following is a summary of the written responses submitted as well as additional notes taken at the meeting itself.

Beginning with what you have...What do you like and love about where you live right now?

- The rural character
- Open Space/ forests, meadows and brooks/ample undeveloped land
- The physical beauty of the area/picturesque stone walls
- Farms/Agricultural heritage/Seeing horses along Wyassup/ farm smells
- Abundant wildlife/variety of wildlife/good habitat
- Privacy/large lots/ Low population density
- Caring concerned neighbors/friendly people/down-to-earth
- Well maintained roads
- Quiet
- Low traffic
- Well maintained historic homes/ terrific history
- State forest/fair grounds/ Wyassup Lake (recreational opportunities)
- Fowler Preserve
- Hiking trails

How do we protect it?

- Protect farmland and farmers. Open up some forested land for farming. Encourage farm related industries such as a slaughterhouse, feed store, granary etc.
- Promote the history/ maintain historic stonewalls and structures
- Protect water quality/encourage best farming practices
- Preserve the rural character. Make land clean and accessible.
- Control any tendency to industrialize – only allow small diverse businesses
- Control littering/encourage Town to clean roadsides
- Protect Zoning – engage in big picture planning for the whole town. Identify and provide infrastructure, planning and support for a business/industrial area.
- Zone residential/farm areas to protect water quality/ allow enough room for septic

- Encourage underground utilities

What do you think would make your road, or living along your road, a better place to live and work? Is there something that should be eliminated or reworked?

- Support farms/facilitate farming. Support new farmers so that you can market the community as a great place to start farming. Don't tax every structure on a farm Roads need better paving, road stripes, and signage and street lights needed at some intersections.
- Need to address speeding by either lowering speed limit or simply better enforcing existing speed limit. Traffic speed threatens safety of walkers. Need speed bumps at Wyassup Rd./Chester Main/Ryder Rd. intersection for safety.
- Prohibit outdoor furnaces or create better regulations.
- Address litter situation. Promote community efforts to pick up litter along roads and trails. Educate the children about littering and have them participate in the clean-up.
- Get rid of the adult bookstore
- Create and maintain a trails map
- Lower taxes and fewer regulations
- Control development
- More land preservation and enforcement of environmental regulations.
- Strong "clean farming practices".

What plans can you see this neighborhood making its future? What do you envision for this very neighborhood you call home?

- No change
- Maintain the rural nature and control or prevent "big business" encroachment
- Keep the cost of farmland down by preventing sprawling residential developments as this drives the price of land up. Lower cost of farmland will attract new farmers.
- Create senior housing
- Allow clean industry to increase tax revenue
- Improve communications by putting more information about property boundary regulations, trail maps, and legal hiking roads. Use website more effectively to communicate local views and meetings.
- Encourage business development and enhance the village center with retail and restaurants (i.e. an Irish Pub)
- Hold a weekly farmer's market at Holly green or the Senior Center
- Economic downturn has slowed development and allows us to carefully plan for the future in a prudent, conservative, thoughtful way. This includes careful consideration to changing the current configuration of our schools and looking for ways to create niche environment for businesses.

OTHER NOTES FROM THE MEETING:

Things to create and preserve:

- The quality small schools
- Clean fishable rivers
- Quiet rural character
- Ability to walk in the woods/good trails/open space
- Narrow rural roads
- Historic buildings and resources
- Dark Skies
- Support land trusts
- Support farming- create farm friendly regulations. If you want to protect the rural character, you must protect the farms. Succession plans important/ Transfer of development rights.
- Energy self-sufficiency
- The Grange

Some of the primary concerns were as follows:

Schools: Some felt schools were great (outrank others) but that many students go elsewhere for sports and better course selection. Young parents are concerned that there is a lack of opportunity in such a small community that more opportunities are available in surrounding communities such as Stonington and Ledyard.

Traffic: Traffic and speeding came up a lot at this meeting. Residents complained about the noise and speeding along the roads and that we should keep traffic and noise in mind when permitting certain uses (i.e. a winery). Increased traffic and uncontrolled speeding become a safety concern to walker, bikers and horseback riders. Some possible solutions were discussed, but none really agreed on. Many felt that by attracting new business or visitors to town, we would just be getting more noise, traffic and litter. Litter along the roads was a major concern as well. Many spoke of a community clean-up effort and better education in school about littering and respecting the environment. Young people need to be more involved in the community and more in touch with the natural world.

Open Space/Trails/Natural resource preservation: NS has abundant natural resources, open space, clean water, beautiful stone walls, farms and forest. All these must remain a priority for preservation. Some felt that open space is being encroached upon by development and efforts should be made to preserve large tracts of land. There are many Indian stone piles and artifacts that should not be identified on maps and efforts to protect them should be in place. Some felt that open space for public use should be better marked to prevent unintentional trespassing and others felt that too many signs along properties and trails would destroy the rural character. One felt that some open space should just be for wildlife and not people. Maintaining safe paths could be an objective in the POCD.

Preserving Historic resources: Some felt strongly that historic structures and other resources should be preserved even if it means at greater cost to the town than simply replacing or removing the structure. Desire expressed to create an accurate survey of the existing historic resources in town.

Community: The loss of the Watermark was a real blow to the community. More gathering places needed to foster real community... facebook Community seems to be replacing the real community. Supporting the grange is a positive way to support the NS Community. Many spoke of a need to respect each other, the land and our neighborhoods.

Farms: there was a great deal of conversation about preserving farms and supporting farmers. Suggestions ranges from supporting land trusts and their efforts to buy land, creating farm friendly regulations, hosting a membership drive for the grange, hosting a farmer's market in town, encouraging the selling or transfer of development rights to preserve farmland (though farmers ofte make more by selling to a developer), enforcing zoning regulations concerning agriculture (and others said the opposite), town purchase of farmland to then lease to a family, selling conservation easement to a farmland trust, State purchase of farmland for continued use as a farm, and Conservation Subdivisions as an alternative to traditional subdivisions in order to preserve land and provide a better buffer between homes and farms.

There was discussion about the fact that older generations in town are generally opposed to change and the younger generations are not involved in the community or planning process. It is hard to achieve the right balance between keeping taxes low and getting the services and other things that we want (i.e. preserve historic resources or purchase of open space).

COSSADUCK HILL NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING – JANUARY 30, 2013

AREA: Cossaduck Hill, Yawbux Valley, Ryder, Milltown, Swantown Hill, Button, Northwest Corner, Anna Farm east & West, Miller, Patricia, Lake of Isles, Billings lake roads and Blue Lake roads, and Rte. 2 from Ledyard line to Rte. 201.

24 residents attended in addition to Madeline Jeffery (coordinator of the neighborhood meetings) and Juliet Leeming, Town Planner. Representatives from the DEP and Avalonia as well as First Selectman, Nicholas Mullane were in attendance. Doug Schwartz attended to provide information about the Native American stone constructions found throughout NS and submitted written comments on this subject as well. Two residents submitted written comments in addition to attending the meeting. Roy Kerlin moderated the meeting.

The following is a summary of the notes taken at the meeting itself and from the two written comments submitted..

Beginning with what you have...What do you like and love about where you live right now?

- Rural nature/sparse population/isolation
- Silence
- dark skies
- animals on the roads
- Lack of noise and light pollution
- Helpful friendly neighbors/sense of community/strong family ties to the land
- Loved the NS of old with few houses and few people – but realize change is inevitable
- Scenic roads/narrow winding country roads
- Woodlands, wildlife, gardens, and birds
- State Forests

How do we protect it?

- Maintain the roads and stone walls. Keep roads narrow and curvy. Designate more roads as scenic roads to offer a layer of protection. Some say not to maintain the roads as this would reduce the speeding. Don't add lights or speed bumps.
- Preserve the rural character
- No sewers
- Keep large lot zoning – keep houses sparse and setback from road; purchase adjoining lots to preserve as open space.
- Encourage the preservation of land. Encourage farming on the land.
- Avoid large commercial developments and support and encourage small businesses

- Make farming as easy as possible. Allow slaughterhouses, ag-tourism and B&B's on farms.
- Protect and maintain the forests
- Encourage closely monitored forestation techniques to preserve woods.
- Create wildlife habitats.

What do you think would make your road, or living along your road, a better place to live and work? Is there something that should be eliminated or reworked?

- Speeding is a real concern and safety issue. Need increased enforcement. Dangerous intersections are a concern too.
- Increase police presence in town to keep criminal and drug activity under control.
- Work to increase awareness, personal responsibility, and courtesy (in reference to many things i.e. speeding, litter, community involvement etc.)
- Allow family compounds on large lots – especially those with little frontage thus eliminating the possibility of splitting off an additional lot.
- Educate newcomers from more urban areas what it means to live in a rural farming community.
- Control traffic and noise
- “Leave as is.”
- Do something about the abandoned, neglected houses that result in blight and sometimes crime.

What plans can you see this neighborhood making its future? What do you envision for this very neighborhood you call home?

- Increase conservation efforts to preserve the forests. Reclaim neglected forests and turn into leasable farmland. Town can make money on preservation and gain trails, farmland, firewood, animal habitats etc. There are farm soils of special importance in town and the Town itself owns land with these soils. The town can utilize this resource and earn revenue at the same time by leasing it to farmers. Owner of FireFly farm outlined a plan of forest preservation that would generate an income for the town.
- New development is not necessarily a bad thing. Many feel that economic growth will help the tax base and provide funding for the things we need (i.e. schools, new firehouse). It is not what we develop, but more how it is done. The real concern is scale, location and design. People do not want to see large scale development (like senior housing complex) in residential areas, but feel there are appropriate locations for development. Development should be focused along Rte. 2. This development should be more infill and reuse of existing vacant properties or blighted buildings. Some feel we should focus on cottage industries/ home occupations and allow slightly more intensive uses. People are willing to travel to work and to access goods and services in order to preserve NS as a rural town. Some feel that the small-town mentality and

lifestyle is desirable and that we should let people do what they want as long as they do not disturb the peace and rural character.

- The town needs places for people to gather. The loss of the Watermark was huge.

BOOMBRIDGE AND MYSTIC ROAD NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING – FEBRUARY 20, 2013

Boombridge Neighborhood Area: Boombridge Rd. (south of Rte. 184), Rte. 184 each side of rotary from RI to boarder, Pendleton Hill (south of 184), Stillman, Surrey lane, Cranberry Bog, Anthony, Ella Wheeler, and Surry Lane.

Mystic Road Neighborhood Area: Mystic Rd. (to Rte 2), Rte. 184 (from Stonington boarder to rotary), Holly Ln., Mill Village, Kingswood/Meadow Wood community, Cedar ridge Community, Farm Ponds, Rocky Hollow, and Rte 2 (from Rte 201 through Village to Stonington).

16 residents attended in addition to Madeline Jeffery (coordinator of the neighborhood meetings) and Juliet Leeming, Town Planner. Roy Kerlin moderated the meeting.

The following is a summary of the notes taken at the meeting and one additional written comment submitted.

Beginning with what you have...What do you like and love about where you live right now?

- Great neighbors that really look out for one-another/ friendly neighborhood
- Isolation/quiet/dark skies
- Quaint historical aspect of NS/ charm
- Rural character/ farmland/ woods/ stonewalls/ Natural resources and wildlife
- Diversity of neighborhood types – some rural some suburban
- Like feeling like they live in VT but do not have to drive so far
- Great school system
- The library
- Ability to walk on the back roads and trails
- Narrow rural roads
- NS Fair and other community events and organizations (Garden Club, Grange, Little League)
- Hewitt Farm

Some of the primary concerns were as follows:

Schools: This group felt the school system was great and had a high success rate for graduates. The school grounds have been used for community events and meetings and they are the focal point of the community. They did not like the idea of shipping kids off to other school. They felt the sports program needed improvement. Overall, they felt the schools should be preserved at all costs.

Traffic: Traffic and speeding came up at this meeting too. Residents complained about the Casino traffic along Rte. 2. The Casino traffic is a hazard to residents and the Town reaps no benefits from the passing travelers. They head right for the Casino and spend no money in town. Some commented that the traffic

has increased in town despite no increase in population. Some solutions to this issue that were discussed were: Sidewalks along Rte. 2; keeping the roads narrow; greater police presence and enforcement of speed limits; use of speed trailers; better signage at rotary; better utilization of existing troopers. One even suggested a return to having Constables.

Litter along the roads was a major concern to this group as well. Many felt more signs about littering fines should be posted. Wintechog Hill in particular has a real issue with litter and dumping. People lose garbage out of their trucks on the way to the dump and often leave bags of trash if the dump is closed. Some felt individuals should continually clean the road in front of their houses to send a clear message, but most felt it was too dangerous to pick up litter along Rte. 2 and that the town or some state entity should be responsible for controlling the litter along State roads. Residents felt that the troopers should be more diligent and enforce littering fines.

Development concerns: All in the group want NS to remain rural, but many feel that some industry/development is needed to provide tax relief. Retirees in particular are burdened by the high taxes. Economic Development has been a contentious issue over the years. People want development, but not traffic generating development that will increase traffic on the back roads too. Traffic interferes with the farmers who have to drive tractors on the back roads to access their land. The question we need to answer is what scale is appropriate for NS. How far are we willing to go to attract development to reduce taxes? Developers need to have a viable project, but residents want to protect the character of NS. Large developments become an entity in and of themselves: a suburbia within the rural NS community. Some feel that there are ways to bring in development while still preserving the character and natural world... it just has to be planned carefully. Members of the EPTN commented that they would like to have better access to goods and services, but they really do like the quiet rural nature.

Open Space/Trails/Natural resource preservation: NS's abundant natural resources must remain a priority for preservation. People love the variety of wildlife and the opportunities to be out in nature (trails, country roads, Hewitt Farm etc.). One mentioned loving the smell of wood smoke when she drives through town. One commented that most people in town were here because of the natural beauty and rural nature not because of recreational opportunities or development. The positives (night skies, beauty, farms and forests) have to be emphasized and protected. One mentioned the need to care for the forests – selective cutting – in order that they are better preserved. Discussion also focused on the need to educate people about invasive species.

Another environmental concern raised was flooding. This resident felt that the creek behind Oak Dr. needed attention – maybe it could be enhanced and used to help control flooding (somehow). She felt some education about invasive species was needed and that fertilizers and pesticides should be discouraged.

Housing: When asked what needs to be changed in town, the first response was to increase housing choices especially for seniors. Another commented that the blight was lowering

surrounding house values. There was concern that clustered or multifamily housing would have a negative impact on the aquifer and that it simply didn't fit into the character of town. Others were OK with the idea of multi-family housing or mixed use provided it wasn't in their back yard or that the scale was appropriate. Much of the housing discussion centered around how to attract young adults to town or how to keep our own children here. How do we integrate the kind of housing young adults can afford into a town that is predominately single-family homes on large lots?

Community: The loss of the Watermark, as in every other meeting, was described as a great loss to the community. Central/community gathering places as well as community events are really needed to draw a community together. Many enjoy their privacy, but need to feel a connection with the community around them. They feel a need to take part in community events and connect with other residents. The Garden Club was mentioned as a great organization. Farm tours, the Fair, and the Wheeler Library were also mentioned as positives to the Community. Many would like to see the Hewitt Farm better utilized for community events. One mentioned the desire to see the neighborhoods kept clean.

Summary of future planning suggestions for the neighborhood (and NS):

- Carefully plan future development in order to lessen impact of traffic on NS roads and to preserve the rural character and natural resources that attracted residents to NS in the first place. Development should be appropriately scaled while also being a viable project for the developer. Development should be planned in order that we may achieve the right balance between reducing the tax burden; providing greater access to goods and services; and providing more housing choice for seniors and young adults while protecting what we value most in the community.
- Address the litter issue by increasing public awareness (via signage and education programs), individual clean-up efforts and increased trooper enforcement.
- Utilize existing organizations, town properties, historic and cultural resources and community events to draw residents together. Help residents connect to one another and be involved in their own neighborhoods and in the greater NS community.
- Encourage gardening without using fertilizers to better protect environment.

VILLAGE NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING – FEBRUARY 25, 2013

AREA: The Village Preservation Overlay Area (Main St. through Village, parts of Rte. 2, Rocky Hollow Rd., and corner of Babcock down Wyassup to Main Street)

9 residents attended in addition to Madeline Jeffery (coordinator of the neighborhood meetings) and Juliet Leeming, Town Planner. Several members of the Historical Society were in attendance. John Olsen moderated the meeting.

The following is a summary of the notes taken at the meeting and from two written comments submitted by 2 of the attendees.

Beginning with what you have...What do you like and love about where you live right now?

- The Wheeler Library (and wonderful staff)
- The great open space around the Village
- Walking trails
- The municipal building being in the Village
- Historic buildings and architecture
- Great neighbors – sense of community in the village
- The old Trolley Line, Hewitt Farm and Fair Grounds
- Being able to walk to meetings, events, the library, etc.

Some of the primary concerns were as follows:

Historical Buildings: Frank Eppinger, president of the Historical Society spoke at length about the Village and its place on the national register of historic places. This status offers a lot of protection. Rte. 2 cannot be widened in this section, because no federal funds can be used to change something in a historic district. There are different Zoning protections in the Village Preservation Overlay Zone as well – though not as strict as some other towns and historic areas. The protection of historical buildings outside of the building was also recognized as important by the residents present. There are some State Statutes that offer protection for the vulnerable historic buildings outside of the Village, but they feel the Town could do a better job educating the public about the existing historic buildings and the programs available that could provide funds for protection. Individual property owners take pride in their historic homes and put in much effort to preserve/maintain them.

Development in and around the Village: While Frank believed the Village was fully developed, others disagreed saying that the Watermark should be rebuilt (restoration of village appropriate businesses). All agreed that the gateways to the village should remain as they are and not be developed further – and that Village entry points should illustrate the pride and historical attributes of the Village. “Village gateway” signs identifying the Historic Village should be considered as well as a change in pavement to indicate that you are now in the Village (. All

also agreed that the municipal buildings should remain in the Village as well as the Fire Department.

There was discussion about possible uses for the vacant buildings. The flood and the related loss of the Watermark and the closing of the Hardware store as well as the death of Bill Hescoock (subsequent closing of his law office) really ripped the commercial heart out of the Village. How can we rebuild the Village? Some suggested giving the hardware store and the future developers of another “watermark” tax credits or incentives to get them running again now that the Bridge is finished.

The issue of parking was raised in conjunction with the possibility of new commercial activity in the Village. All felt the Town hall parking lot should simply be a Town Parking lot to be used by the commercial entities as well (with no additional parking requirements for each business). The Library, which now serves as the community center of sorts also lacks parking. The group felt there needed to be a better relationship between the Library and the HS so that they could use the school parking for special events. Whatever plans for additional parking should be sensible and invisible.

The group present was not opposed to the idea of tying into a sewer and/or gas line as it may in fact be better for the environment as the Village tends to flood which effects the septic systems. There was also talk of putting all utilities underground. This would give the Village a more quaint historic feel (similar to Stonington Borough).

There was no specific talk of development in town, only that any growth or planned activities should remain minimal – a nice local thing. Whatever economic development we encourage should be such that the benefits to town outweigh the draw on services. Many felt that increased economic development would not actually help the tax base – the added tax revenue would just be absorbed into a bigger budget. There was a consensus that there was a need to plan for the good and the bad.

Traffic and Speeding: As in every other meeting the same complaints about increased traffic and speeding were voiced. Some of the speeding and traffic was the result of the changed traffic pattern resulting from the Bridge being closed. Many feel some additional stop signs are needed in various locations as well as speed bumps in the village. One suggested a barrier between the library and the adjoining green as cars have been driving through the green. All agreed that the new “Drive like your kids live here” signs were being ignored. Residents basically want the lawful compliance and enforcement of traffic laws.

Community vitality and connectivity: There are great trails and open space that surround the Village. Trails that connect the Village to some of these places should be expanded. The Trolley line and Wyassup Road provide great walking routes that connect the Village to the surrounding area. One expressed a desire for better access to the Hewitt farm from the Village and for the Town to use this space for more town events (i.e Town picnic). The town benefits from the Village and the Village benefits from town events.

With the loss of the Watermark, the Library has become the new gathering place. Community meetings and events are held here. All efforts to support the library are encouraged as it is seen the most vital force in the Village. There was some concern about encouraging more social and cultural events in the village as this would draw more people to town. Some events have drawn too many people causing traffic and noise issues. One resident said “We are a Village not a museum!” Everyone in the Village is fine with the NS Fair. They understand that the Village will be full of cars and people – but it is only for 4 days and is an important event for NS.

Other comments/suggestions:

- One resident suggested lowering Main Street back to its original elevation so that her property wouldn't flood.
- Create a stone wall in front of the Library using the stones from the original bridge.
- Preservation of the Library green from errant passage of cars onto the grass (west of Library) through introduction of stone barriers.
- Formal elimination of the “short cut” through the Middle school parking area from Rte. 2 to Main St.
- The cooperation of parking access at the rear of the Library with school property.
- Stop signs were suggested at the corner of Rocky Hollow and Main (make a 3-way stop by B&B) as well as one on the new bridge where Main St. intersects with Wyassup.
- Mac Turner reminded group of the Rte. 2 bypass study and of the Decision of record that was entered that basically prevents the expansion/widening of Rte. 2 until a second bridge across the Thames River is built and some road construction that will likely never happen.
- Hardware store in the village is a good thing.
- Keep the Village the way it is.
- Action on behalf of Village Preservation in the presentation of ideas for expansion and direction of the assets of undeveloped land (at entrances).
- I envision a Village that returns to the status of Center of Government and Identification for the Town of NS. In addition, I can envision a reconstruction of the Fire House to an alternate location on Rocky Hollow Rd. that would serve to provide increased protection of the assets of the town as well as safety of the Fire Company personnel. School

construction plans should include provisions for the eventual change in mission from an educational venue to an alternate use facility such as a Senior Citizen Shelter.