

OFFICE OF THE
FIRST SELECTMAN

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William F. Brennan
First Selectman

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Richard F. Creeth

Harold E. Clark

Ted W. Hoffstatter

TOWN HALL
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, CT 06897

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2011
MEETING ROOM B, WILTON TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: First Selectman William Brennan, Selectman Susan Bruschi, Selectman Richard Creeth, Selectman Hal Clark, Selectman Ted Hoffstatter

GUESTS: Sandy Dennies, Robert Nemey, Sarah Taffel, Ann Bell, James Meinhold, Ben Saunders, Marilyn Gould, Jan Andras

OTHERS: Joan Lownds (Bulletin), Tom Evans (Villager), T. J. Buzzeo (Daily Wilton website)

First Selectmen Brennan called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

A. Consent Agenda

Upon motion by Mr. Clark, the consent agenda was approved as follows:

Minutes

- Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting of January 18, 2011

Tax Refunds

- Real Estate and Motor Vehicle Refunds as per Tax Collector's Memo of 1/21/11

B. Discussion and/or Action

1. Ambler Farm Greenhouse Proposal – The Friends of Ambler Farm are proposing to erect a greenhouse at the farm that will be purchased, erected and managed by the Friends of Ambler Farm, at no cost to the Town. They are planning to have the 22' by 48'

structure erected by March 2011. They have reviewed their proposal with the Elizabeth Raymond Ambler Trust, the Wilton Historical Society and the bordering neighbors, and received no objections. This greenhouse could extend the Farm's growing season by 6 weeks.

2. Economic Development – Mr. Brennan read remarks that he prepared regarding Economic Development – Past, Present and Future (attached to these minutes). Mr. Nerney added that when the Plan of Conservation and Development was being prepared, a survey of 400 residents indicated that their number one priority was quality of life and that economic development was a close second. Planning and Zoning is mostly considered to be a regulatory agency but economic development is an important part of the land planning process. Mr. Clark would like to see some type of town government plan to improve infrastructure, including the possibility of extending the natural gas pipeline further north. Mr. Brennan will invite a representative from Yankee Gas (now a part of CL&P) to a future BOS meeting to answer questions about the possibility.

3. Resolution – Authorization to sign a Quitclaim Deed

Ms. Bruschi moved the following – RESOLVED, that William F. Brennan, First Selectman of the Town of Wilton, be and hereby is authorized to convey by Quitclaim deed to the State of Connecticut: All that certain piece of parcel of land situated on the Westerly side of the Danbury-Norwalk State Highway, U.S. Route 7 in quantity about one half (1/2) acre, more or less, and bounded Northerly by the Norwalk River formerly known as Charles Gregory's Mill Pond; Easterly by land of the State of Connecticut, being the Danbury-Norwalk State Highway, U.S. Route 7; Southerly coming nearly to a point at land of the State of Connecticut, being the Danbury-Norwalk State Highway, U.S. Route 7, and the Norwalk River formerly known as Charles Gregory's Mill Pond; and Westerly by the Norwalk River formerly known as Charles Gregory's Mill Pond. Being the same property described in a Warranty Deed from Dorothy W. Scribner A.K.A. Dorothy W. Lamb, to George DiScala, Jr., recorded in Volume 133 at Page 183 and a Quitclaim Deed from the State of Connecticut to George DiScala, Jr., recorded in Volume 520 at Page 68, recorded on the Town of Wilton Land Records. FURTHER RESOLVED, that William F. Brennan, First Selectman, is hereby authorized to sign all documents necessary to complete said conveyance to the State of Connecticut. Motion seconded and unanimously carried.

This Quitclaim is meant to satisfy the State of Connecticut that the Town of Wilton does not have any interest in this small piece of property.

4. Wilton Commons Status Report

Mr. Brennan advised that he meets monthly with Mr. Ciaccio and others in charge of this project to receive updates and monitor the many steps involved in the Town granting the property lease for construction of the Wilton Commons. In March, Mr. Ciaccio will be invited to give a report to the full Board of Selectmen.

5. Miscellaneous Other Business

Senior Survey – To date, we have received approximately 1,100 completed surveys of the 3,100 that were mailed out to residents 55+ in age. This is an excellent response. The results are being tabulated and are expected to be presented to the BOS by the end of March.

Snow – Mr. Brennan prepared an Op Ed article for the local press regarding the challenges of the recent snow storms (attached to these minutes). To date, the town has depleted 75% of the budgeted funds for winter and the schools have used 85% of funds they have in the budget.

C. Public Comment: None noted

D. Reports

1. First Selectman's Report

Unemployment – The current unemployment rate in Wilton is 5.6% compared to 6.6% in December 2010.

2. Selectmen Reports

Mr. Creeth: No Report

Mr. Clark: No report

Mr. Hoffstatter: The Go Green Committee is requesting that the First Selectman help to promote the Re-usable Bag campaign to the Chamber of Commerce at their next function.

Ms. Bruschi – No report

- E. Executive Session – Mr. Brennan moved to enter executive session to discuss personnel litigation and to invite Ms. Taffel and Ms. Dennies to attend. Motion seconded and unanimously carried. The meeting entered executive session at 8:40 p.m. and returned to open session at 9:35 p.m. at which time the meeting adjourned with no action being taken.

Jan Andras, Recording Secretary

Attachment A: Ambler Farm Greenhouse Proposal (4 pages)

Attachment B: Economic Development – Past, Present and Future (4 pages)

Attachment C: "A Winter to Remember" – (3 pages)

Potential Issues Addressed

Planning + Zoning - The greenhouse will be situated more than 100' from any property line to comply with zoning regulations. Ambler Farm is zoned as R-2A. As a farm, any greenhouse or similar structure is a permitted use as long as it is located at least 100' from any property line.

Building Department - The greenhouse will be erected as a temporary structure. It will not have cement or in-ground footings, but will follow the complete Wilton Building Department application process which requires several permit applications and Town department signoffs – from the Health Department, Wetlands, Erosion And Sediment Control, Planning & Zoning, Fire Marshall, Building Department.

Wetlands - Pat Sesto confirmed there are no wetlands at Ambler so nothing is needed from Wetlands Department other than signing off, as part of the permit process.

Fire Department – The Fire Department sees no issues.

Deed – The greenhouse is to be placed in Parcel A as defined by the deed of sale. The deed stipulates that no new construction may be carried out on Parcel A. In the opinion of our attorney, Casey Healy, a greenhouse would not be considered a structure according to the building code (it would be classified much like a tent). As such, placing a greenhouse as proposed would not be in violation of the deed. However, we have taken the extra step of reviewing our proposal with members of both the Elizabeth Raymond Ambler Trust and the Wilton Historical Society – neither objects to the greenhouse.

Neighbors – We have reviewed our plans with the neighbors bordering the area where the greenhouse would be sited. They have no objections to our plans.

Conclusion

A greenhouse at Ambler Farm will improve the success of the agricultural operation and add to the farm's revenue. It will enhance ongoing educational programming at the farm and will create the opportunities for new programs. It forwards the agricultural mission of the farm and the directives of the deed to promote the agricultural heritage of the community.

Ambler Farm Greenhouse Proposal

The Friends of Ambler Farm proposes to erect a greenhouse in the southwest field at Ambler Farm. The greenhouse will be purchased, erected and managed by the Friends of Ambler Farm.

A greenhouse is critical to the ongoing success and further development of agriculture at Ambler Farm. The idea of locating a greenhouse at the farm has been under discussion for some time by the Friends of Ambler Farm Board. Until recently, however, this has not been an urgent issue because Ben Saunders, Ambler Farm's farmer, has been renting a home that has an attached greenhouse. Unfortunately the landlord wants to sell the property and may not renew the Saunders' lease. Even if the lease is renewed, this is only a short-term solution at best. Timing is critical in order for the greenhouse to be available for use during the current growing season. We are planning to have the greenhouse erected by March 2011.

Why a greenhouse is important

The greenhouse will be used to start plants from seed (transplants) beginning in February each season. The transplants grow in the greenhouse until they can be planted in the farm's gardens. Using transplants rather than waiting to grow everything from seeds sown directly in the ground means the farm can extend the growing and production season by up to 6 weeks. It is not possible to sow anything in the ground until the risk of hard frost has passed; usually this occurs in May. By extending the harvest season the farm would generate \$8,000-10,000 additional income annually (after deducting operating expenses). Additionally, as has been the case the past two years the farm will also sell these transplants to the public to be used in their own home gardens.

Greenhouse Details

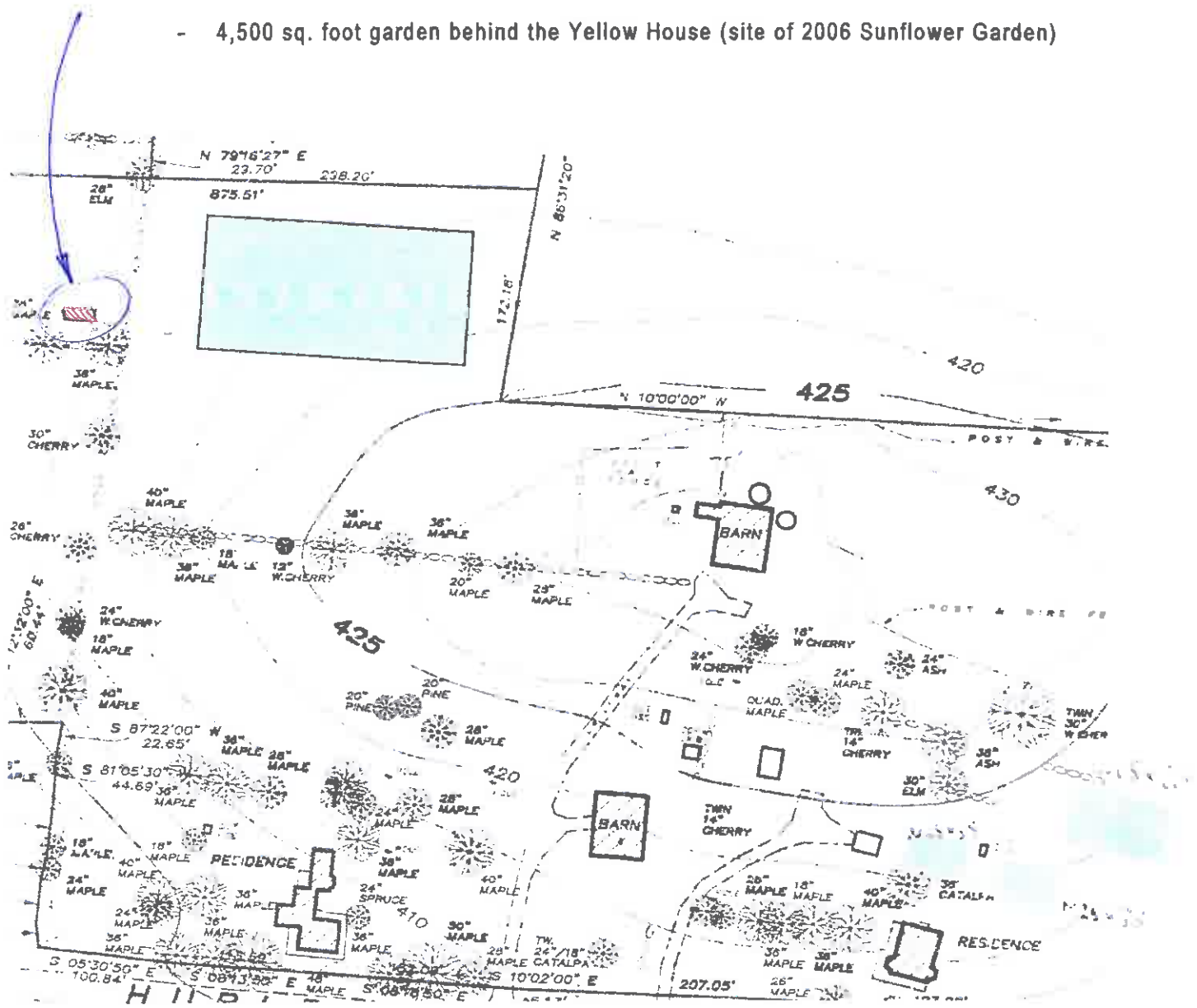
The Friends of Ambler Farm will purchase the greenhouse, which is manufactured by Rimol Greenhouse Systems, Inc. a leading greenhouse manufacturer that has sold greenhouses throughout the United States for over 15 years. All Rimol greenhouses have been developed to be economical, yet rugged enough to handle the harshest snow and wind loads that New England and other regions of the country endure. The particular greenhouse the Friends of Ambler Farm has selected would be approximately 22' wide x 48' long x 14" high. It would have water and electrical service and an above ground oil tank (less than 550 gallons) for heating.

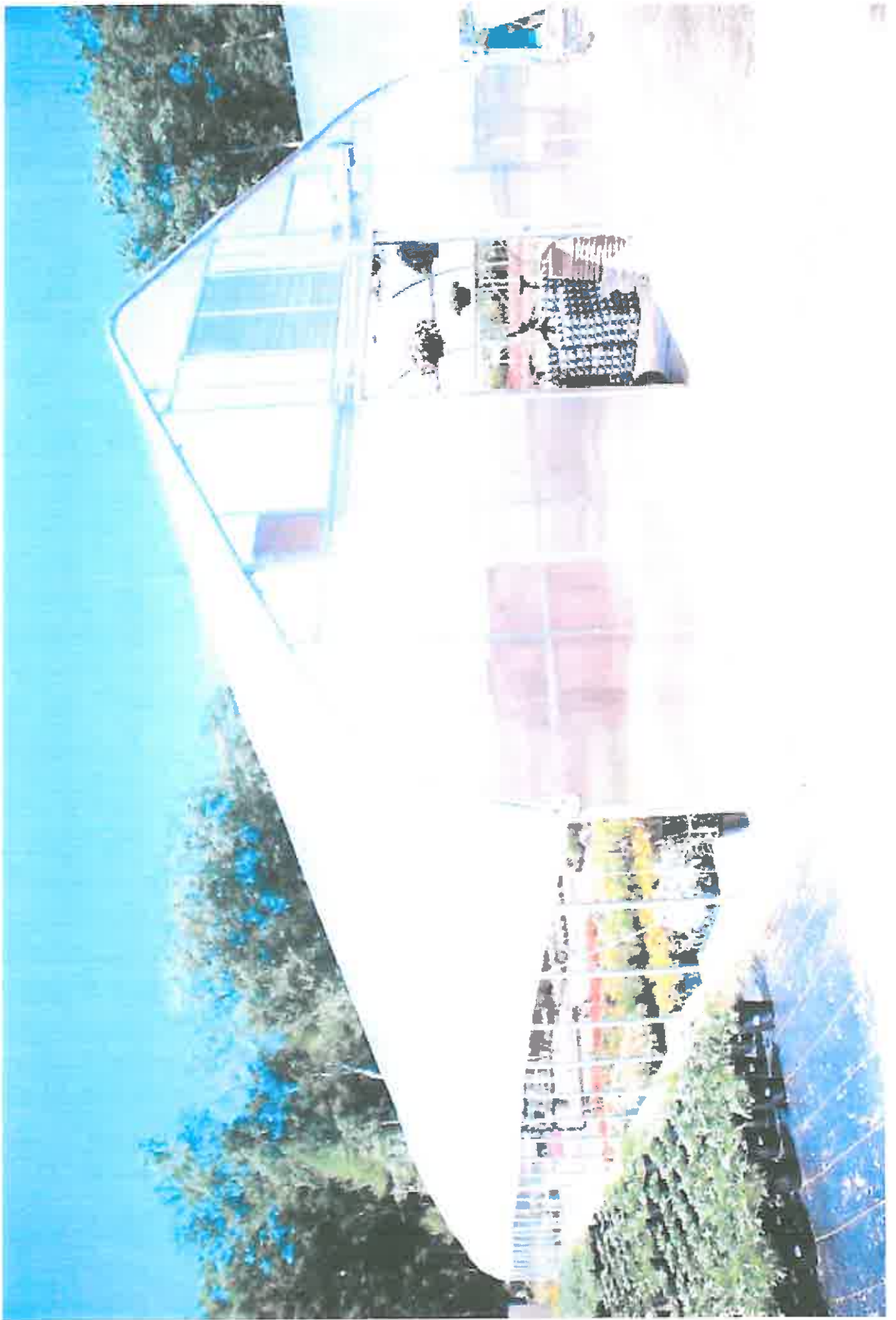
The greenhouse is erected using a bow and truss frame made from galvanized steel tubing.

- The frame is covered with a double layer of 6 mil, clear polyethylene film that has 4-year guarantee. Its engineering meets International Building Codes (IBC). As mentioned above the proposed location is adjacent to the south hay field in an area that until recently has been overgrown with weeds, vines, and dead trees. This location was chosen for several reasons, including its proximity to the garden, the number of hours of direct sunlight it would receive and because it's one of the least obtrusive locations on the farm, tucked away out of view from the general public.

AGRICULTURE

- Portions of the land to remain as "open space".
- Areas to be developed and maintained as garden plots.
 - for educational purposes.
 - for the production of produce and flowers to sell to the public.
- The Farm to be a source for agricultural and environmental educational programs.
- The Farm to be a source for healthy, locally-grown produce and flowers sold via Ambler Farm market stand and other farmer's markets.
- Garden plots to be developed:
 - 1.2 acre garden in the west field
 - 4,500 sq. foot garden behind the Yellow House (site of 2006 Sunflower Garden)





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

By late February, I had planned to write an OP ED to the community, summing up economic development activity in Wilton. As there have been some recent comments on this subject, I decided to provide a report to the BOS and the community this evening to clarify some information and to improve understanding on this subject.

It is my intent to provide a brief summary of economic development activity in Wilton over the last several years for perspective. As you will see, it has been significant, but the nature of economic development is that it is a gradual complex process. In brief, it is a planning process to promote economic growth that is location appropriate, and consistent with the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development.

To some, economic development is viewed as industrial parks and big projects, such as new manufacturing factories and corporate headquarters. It is not a short term process or simple "buzzwords" for a quick fix to a community's search for additional tax revenues. In fact, economic development encompasses any effort that promotes economic growth and opportunity for all residents, as well as improvements in the quality of life of an area.

I mentioned Wilton's Plan of Conservation and Development, which was developed over a three year period and adopted last year. This plan was carefully developed with substantial discussion and public participation by our Planning and Zoning Commission with Bob Nerney's capable assistance. It is a comprehensive directional plan with goals and strategies that addresses the many aspects of future development, including future economic development. It is a very well written plan and is the core planning document for the community.

First let's look at the past and then I'll comment on the present and provide some thoughts on the future.

In brief, there has been substantial economic development in Wilton over the last -several years. For example, at 20 Westport Road, 317,000 sq. ft. of class A office space was built – dramatically increasing office space at this corporate park.

Over the last two years, Davis Marcus Partners expanded Wilton Corporate Park by building two new buildings at 40 and 60 Danbury Road, which added another 243,000 sq. ft. of office space to the community, bringing Wilton's total to well over 1,000,000 sq. ft. of class A office space. These projects, which have attracted well known corporate clients to these facilities, are the envy of some of our neighboring communities.

Other new office space has been added in Wilton Center and along the Route 7 Corridor. These projects increase the vibrancy of our community, create jobs, and increase ancillary service business for many small firms in the area.

Wilton has also been a leader in the development of adult care facilities. Currently, we have five nursing homes and assisted living facilities in Wilton. While some have said that seniors are leaving Wilton, it is evident that many seniors are moving to Wilton and residing comfortably at these facilities!

Obviously, the "great recession" has stalled growth and development across the country and Wilton is not an exception. New home construction has suffered badly, along with existing home sales. A buyer's market has gradually eroded home values which has dampened builders' enthusiasm to invest in new construction. Yet, local businesses are surviving. Retail businesses have struggled but Wilton, I believe, has lost less retail businesses on a % basis than some of our neighbors.

PRESENT

It is interesting to note that over the last few months, ten new retail businesses have opened in Wilton Center and one on Danbury Road.

This is a very positive sign, as small businesses involve the investment of capital resources by businessmen and women, who see a promising future. Along with major investments in new office space, it is a vote of confidence in Wilton.

On that point, we have made many infrastructure improvements to Wilton Center, consistent with our Plan of Conservation and Development. Lampposts, new curbs and sidewalks, flowers and park benches make Wilton a more attractive shopping and dining environment, which supports our local businesses and most important, attracts new businesses and stimulates economic activity. These projects have been strongly

supported by the Chamber of Commerce and many paid for by citizen contributions. Adding three new wine and liquor stores, two in the village, also filled a need that keeps revenues in our community.

This is the current retail situation, and I am pleased to report that there are two or three new businesses in the planning stage. In addition, redevelopment activity is also underway to totally upgrade the CITGO service station and convenience store at the corner of Routes 7 and 33.

Looking at residential building projects, Avalon is presently building 100 new apartments along Route 7, with a target completion date in early summer of this year.

As I stated earlier, economic development is complex and while the Town actively seeks new investment projects, some may conflict with the Town's planning parameters. Residents also oppose various projects for location proximity and various other reasons.

As noted, it is not a simple process but most important we try to work with credible developers and support development that adds value to our community.

FUTURE

As stated earlier, there is considerable future activity planned for Wilton.

I am very pleased to announce that a new hotel is being planned for Wilton. Bob Nerney and I have been working closely with the Executive Director of I-Park's management team for over three years on this project. We met with this organization when they first acquired the old Perkin Elmer site. We indicated that Wilton did not have a hotel or even a bed and breakfast in our community. It was identified as an economic need. Plans were formed to locate the hotel in the Wilton section of I-Park's site, but were delayed due to the financial meltdown.

A required traffic study and design plans are now underway and we expect this project to be presented to the Planning and Zoning commission in the not too distant future.

Other future projects include the Wilton Commons Project, which, as you know, is an affordable assisted living facility for seniors. Funding commitments have been received from the State of CT and development plans are proceeding to enable construction to hopefully start this summer.

The Greyrocks project to build 20 cluster homes in a gated community off of River Road was halted at the start of the recession. However, the developer is anxious to start building and has made some creative proposals to our Planning and Zoning commission to comply with the affordable housing component. Difficult times often require creative solutions!

The owner of the Cannondale shopping center is also anxious to build condominium units on land in the rear area of his property and wants to make some major improvements to the shopping area. Residents in the area are sensitive to development in this charming and historic area. . . so a collaborative effort will be required.

At Crossways Shopping Center (corner of Rts. 7 and 33), a north driveway will be completed in the spring and sidewalks and landscaping installed. Additional commercial development is also in the planning stage for this prominent Wilton location.

In summary, Wilton's local economic development activity involves a wide range of activity with developers and the building of cooperative working relationships. There is also another important dimension, Wilton is a member of the One Coast/One Future consortium of 14 communities in Fairfield County. This is a regional initiative to promote economic growth in the region by linking the social and economic advantages offered by the three urban centers and surrounding towns. It is an alliance for mutual benefit.

Over the last few years, an economic development plan was created. This regional organization has recently been qualified to receive Federal grants for economic development.

As I have tried to illustrate, economic development is a broad, long-term continuous effort at many levels to promote economic growth. It is a never-ending priority for all town officials and for the various boards and commissions involved in the process.

OP ED
February 8, 2011

A Winter to Remember

Most Wiltonians will agree that snow storms every three days or so are not much fun anymore! This has clearly been a winter to remember . . . and perhaps one to forget! For the record, we have had eight storms to date and approximately 60" of recorded snow! January set a record with snowfall four times the normal, combined with frigid temperature levels.

As our residents cope with snowed-in homes, ice dams, leaking roofs and narrow driveways, the Town employed all of its available resources to manage the issues created by repetitive snow storms that have buried Wilton this winter.

Besides the regular plowing of 127 miles of town roads and four miles of sidewalks, roofs of Town buildings have had to be cleared of tons of snow. In addition, piles of snow in the village right-of-ways and at various road intersections have had to be trucked to Allen's Meadow to improve safety and traffic flow. At times, our equipment has been overwhelmed by the heavy snow and more recently by thick coatings of ice that have made road widening efforts very difficult.

Department of Public Works (DPW) and Parks and Grounds employees have worked around the clock to keep our roads and sidewalks clear of snow, but we need the assistance and understanding of residents and business owners as our resources have been maxed-out at times.

After snowstorms, as required by a Town ordinance, it is the responsibility of property owners abutting sidewalks to clear the snow and ice from the public walkways. It makes good sense to do this promptly when the snow is fresh and easy to shovel. Business owners and landlords clearly wish to make their shops and offices easy for customers to access and to limit potential liability issues caused by a citizen injury due to an unshoveled or icy sidewalk. For the most part, we have had very good cooperation and wish to thank all property owners for their assistance and neighborly efforts during this difficult winter.

Obviously, all this effort and activity has a price tag! To date, the storm has cost the Town over \$325,000 in materials, overtime, equipment rentals, repairs and contractor assistance, representing about 75% of Wilton's total winter snow budget. The schools' snow removal budget has also been depleted, using 85% of snow removal funds to date. And we still have six weeks of winter left!

For example, up to five feet of snow had to be cleared from the roofs of Town buildings (Town Hall, Annex, Police and Fire Departments, Comstock Community Center, schools, etc.). Roof drains were cleared to facilitate snow melt and reduce the potential for costly repairs due to leaks.

Fortunately, the Town has had few storm related emergencies, although two structure fires did occur between two severe storms. Several power outages occurred, but most were corrected by CL&P in reasonably quick time. Overtime for Firefighters and Police officers for storm related coverage has cost over \$13,000 to date. Police responded to some minor emergencies and firefighters have also worked every day to dig out buried hydrants.

While many citizens have complimented our DPW crews for their snow plowing efforts, we have had several complaints of driveways blocked with snow due to secondary plow passes. Please understand that the primary responsibility of our plow crews is to make the streets passable for public safety as soon as possible. Fire engines and other emergency vehicles must be able to get through on all Town roads in response to fires and other emergencies. It is therefore essential that residents have their driveways cleared to provide access in case of emergency.

Plow drivers often make several passes on streets to clear the roads sufficiently. They cannot avoid leaving snow in front of driveways as they plow and the Town of Wilton does not have the manpower available to clear snow from the front of driveway entrances for thousands of homes! It is the responsibility of homeowners to clear residual snow at the front of their driveway and to clear access to mail boxes. If your neighbor is elderly and needs assistance, please offer whatever help you can provide. It will be most appreciated.

A winter with this magnitude of snowfall has challenged our DPW employees. Cold weather, equipment breakdowns, poor visibility and icy road conditions have

required long work hours. Please understand and help us, and yourself, by considering the following suggestions:

- Drive with caution at slower speeds. Sight lines are restricted at many intersections and exiting many commercial locations on Route 7 is also hazardous due to large snow piles.
- Remove heavy accumulations of snow from roof tops and decks to limit the build up of ice dams and to prevent any structure damage due to heavy snow loads.
- If a known fire hydrant is buried in your area, please help our firefighters by digging it out. In case of emergency in your neighborhood, it could be a life saver!
- Please help yourself to free sand/salt at the Town Hall. A pile for residents is next to the Annex building. Be considerate of others by limiting your sand take to 5 gallons per visit. Keep some sand/salt in your car trunk. It adds weight that helps traction and can be invaluable when emergency sanding is required.
- Plan ahead. All this snow is going to eventually melt and we can expect some flooding. Residents that have traditional basement moisture problems should be sure their sump pumps are operating. Now is the time for maintenance if necessary. Also, be sure to clear sump pump surface exits of snow and ice. For more serious drainage problems, consider purchasing a portable pump now before expected high demand in the spring.
- Be a good neighbor and help others who need help.

Lastly, spring is just 37 days away! It will get warmer and we will all survive this winter to remember!

William F. Brennan
First Selectman