



Connecticut

Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association

Legislative Chairman: Christopher S. Wood, AICP Phone: 203 558-0654 woodplanning@charter.net www.ccapa.org

FEBRUARY 23, 2005

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

PROPOSED H.B. 5892 AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY PRESERVATION

SUMMARY: The proposed bill addresses planning resources to support effective growth management by creating a Geographic Information Systems Council to coordinate GIS applications, coordinate and support build out analyses, and identifying available land use training and education. In addition, the bill would authorize split rate taxation in larger municipalities and require biennial tax incidence studies. **CCAPA's** testimony on this bill addresses only the proposed planning resources.

ANALYSIS: The proposed bill addresses only two areas of need for the development of effective programs to effectively implement growth management principles. The attached analysis demonstrates the scope of the necessary commitment that the State must make to improve planning capacity and land use decision making in Connecticut.

FISCAL IMPACT: No direct fiscal impacts to municipalities should be created by this legislation. Some municipalities may be able to conduct planning at less direct cost due to the support of the GIS Council proposed planning actions cannot be calculated at this time.

CCAPA POSITION: The Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association supports the drafting of legislation to further the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Property tax Burdens and Smart Growth Incentives, including specifically State support to improve planning capacity at the State, regional, and municipal levels. However, the proposed bill fails to identify specific actions to improve the State's capacity to implement improved growth management principles and support regional and local efforts to do so. **CCAPA** believes that a separate bill addressing planning organization, tools, and resources is necessary to ensure effective implementation of the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission Report.

While the Chapter strongly supports the creation of a GIS Council, we believe that the other provisions of the bill with respect to planning resources and capacity are inadequate and will prove ineffective. We are concerned that enactment of these minor provisions will only forestall the State's consideration of truly effective planning resources and therefore **CCAPA** cannot support this bill as drafted. Attached is a summary paper prepared by **CCAPA** presenting our recommendation for the establishment of planning capacity that we believe is necessary as part of a comprehensive smart growth strategy for Connecticut. We will be happy to work with the Committee to identify improvements to the State's capacity to conduct planning and support local planning efforts.

CONNECTICUT CHAPTER AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION

POSITION ON PLANNING CAPABILITY AND RESOURCES

SUMMARY/ANALYSIS: Growth management and smart growth have been major issues in the Legislature over the past few years. The Legislature's Planning and Development Committee has been dedicated to and worked hard for changes to statutes that would improve planning in Connecticut.

Many of the growth management tools and concepts proposed have focused on the creation of Corridor Management Areas; Pre-Selected Sites; Priority Funding Areas; the State Plan of Conservation and Development; consistency of local regulations to local plans; and consistency of local, regional, and state plans. Planning resources that have been considered include statewide coordination of geographic information systems, preparation of a development build out analysis at the State level, and support for local analyses of development potential.

While CCAPA supports the Planning and Development Committee's efforts and many of these concepts, we believe that the single most important initiative necessary to improving planning in Connecticut has not yet been addressed: the need for a meaningful, well funded, fully staffed, and independent Office of State Planning.

CCAPA POSITION: The Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association supports the creation of an Office of State Planning through the consolidation of existing State planning units with existing State agencies. Such an approach would have minimal fiscal impacts and would build on existing State resources. This position paper addresses CCAPA's determination that an Office of State Planning is a critical step toward effective and efficient planning at all levels of government in Connecticut. We also provide recommendations for the implementation of this initiative.

OFFICE OF STATE PLANNING & THE STATE PLANNING PROCESS

Planning functions across all levels of government in Connecticut are very fragmented at this time. We have 169 local communities that plan and implement local land use controls. We have 15 regional planning agencies that perform varying degrees of regional planning functions. We also have planning units within many state agencies that perform agency specific planning functions. And last, there is the Planning Unit with the Office of Policy and Management that develops the State Plan of Conservation and Development. The State would be much better served if there was one state agency that oversaw all state planning functions and also coordinated planning with regional and local agencies.

CCAPA's proposal is to address the need for State planning and coordinated intergovernmental planning, not to implement State land use regulation and control. Our members know that land use controls are most effectively exercised at the local level to reflect community interests and goals.

The following is a detailed recommendation concerning the consolidation and coordination of State planning functions to provide for effective planning at the State, regional, and local levels.

Step I: Create an Office of State Planning

An Office of State Planning would not have to be a new entity with new staff and new budget expenditures. Such an office could be established with existing staff in many state agencies, current agency budgets, and other existing resources. The consolidation of the OPM Planning Unit, the DOT unit responsible for the Transportation Plan, DEP analysts, DECD Housing and Workforce Development Staff, and planning staff from other agencies into one Office of State Planning would greatly improve the State's ability to plan for its future.

Step II: Coordinate State Agency Planning

A consolidated Office of State Planning could begin to coordinate planning efforts that are currently performed by individual agencies with little regard for other agencies and other plans. Such coordination would be manifested in the State Plan of Conservation and Development as the State's comprehensive planning document. All other State plans, including the state Transportation Plan and Housing Plan, would be integrated into the policies of the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

Creating a State Office of Planning that would work with state agencies, regional planning agencies, and municipal planning agencies would create an environment for better planning. Such a planning process would facilitate communication between agencies and lead to more efficient and effective planning at all levels. In addition, a State Planning Commission, made up of agency heads and other involved parties, could oversee the planning process. This would be very similar to the current Transportation Strategy Board.

Step III: Support Necessary Research and Analysis

The first step in any planning process is to establish where we are right now. This is the data collection and analysis phase of planning and could entail conducting a statewide land use and planning study to identify existing trends and development patterns. This would include analysis of local zoning, a statewide build-out analysis, statewide land use mapping, and other research, such as

- Review all local, regional and state agency plans
- Identify where growth has occurred, where it can occur, and where it should occur.
- Identify natural, cultural and historic resources.
- Identify the policies that have influenced these development patterns.

This process could include the development and analysis of Corridor Management Areas. Then through the next update of the State Plan of C&D coordinate all state planning for housing, transportation, land and resource conservation, state government facilities, and government programs.

Based on research and analysis, the planning staff and State Planning Commission could start to formulate answers to the question, "where do we want to go?" This is the visioning phase of the planning process. The visioning process identifies conservation and development priorities and infrastructure requirements to accommodate those priorities.

Step IV: Develop Planning Policies

The next step is based on the extensive research and visioning to determine what policies are needed to get us where we want to go. This is where all of the growth management tools, concepts, and strategies come together. Corridor Management Areas, Pre-Selected Sites, Priority Funding Areas and/or a combination of these and other growth management concepts would be considered to pursue the planning vision. For example, Corridor Management areas could receive priority funding and have pre-selected sites within them. In addition, regional revenue sharing could be used in association with these areas. If a site is pre-selected and receives state funding through DECD, then the local municipality might receive 50% or 75% of the tax revenue and the remainder would be divided between the other municipalities within the region. This is just an example of how we could reduce competition between municipalities for growing the local grand list.

Step V: Implementation

Implementation of the plan, its programs, and policies would include:

- Update the state, local, and regional planning statutes to make the State Plan of Conservation and Development more relevant.
- Apply the State Plan to all state agencies and projects.
- Eliminate loopholes that undermine the Plan's authority.
- Work with the towns to plan together.
- Provide incentives for towns to coordinate their plans with the State Plan.

The planning and implementation process, including interagency and intergovernmental coordination, does not have to be adversarial. Towns, regions, and the state can all maintain their individuality and local controls while developing strategies that meet everyone's needs.

Conclusion

The Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association believes that we need to improve our state planning capacity if we are to implement better growth management techniques. Consolidating existing state planning activities into one Office of State Planning would ensure that coordinated planning takes place across all state agencies, and provide the capacity to aid and assist regional and local agencies. This would also ensure that new growth management tools proposed by the Legislature would be implemented in the most effective and efficient means.

Planning is not just about land use, transportation, growth, conservation, and development. Planning is about efficient and effective government that provides good public policy to meet the needs of the residents of Connecticut and maintain our high standard of living and quality of life.