

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
JANUARY 12, 2016 – 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 2

Chairman Sherrard called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Regular members present: Sherrard, Pritchard, Kane, Munn
Alternate members present: Fitzgerald, Tarbox, Zod
Absent: Steinford
Staff present: Jones, Glemboski, Allen, Silsby

Chairman Sherrard appointed Tarbox to sit for Steinford.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. December 8, 2015

MOTION: To adopt the minutes of December 8, 2015

Motion made by Munn, seconded by Pritchard, so voted unanimously, as annotated

2. December 17, 2015 (Special Meeting)

MOTION: To adopt the minutes of December 17, 2015 (Special Meeting)

Motion made by Pritchard, seconded by Tarbox, so voted 4-0-1 (Munn abstained), as written

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS - None

IV. SUBDIVISIONS

1. North Woods Subdivision, 1313 North Road – Request Acceptance of Open Space and Public Improvements

Staff stated that original approval was granted in 2008. She added that the Town is ready to accept the open space associated with this subdivision and the public improvements are complete. The Parks & Recreation Director has recommended acceptance of the open space and the Town Engineer has recommended acceptance of the public improvements.

MOTION: To recommend acceptance of the public improvements and the 0.89 acres of Open Space of the North Woods Subdivision

Motion made by Munn, seconded by Kane, so voted unanimously

2. Mystic Weigh Subdivision, Flanders Road – Request for Reduction in Performance Bond

Staff explained that Phase I and II have already been completed. She stated that this is a request to release the entire cash reserve bond, except for \$1000, which would be assigned as cash reserve for Phase III. The Town Engineer has recommended the reduction of the \$16,723.20 bond to \$1,000.

MOTION: To reduce the cash reserve portion of the performance bond for Phase I of the Mystic Weigh Resubdivision from \$16,723.20 to \$1000.00 and assign the remaining \$1000.00 as the cash reserve for Phase III

Motion made by Tarbox, seconded by Kane, so voted unanimously

V. SITE PLANS

1. Long Meadow Landing (SIT15-14), 45 South Road

Staff stated that the applicant has requested a 65-day extension.

MOTION: To accept the 65-day extension for Long Meadow Landing for 45 South Road

Motion made by Sherrard, seconded by Kane, so voted unanimously

Chairman Sherrard stated that Kane is recusing himself for the next application and appointed Zod to sit for Kane. Sherrard noted that Zod had been present when this item first appeared before the Planning Commission.

2. High Rock Inn (SIT15-16), 40 High Rock Road

Clint Brown of DiCesare Bentley Engineers reviewed the site plan as he spoke about the proposal for a change of use. The project involves the conversion of an existing, vacant building (former child daycare facility) into a hotel/motel. There will be no changes to the building footprint, parking, utilities or stormwater management facilities. He stated that a wetlands permit has been granted. Staff comments that were given at staff review have been addressed. He reported that the applicant is working with the CT Department of Transportation (DOT) and the local traffic authority to provide a safe way for residents to cross Poquonnock Road. They are determining whether the existing light can be modified to add a pedestrian phase. Until the light is modified, residents will be transported across the street by van. He stated that a waiver for a sidewalk on Johl Drive has been submitted. Information was given about installing a sidewalk on High Rock Road and the need for a wetlands permit.

Staff reiterated that a wetland permit has been approved. She spoke about the pending decision by the DOT and the requirement of an additional wetland permit for the installation of a sidewalk on High Rock Road. Information was given about stormwater maintenance.

A suggestion was made to install a sidewalk from the site to the intersection of High Rock Road and Poquonnock Road if the traffic light is modified to allow a pedestrian crossing. Plans were reviewed and the size of the retaining wall was noted. Discussion followed about alternate options for the sidewalk. An inquiry was made about painting a crosswalk on High Rock Road. It was noted that the sidewalk agreement that the Town had with Pfizer has expired.

Discussion followed about using vans or cars to transport clients to the facility, as well as walking on the pedestrian crosswalk.

MOTION: To approve a waiver of section 7.5-2 regarding frontage sidewalks on Johl Drive for the following reasons:

1. Currently, there are no sidewalks on Johl Drive and the Master Pedestrian, Bicycle and Trail Plan does not recommend sidewalks in this area.
2. There will be no significant pedestrian movement to the site from Johl Drive.

Motion made by Zod, seconded by Pritchard, so voted unanimously

MOTION: To approve the High Rock Inn (SIT15-16) with the following modifications:

1. As proposed by the applicant in a memorandum dated January 6, 2016, an eight foot wide bituminous walk shall be constructed on the south side of High Rock Road from the intersection of Poquonnock Road to Johl Drive. The applicant agrees to apply for a wetland permit within 30 days of site plan approval. In the event that a wetland permit is not granted, the applicant shall construct the walk to the edge of the area regulated by the Inland Wetlands Agency.
2. Residents of High Rock Inn shall be transported to the counseling facility located at 618 Poquonnock Road by motor vehicle until a suitable pedestrian crossing has been approved by the appropriate regulatory agencies and constructed.
3. The stormwater system and structures shall be inspected and cleaned as necessary before a Certificate of Site Plan Compliance is issued.
4. An interior sidewalk shall be constructed to connect the existing interior sidewalk to the intersection of High Rock Road and Poquonnock Road if the traffic signal is modified to allow pedestrian crossing.
5. Technical items as raised by staff shall be addressed

Motion made by Zod, seconded by Pritchard, so voted unanimously

MOTION To approve the Coastal Site Plan for the High Rock Inn because it is consistent with all applicable coastal policies and includes all reasonable measures to mitigate adverse impacts on coastal resources

Motion made by Zod, seconded by Tarbox, so voted unanimously

Kane returned to the meeting at 7:38 p.m.

3. Proposed Retail & Grocery (Aldi) (SIT15-17), 688 Long Hill Road

Todd Schively, Director of Construction with Cedar Realty Trust, gave background information about Aldi grocery stores. He spoke about the partial redevelopment of the Groton Shopping Center. Others present for the application were Karen Isherwood, Chris Hill and Bruno Lorenzo.

Karen Isherwood, Project Manager of BL Companies, reviewed plans as she spoke about property lines and consolidating parcels. Information was given about demolition, utilities (sewer and water) and the location of a new fire hydrant. Utilities will be installed overhead and underground. The landscaping plan was provided and details were given about trees, shrubs and grasses. The entrance will be updated and a new sign will be relocated but will receive a separate permit.

Chris Hill, an architect with Blue Moon Design, reviewed elevation plans and spoke about the materials that will be used. Information was given about awnings and signs.

Staff stated that there will be significant redevelopment in the plaza. He gave information about landscaping improvements, regulations, utilities and property lines. The HVAC system will be located on the rooftop of the building. Information about lighting was given. Signage will not be approved as part of this application. A new sign will replace the old sign, in accordance with regulations and proper town permits.

Inquiries were made about landscaping, the size of the store, the concrete loading dock, the location of utility wires, screening of the HVAC units on the roof, signage, lighting, curbing, and trash/recyclables. Concerns were raised about removing large existing trees, to be replaced with small trees, and to be sure that the new trees get limbed up and not down. Discussion followed about plantings, grasses and other landscaping items. Information was given about what will be demolished first and how the project will proceed, as well as an outline of the timeline. Signage will be used to alert people of construction work being done.

MOTION: To approve Site Plan (SIT15-17) for Aldi at the Groton Shopping Center, 688 Long Hill Road with the following modifications:

1. All parcels shall be consolidated prior to the recording of final site plans in land records.
2. A note shall be included on the plans stating, "All HVAC structures shall include containment measures for hazardous materials."
3. All signage shall meet zoning regulations.
4. Technical items as raised by staff shall be addressed.

Findings

The Commission finds that the redevelopment of the existing landscaping and the addition of the landscape planter at the front of the building meet the intent of Section 7.4 of the Zoning Regulations.

Motion made by Pritchard, seconded by Kane, so voted unanimously

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. POCD Draft Themes – Staff gave an update on the timeline for completion.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Town of Ledyard Referral for Public Hearing on January 14, 2016 – Zone Change to Commercial Industrial Park (CIP) District Application #4340

Staff reviewed the zone change proposal and the plans, noting that this area is in the RU-40 zone. She referred to the Town's Geographical Information System (GIS) map. Wetlands were reviewed. Discussion followed about the watershed and buffering any proposed development from residential properties in the Town of Groton.

The Planning Commission reviewed the Referral from the Town of Ledyard for a Zone Change at 1001-R & 1009-R Long Cove Road from RM-40 and R-40 to Commercial Industrial District (CIP) and has the following comment:

MOTION: The Planning Commission recommends, for any future development, a minimum 50-foot wide onsite non-developed landscaped buffer be established adjacent to the Town of Groton residentially zoned property to maintain consistency with the Town of Groton Zoning Regulations.

Motion made by Pritchard, seconded by Tarbox, so voted unanimously

2. Zoning Commission Referral for Public Hearing on February 3, 2016 – REGA15-02 Zoning Regulation Text Amendment to Section 5.2 in the WF-20 Zone

Staff reviewed the location of the waterfront district, which is in a flood zone and encompasses the Mystic Shipyard. Staff stated that the requested 50 foot building height needs to be discussed. She offered options that the Planning Commission can consider, in accordance with Town regulations. After some discussion, the Planning Commission decided to revisit this item at the next meeting and ask for additional information from the applicant on the need for the additional height request.

MOTION: To postpone this item to the next meeting

Motion made by Sherrard, seconded by Tarbox, so voted unanimously

3. Market Analysis and Regulation Audit – Discussion/Update

Staff stated that the market analysis has been completed and was presented to the focus group the night before. She summarized some of the changes as she distributed a summary of the market analysis. Staff explained that the next step with the consultants is to provide changes based on comments received. Comments from the Planning Commission are welcome.

4. Election of Officers

MOTION: To elect James Sherrard as Chairman of the Planning Commission

Motion made by Pritchard, seconded by Kane, so voted unanimously

MOTION: To elect Jeff Pritchard as Vice Chairman/Secretary of the Planning Commission

Motion made by Sherrard, seconded by Kane, so voted unanimously

5. Report of Commission

Inquiries were made about the size of the sign at Fields of Fire on Noank-Ledyard Road. Staff explained that the owner of the business has been sent a letter from the Town instructing him to remove the sign due to its large size, so as to comply with zoning regulations. Staff noted that the allowed size of a sign is based on the size of the building. Discussion followed about the recent article in the newspaper. Concerns were raised about lighting at night, which is quite visible from I95. An inquiry was made whether lighting is

allowed at night, in conjunction with the original permit that was granted by the Planning Commission. Staff will discuss these issues with the zoning officer.

6. New Applications - None

VIII. REPORT OF CHAIRMAN

Sherrard requested information about the sale of the Sealy School and Route 12 access for the next meeting. An inquiry was made about the area in back of the Tift Building and whether the previously existing freezer area location, in the back of the adjacent property, was ever resolved. Staff will look into these requests and provide additional information.

IX. REPORT OF STAFF

Staff distributed and summarized the decision by the Connecticut Siting Council regarding solar panels at the City of Groton Water Treatment Plant.

Staff stated that Planning Commission members are being invited to the upcoming Committee of Chairpersons January 25, 2016 meeting in regards to the Mackenzie decision and waivers. Town Attorney Carey will be present.

In regards to a request, Staff will look into when the CFPZA annual meeting will be held this year.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 9:04 was made by Munn, seconded by Kane, so voted unanimously.

Jeffrey Pritchard, Secretary
Planning Commission

Prepared by Robin Silsby
Office Assistant II