

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
DECEMBER 8, 2009 – 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL

Regular members present: Munn, Pritchard, Roper, Steinfeld
Alternate members present: Fitzgerald, Zod, Kane
Absent: Sherrard
Staff present: Davis, Doolittle

Acting Chairman Pritchard called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.; he seated Zod for Sherrard and appointed Roper as Acting Secretary.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF meeting of November 10, 2009.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of November 10, 2009 as amended.

Motion made by Roper, seconded by Steinfeld. Motion passed unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Staff noted the receipt of a letter dated December 8, 2009 from Joellen Anderson on behalf of Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc. A copy was provided to each member present.

IV. SUBDIVISIONS – None

V. SITE PLANS

1. Electric Boat Building #775 (ASP09-28), 456 Poquonnock Road (CAM)

Frank Borawski, PDS Engineering and Construction, detailed the demolition of the building and plans for the lot once the building is gone. Staff noted that because of the CAM review, this administrative site plan was brought before the Planning Commission.

The Commission and Mr. Borawski discussed the dam located near the site, natural vegetation & landscaping, future use of the site, the culvert and the benefits of documenting the historic portion of the building prior to demolition.

MOTION: To approve ASP #09-28 last revised 12/2/09, proposed building #775 demolition and related site work, with the following modifications:

1. Plan sheet C-101 shall be revised to include the following notes:
 - a. The property owner acknowledges that removal of the structure shall constitute the willful abandonment of any rights that may have existed to prior lawful nonconforming uses, structures and/or improvements and that further, removal of the building

eliminates any approved principal use of the site, and as such, no use of the site, principal or accessory, shall take place subsequent to such removal without the approval of at least a Site Plan application by the Town of Groton Planning Commission.

- b. Prior to recording of the endorsed Site Plan mylar, the owner shall provide a cash surety to the Director of the Town of Groton Office of Planning and Development Services, to assure prompt and complete compliance with the approved Site Plan and Coastal Area Management approval, including but not necessarily limited to required site erosion control, site access limitations and the post-demolition removal of equipment, materials and debris.
- c. Project duration shall not exceed the minimum necessary and the required surety shall not be released until all site work has been completed, inspected and approved by the Director of OPDS or his agent.
- d. The site shall be secured at all times from unauthorized access and use.
- e. Upon completion of demolition and prior to the release of the required cash surety, all required improvements shall be completed and all vehicles, equipment, materials, stockpiles, debris and litter shall be removed from the site, with the express exclusion of materials and debris presently located in the northeast portion of the site, access to which requires review by the Town of Groton Inland Wetland and Watercourse Agency.

Motion made by Pritchard, seconded by Roper. Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: The Planning Commission finds that ASP #09-28, as modified herein, is consistent with applicable coastal policies, and as modified herein, also incorporates all reasonable measures to mitigate potential adverse impacts on coastal resources.

Motion made by Pritchard, seconded by Steinfeld. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Chelsea Groton Bank, 61 West Main Street

Richard Strauss, representing the bank, presented to the Commission the plans for turning the building into a contractor office space and showroom. He discussed in detail the sidewalk, parking, DOT review and drainage. He presented to the Commission photos of the existing landscaping, parking and other site features.

Staff discussed the proposed site development, required interlot access, landscaping and drainage. The Commission raised concerns over how this design would affect/be affected by the Mystic Streetscape.

The Commission and Mr. Strauss discussed the net change in total parking spaces. Trash and recycling were discussed and Mr. Straus assured the Commission that there would be no need for a dumpster.

The Commission questioned the number of traffic signs and if that number could be reduced. Mr. Strauss stated he would check with the DOT and eliminate signage where possible.

Commissioner Roper suggested adding a bike rack on this site or on the adjacent bank site.

MOTION: To approve Site Plan #09-17, dated revised 12/2/09, Chelsea Groton Savings Bank owner/applicant, for a contractor business office, showroom and related site improvements at 61 West Main Street and 2 Water Street, Mystic.

Motion made by Pritchard, seconded by Roper. Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: To approve Coastal Site Plan #09-17, dated revised 12/2/09, Chelsea Groton Savings Bank owner/applicant, for a contractor business office, showroom and related site improvements at 61 West Main Street and 2 Water Street, including the finding that the application is consistent with applicable coastal policies and incorporates all reasonable measures to mitigate potential adverse impacts on coastal resources.

Motion made by Pritchard, seconded by Roper. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Hummingbird Hollow, 110 New London Road

Peter Gardner, Licensed Land Surveyor, presented to the Commission the proposed horse ring, indoor arena and paddocks.

John Vinson, owner, explained the existing conditions of his property. He handed out pictures and requested a modification of the required perimeter landscape buffer. He also requested a waiver of the sidewalk requirement.

The Commission and Staff discussed the sidewalks and the access to Pequot Woods on the east side of the property. Sidewalk placement and feasibility were discussed at length. The option of having the applicant grant an easement for future sidewalk installation as a condition of a waiver was discussed.

A discussion ensued regarding the number of permitted horses and other operational matters, as well as the stable with respect to the landscape buffer.

The Commission suggested adding more trees to screen/buffer the building. The applicant agreed to add three white pines at 25 feet on center in the area discussed. In addition, the applicant agreed to provide full cut off light fixtures to screen and/or reduce off site glare.

MOTION: To approve the waiver of the requirement of Section 7.5-5 regarding the installation of frontage sidewalks subject to providing a five foot wide easement in favor of the Town of Groton along the parcel frontage for the purpose of the future installation, use and maintenance of a public side walk. The commission finds that construction of a sidewalk at this time is not practical due to construction constraints.

Motion made by Pritchard, seconded by Roper. Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: To approve the Hummingbird Hollow Riding and Boarding Stable, 110 New London Road with the following modifications:

1. The final design of the trail restrictor shall be coordinated with the Department of Parks and Recreation and a detail placed on the plan.
2. Technical items as raised by staff shall be addressed.

The Commission finds that the existing perimeter landscaping is adequate screening and that additional plantings are not required to meet the intent of section 7.4-4 of the Zoning Regulations.

Motion made by Pritchard, seconded by Roper. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Lighthouse Point, Pleasant Valley Road North – Request for extension for site plan expiration and start of construction

Attorney Genevieve Salvatore, on behalf of her client, explained her request for a five year extension for site plan expiration and a one year extension for start of construction.

MOTION: To deny a request for an extension for five year site plan expiration to Lighthouse Point, Pleasant Valley Road North.

Motion made by Pritchard, seconded by Steinfeld. Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: To grant a one year extension for start of construction to Lighthouse Point, Pleasant Valley Road North, to December 26, 2010.

Motion made by Roper, seconded by Steinfeld. Motion passed unanimously.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. Discussion and action regarding revised draft letters to DEP and GOSA (Merritt Family Forest Trails use limitations and State OSWL grant program concerns)

The Commission discussed the revised draft letters to DEP and GOSA, which included versions provided in the agenda packet, as well as blacklined drafts, developed subsequently, and handed out this evening. The general consensus was that the revised draft letters had improved since the original draft letters. Commissioners offered their suggestions concerning minor edits to the drafts and the associated addendums.

Commissioner Kane detailed his objections to the letters, both in terms of their content, but also in terms of the idea of communicating with the State DEP on these matters. Other commissioners voiced their disagreement with Mr. Kane, on both concerns.

Not having had the opportunity to review the versions handed out this evening, the commissioners agreed to table the matter and to take it up at their 1/12/10 meeting.

2. Land Use Regulation Update Project

Staff indicated that the Planner II has returned to work and that he will speak to the Director about the work program, possibly focusing more on completing the subdivision regulation update.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Report of Commission

Commissioner Steinfeld is very pleased with the progress on the Route 1 sidewalk.

Commissioner Roper was very pleased with a workshop he attended by Randall Arendt entitled "Reinventing Commercial Strips." He noted that a CD was available from Barbara Strother and discussed the policy and practice suggestions from the session. Staff made note of how these relate directly to the Town's MX regulation with particular emphasis on the downtown node, but that other factors (conventional mindsets about mixed use, property ownership, etc.) limit the ability to achieve these objectives.

As the Commission's designated representative on the school study committee, Commissioner Kane asked for general input from the Commission on the proposed middle school location options. It was the general consensus of those present that the King Property was the preferred option of those being discussed presently by that committee.

2. New Applications - None
3. Zoning Board of Appeals referrals for December 9, 2009 public hearing

ZBA09-11 - 36 Laurelwood Road, Community of Hope

Staff explained the referral and the proposed use. Staff explained that the applicant has asked that his hearing be opened and continued to the first ZBA meeting in January 2010. The commission tabled the referral to their 1/12/10 meeting.

ZBA09-12 - 239 High Street, Addition to Tiesinga House

Staff explained the referral and the proposed use. The Commission had no comment.

VIII. REPORT OF CHAIRMAN - None

IX. REPORT OF STAFF

Staff discussed the FEMA Preliminary Flood Map meeting. Over 200 people attended and the overall response was positive. A DVD of the meeting is available and is also running on public access television.

The draft CIP will not be available until January.

The Mystic Streetscape Plans have been finalized and submitted to CONNDOT with bid specs. Bidding will take place in January or February.

The Climate Adaptation Meeting is tomorrow, Pritchard may attend in Sherrard's place.

Staff looked into Commissioner Kane's concern over dumping on State property in Old Mystic and the State DEP will investigate. Staff noted that the Town has no jurisdiction over activities on State lands, but that we will coordinate with State DEP staff as necessary.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 10:11 p.m. made by Roper, seconded by Steinfeld, so voted unanimously.

Peter Roper, Acting Secretary
Planning Commission

Prepared by Katie Doolittle
Office Assistant II