

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
JULY 11, 2017 – 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 2

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

I. ROLL CALL

Regular members present: Pritchard, Kane, Munn, Steinfeld, Zod
Alternate members present: Fitzgerald, Tarbox
Staff present: Jones (7:01), Allen, Silsby

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. June 27, 2017

MOTION: To adopt the minutes of June 27, 2017, as amended

Motion made by Kane, seconded by Steinfeld, so voted 4-0-1 (Munn abstained)

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS - None

IV. SUBDIVISIONS - None

V. SITE PLANS

1. Groton Utilities Water Filtration Plan Improvements (Modification) (SIT17-09), 1268 Poquonnock Road

Michael Weber of Groton Utilities reviewed the proposed modifications to adjust the time period in which to apply for state permits to construct a frontage sidewalk along Poquonnock Road. He stated that the Department of Transportation has been contacted regarding the walk's location. He noted the location of tidal wetlands and existing guardrails.

Staff stated that the Planning Commission approved the upgrade to the water filtration plant in July 2015. One condition of approval required Groton Utilities to apply for a Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) permit to construct the frontage sidewalk within six months of site plan approval and to enter into a sidewalk agreement with the town to construct the walk within five years of approval. The plans have not yet been filed in land records.

Staff reported that a meeting was recently held on site with a representative of DEEP to discuss the location of the sidewalk and the likelihood of obtaining a permit to construct it. A location that will not require a DEEP permit was identified; however, that location will require DOT approval. Groton Utilities has requested a modification to the 2015 approval to allow for coordination with both DEEP and DOT. They will enter into a sidewalk agreement and will construct the walk, if successfully permitted, by December 31, 2020.

MOTION: To amend modification #1 of the July 14, 2015 motion to approve the Groton Utilities Water Filtration Plant, 1268 Poquonnock Road (SIT15-04) to require all state permits necessary for the installation of the Poquonnock Road frontage sidewalk be obtained by July 1, 2019 and to require the construction of the sidewalk by December 31, 2020. These modified dates will be reflected in the sidewalk agreement

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

2. Groton Utilities Water Filtration Plan Improvements (SIT15-04), 1268 Poquonnock Road - Request for Start of Construction Extension

Staff explained that Groton Utilities has requested a Start of Construction Extension

MOTION: To grant a Start of Construction Extension till July 14, 2018

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

3. Old Mystic Fire District (SIT17-07), 295 Cow Hill Road & 0 Cow Hill Road

Clint Brown of Louriero Engineering, Inc. presented plans to the Commission for a proposed expansion of an existing parking lot and the instillation of a new stormwater system at Old Mystic Fire District Headquarters. Mr. Brown explained that more parking spaces are needed and more room is required in order to allow easier maneuvering of fire trucks and other vehicles. He also explained that the existing stormwater system, which was designed to drain into three drywells on the north side of the firehouse, was no longer functional and not compliant with current Water Resource Protection District regulations. A proposed stormwater system would abandon the dysfunctional drywells, provide underground storage and treatment onsite, and comply with WRPD regulations. The proposed stormwater system will tie into an existing State system beneath Cow Hill Road that discharges into a wooded area to the south of the Fire District property. Mr. Brown also reviewed drainage calculations which showed the increase in stormwater discharge as a result of the project to be negligible. Permission from the State of Connecticut to tie into the State stormwater system has been obtained and was evidenced by a letter of approval provided by Mr. Brown.

Staff noted that an increase in impervious surfaces at the site would be mitigated by the significant improvements made to the stormwater system. It was also noted that more parking spaces provided onsite would alleviate the need to park on the street along what was agreed to be a potentially dangerous traffic area.

Discussion then moved on toward the issue of trails and sidewalks at the site. Staff explained that the Town's Master Trails Plan calls for a future multiuse trail across the property. It was agreed that an easement in favor of the Town for such a trail should be included on the plan. Mr. Brown explained that, while a sidewalk is shown on the plan, the applicant requests a postponement to the frontage sidewalk requirement. It was noted that few sidewalks currently exists along Cow Hill Rd. and there are none along the frontages of adjacent properties.

MOTION: To approve Site Plan SIT17-07 for Old Mystic Fire District, 295 & 0 Cow Hill Road subject to the following modifications and findings:

Modifications:

1. An easement shall be shown on the plan and deeded to the Town of Groton for a multiuse trail. The easement shall allow for the proposed multiuse trail to connect the adjacent open space parcel to the southwest with the area of Cow Hill Road to the northeast. The intent of this easement will be to allow for the extension of an existing multiuse trail located to the south of Ledgeland Drive.

2. A sidewalk postponement shall be granted according to Section 7.5-5A of the Zoning Regulations. As such, the developer and the Commission shall enter into a written, binding agreement indicating that sidewalks will be installed at a later date which will be determined by the Commission when development or pedestrian traffic conditions in the area change.
3. All lots owned by Old Mystic Fire District in the vicinity of 295 Cow Hill Road shall be combined before final plans are recorded.
4. All technical items as raised by staff shall be addressed.

Findings:

1. The Commission finds that frontage sidewalks are not warranted at this time due to lack of existing/anticipated development in the area and/or resulting pedestrian traffic.
2. The Commission finds that the postponement of installing the frontage sidewalk will not significantly endanger the health, safety, and welfare of the existing or anticipated pedestrian traffic along the frontage of the property.

Motion made by Pritchard, seconded by Kane

Kane was concerned about the word “anticipated” in the motion. Staff explained why the wording in the motion is necessary.

Discussion ensued about the potential for anticipated future development increasing. It was noted that a sidewalk would not be connected to any other sidewalk, at this time.

Vote on the Motion was 4-0-1 (Munn abstained). Motion Carried.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

MOTION: To suspend the rules to add an agenda item regarding to reconsider the Planning Commission’s action on the Mystic River Ambulance site plan, Allyn Street, with regards to the request for a sidewalk agreement.

Motion made by Munn, seconded by Zod, so voted 2-3-0 (Pritchard, Kane, Steinfeld). Motion Failed.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Zoning Commission Referral for a Public Hearing on August 2, 2017
 - a. ZCH#17-01 – Zoning Map Amendment, 91 & 105 Walker Hill Road and 55 Seely School Drive

Staff reviewed the location. She stated that the Seely School property, 55 Seely School Drive, is back on the market. She noted that a number of inquiries have been made about developing multi-family housing on the property, something not allowed by the existing R-12 zone. The Plan of Conservation and Development recommends that the Seely School property be changed to a commercial zone. The proposed CA-12 designation will allow multi-family development.

The Planning Commission had no comment.

2. Report of Commission

Munn stated that he was significantly disappointed by the Planning Commission action regarding the sidewalk agreement approval for the Old Mystic Fire District given their denial of a similar agreement for the Mystic River Ambulance site plan application. He feels that the sidewalk agreement has been a very effective tool and should have been used in the case of the Mystic River Ambulance site plan application.

Tarbox called for a point of order. She explained that Munn is speaking under the Report of Commission and is just making a statement. No action or discussion is needed.

3. New Applications - None

VIII. REPORT OF CHAIRMAN

Chairman Pritchard referred to the Committee of the Whole meeting being held this evening regarding the proposed ordinance to combine the Planning and Zoning Commissions. He explained why he believes that the number of members should be changed from 7 to 5.

Staff noted that Planning Commission members should expect a call from a member of the Town Council inquiring about their continued interest in serving on the combined committee. Discussion followed about the Zoning Commission completing the regulations before combining the Commissions. Staff stated that no effective date has been made by the Town Council as yet.

IX. REPORT OF STAFF

1. Correspondence received from the Town of Stonington regarding Referral - PZ1716SUP & CAM KAC, LLC (Angela Kanabis), in response to the Planning Commission's concerns with the referral.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 8:21 pm was made by Kane, seconded by Steinford, so voted unanimously.

Hal Zod, Vice Chair/Secretary
Planning Commission

Prepared by Robin Silsby
Office Assistant II