

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 13, 2016 – 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: Kane, Munn, Pritchard, Steinfeld, Zod
Alternate members present:
Absent: Fitzgerald, Tarbox
Staff present: Jones, Gilot

Chairman Pritchard noted that Zod had been appointed a regular member of the Planning Commission.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. August 9, 2016

MOTION: To adopt the minutes of August 9, 2016, as amended.

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

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Pritchard said he received email from OPDS that the Committee of Chairs will host a Freedom of Information presentation at the Town Hall Annex on October 19th. All land use commissioners are welcome.

Gil Ward, 8A Godfrey Street, spoke in favor of the Mystic River Residential modification to use a noise abatement wall and trees rather than a concrete wall. He said the approved concrete wall would be out of character with the neighborhood and the proposed wall should be high quality with professional noise abatement.

Truman Kelly, 10 Godfrey Street, said he was opposed to a concrete structure at Mystic River Residential, which would be out of character with the neighborhood.

Irene Weiss, 17 Godfrey Street, said she resides across the street from Mystic River Residential, which is currently very noisy. She read a letter from Guy Herman that was addressed to the Commission. She said there was no detail on plantings or sound attenuation on the proposed plan.

Tina Patrella, 9 Godfrey Street, a neighbor of Mystic River Residential, said it is noisy, spoke against plantings and any uncharacteristic wall. She said details should be provided for noise attenuation. She was also concerned about vegetation.

IV. SUBDIVISIONS - None

V. SITE PLANS

1. Parking Lot Improvements (SIT15-10), 721 Long Hill Road – Start of Construction Extension

Staff said the plan was approved in September, 2015, and was recorded. The applicant would like to keep the site plan active in the event the use changes from a furniture store to a retail use. The applicants requested a one year extension to September, 22, 2017.

MOTION: To grant an extension for start of construction for the parking lot improvements at 721 Long Hill Road (SIT15-10) to September 22, 2017.

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

2. Mystic River Residential (SIT16-11), 14 Godfrey Street – Modification

Clint Brown, DiCesare Bentley Engineers, 100 Fort Hill Road, Groton, represented the applicant, Mystic River Residential Care. He introduced Elaine Cole of Mystic River Residential Care and John Kwasniewski, the contractor. Mr. Brown presented the application for a modification to the masonry wall required in the conditions of the original site plan #09-09 approved on October 15, 2009. He detailed the location of the 50 ft. long, 8 ft. high concrete block retaining wall, and the approved landscaping, a double row of evergreens. Starting at the finished grade at the driveway immediately east of the site, an 8 ft. concrete retaining wall would not look very residential. Mr. Brown detailed the requested modification to eliminate the concrete block wall, and replace it with a combination of landscaping and a board and batten wood fence. The 8 ft. wood fence would start at the same place and would shield the generator and dumpster. He noted the generator is not shielded on the original plan. The number of arborvitae would be increased to 17. A transformer proposed on site had been relocated on a utility pole on the street, providing more room between the landscaping and the neighboring driveway. The generator on site would have a steel enclosure. Mr. Brown detailed the proposed board and batten wood fence. He said there had been no testimony about the attenuation characteristics of the concrete wall at the time of the original approval.

Staff reviewed the history of the application and a subsequent modification and noted that the commission was concerned about the wall and sound attenuation at that time. The commission asked about the mass of the boards proposed. Mr. Brown said they would be 1" x 8's. The commission said there were no acoustic attenuation properties in 1" x 8's, and arborvitae provided no sound attenuation.

The commission asked about the frequency of the noise. Elaine Cole provided a detailed schedule of the trucks that come to the site, as early as 6:30 in the morning. She said they are attempting to reduce the number of deliveries by trucks, and where the deliveries are being made (less on the east side). The commission felt that some of the noise may be part of a construction situation. The construction staging in the area was reviewed.

Mr. Brown and the commission discussed the wooden wall as proposed. They agreed that the sound attenuation properties could be increased with a thicker wood fence. The noise from the generator was discussed by the commission.

MOTION: To approve a site plan modification (SIT16-11) for Mystic River Residential Care, 14 Godfrey Street to allow the installation of a board and batten fence with similar noise attenuation properties as the

previously approved masonry wall and 17 Arborvitae in lieu of the masonry sound attenuation wall as required by condition 4 of the 2009 Site Plan approval.

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

VI. OLD BUSINESS - None

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Referral from the Town of Ledyard for a Public Hearing on September 8, 2016 – Site plan review for a bed & breakfast facility

Staff explained the referral. The Commission had no comment.

2. Referral from the City of New London for a Public Hearing on September 15, 2016 – Zone Regulation Amendment to modify Section 550.2 (Waterfront Commercial-Industrial Zone), submitted by Attorney G. Videll

Staff explained the referral. The Commission had no comment.

3. Referral from the City of Groton for a Public Hearing on September 20, 2016 – Subdivision and Zoning Regulations proposal

Staff explained the referral for the update to the City's Zoning and Subdivision Regulations. Staff said that no city commercial zone abuts any town residential zone. The Commission had no comment.

4. Report of Commission

Zod said he attended "Mystic Eats" and the Spicer Mansion was one of the vendors. He felt they were promoting their restaurant as a stand-alone business.

Kane asked about the trees in the Aldi shopping center. He said that some appeared to be dead and should be replaced. Staff said they are dead and expects a plan to replace them.

Steinfeld said there was a blight notice in the paper recently, noting that some enforcement is taking place. Staff said they are trying to address blight complaints, but the department is without a Code Enforcement Inspector. Staff discussed the revised job description for the Code Inspector/Planner 1 position.

Steinfeld asked staff to check on activity at 420 Long Hill Road. There are wood chip piles on the site.

5. New Applications - None

VIII. REPORT OF CHAIRMAN - None

IX. REPORT OF STAFF - None

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 8:15 pm was made by Kane, seconded by Zod, so voted unanimously.

Margil Steinfeld, Vice Chairman/Secretary
Planning Commission

Prepared by Debra Gilot
Office Assistant III