

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 8, 2015 – 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 2

Chairman Sherrard called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Regular members present: Sherrard, Pritchard, Steinfeld
Alternate members present: Fitzgerald, Tarbox, Zod
Absent: Kane, Munn
Staff present: Cullen, Glemboski, Silsby

Chairman Sherrard appointed Zod to sit for Munn and Tarbox to sit for Kane.

II. APPROVAL OF THE FOLLOWING MINUTES OF August 11, 2015

MOTION: To adopt the Planning Commission minutes of August 11, 2015

Motion made by Pritchard, seconded by Zod, so voted unanimously, as annotated.

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS – None.

Chairman Sherrard stated that the public hearing will reconvene at 7:30 p.m.

IV. SITE PLANS

1. 15 Elm Street Conversion and Renovation (SIT15-07), 15 Elm Street

Architect Russell Sergeant of Mystic and Brian Gates of Gates Realty Holdings LLC were present.

Sergeant reviewed maps as he explained the proposal to convert an 8-unit apartment building to an 8 room Inn with an owners' suite, and site work including improving the existing driveway, parking, landscaping, lighting, signage and screening. He stated that the Historic District approved the installation of a transformer. He noted that much of the inside work has been done. The problem with the roof is currently being resolved. Specifics were given about landscaping, shade requirements, the handicapped sidewalk, the basement stairway, underground utilities, and lighting. A wide gravel driveway with pavers is being proposed.

Gates stated that the matching clapboard will look like the original.

Staff stated that a special permit was approved in 1998 for 8 guest rooms and an owners' suite. The applicant is planning to reconfigure the structure to create 8 hotel rooms and an owners' suite. Any expansions in the future would require another special permit. Currently, this is a non-conforming use but is legal because of the special permit that was granted in 1998. Information was given about the gravel driveway, handicap accessibility, sidewalks, and the requirement to install street trees around the perimeter of the property. Staff stated that the draft motion was developed

with the assistance of the Building and Zoning Officer. She added that the applicants have been working with the Mystic Fire Marshal.

The draft motion was discussed. The applicant stated that the basement will be used for storage, which will alleviate the need to build an outer building. Pertaining to an inquiry about access and egress, the applicant stated that they have been working with the local and State fire marshals throughout this process. In regards to utilities, the applicant noted that utilities are being upgraded and will be located underground. Details were given about signs and landscaping. It was noted that the operation of the Inn will require inspections by the Ledge Light Health District. Discussion followed about screening, lighting preferences, and signs. Gates noted that the building is being restored close to its original design. The hope is to open by the middle of December 2015.

MOTION: To approve a site plan (SIT15-07) for 15 Elm Street Conversion and Renovation, 15 Elm Street, Mystic, subject to the following modifications:

1. Provide a note on the final plan stating: “Any addition to the structure or any additional commercial or public use of this property, besides the renting of 8 hotel/motel rooms in accordance with Special Permit # 228, shall require additional approvals by the appropriate departments (staff), commissions, and agencies of the Town of Groton, as appropriate. Any amenities provided onsite are for the hotel/motel guests only.”
2. All fire code items shall be addressed with the Fire Marshal.
3. Technical items as raised by staff shall be addressed.

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

V. PUBLIC HEARING to be held at 7:30 p.m.

1. Briar Hill Subdivision (SUB15-05), 0 Briar Hill Road (Continued)

The public hearing reconvened at 7:45 p.m.

Pat Lafayette of Development Solutions was present.

Staff stated that the DEEP is in the process of obtaining the abutting YMCA Camp property but the transfer is being held up in court. She referred to restrictions that are and will continue to be in effect for the YMCA property.

Lafayette reviewed the location of the trail on the map, which he intends to offer as open space, in lieu of a fee.

Staff reviewed the map and spoke about a separate strip of land from Briar Hill Road that has been routinely used as a trail/path, which could be used to accommodate the 10% open space requirement. Pertaining to a previous request, she stated that there are 36 existing homes on Briar Hill Road. She noted that there is a 16 foot water main in the existing road and Groton Utilities has verified that the water pressure will not change. In regards to the appraisal, she stated that this value is in the appropriate range per the Town Assessor, Mary Gardner. Pertaining to a court decision regarding off-site

improvements titled, "Buttermilk Farms, LLC", Staff stated that the Town's regulations are not compliant with the court's decision regarding this issue.

Inquiries were made about preserving stone walls, trees, utility access, grading and driveways. Lafayette said he would be installing electrical and water utilities underground, in the way of the driveway as they pass the stone wall.

Pritchard expressed concern about the lack of parking near the existing trail/path, and would prefer to see a strip of land adjacent to the school property used as the dedicated open space. It was noted that there is plenty of parking at the school. Discussion followed about the most suitable location for the dedicated open space land and path. Members gave varying opinions as to their preference. History was given about the YMCA property and its restrictions.

Fitzgerald would prefer to have a sidewalk installed. Staff referred to the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) and the Town's Bicycle and Trails plan, noting that the Town cannot require the applicant to build a sidewalk because the sidewalk would be located off-site.

Chairman Sherrard asked for public comment and there were none. He asked Staff if there are any outstanding issues, to which Staff stated no.

Lafayette inquired about the preferred width of the path. He stated that his client is willing to build it in any location. There was no feedback from the public, attending the meeting, about the path location.

Staff did not see any need to keep the public hearing open. Lafayette had no objection to closing the public hearing.

MOTION: To close the public hearing at 8:37 p.m.

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

VI. SUBDIVISIONS

1. Briar Hill Subdivision (SUB15-05), 0 Briar Hill Road

No action was taken. Staff stated that the Planning Commission has 65 days to take action. This item will be continued at a future meeting.

VII. OLD BUSINESS – None.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Town Council Referral regarding sale of William Seeley School Property under CGS Section 8-24

Staff reported that this is in the R12 zone, which is residential, with a small section in the WRPD zone. Sewer and public water are on site. Maps were reviewed. A draft motion was distributed and discussion followed.

MOTION: The Planning Commission supports the sale of the William Seely School with the following comments:

- Current public recreation uses and facilities within the school shall be given appropriate time to relocate.
- Any future zone change on the property shall address traffic, infrastructure, and compatibility with the surrounding land uses.

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

2. Town Council Referral regarding a Grant of Easement over a portion of Town owned property (NE Academy) to Aquarion Water Company under CGS Section 8-24

Staff reviewed maps and explained the proposal to build a 260,000 gallon steel water tank above grade on the property. The two hours of fire protection was requested by the fire marshal. The easement would follow the existing water line. Staff noted their initial concerns with the design and ability to provide emergency access and pedestrian access in the future. The location of the water tower was noted on the plans. An inquiry was made about putting telecommunications equipment on the tower sometime in the future, if the need exists and Staff noted possible location concerns.

MOTION: The Planning Commission supports the grant of an easement over a portion of NE Academy property to Aquarion Water Company for the construction of a water tower with the following stipulation:

- The location of the easement and the water tower shall be designed to provide for future pedestrian and emergency access from the school to Ann Avenue and to minimize any impacts to the school facility.

Motion made by Sherrard, seconded by Steinford. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Report of Commission

Chairman Sherrard attended the Fields of Fire open house, as did Zod.

Pritchard requested to add an action item to the next agenda regarding appraisals for fee in lieu of open space.

An inquiry was made about the status of the POCD. Staff has received the revised conservation text and will be reviewing the document before sending it to the Planning Commission for review.

Zod inquired about the timetable of the Crystal Lake project. Staff will report back on this item.

4. New Applications
 - a. Parking Lot Improvements, 721 Long Hill Road (SIT15-10)

IX. REPORT OF CHAIRMAN- None.

X. REPORT OF STAFF

Staff distributed documentation related to housing data profiles for 2015.

Staff stated that Land Use Academy advance training will be taking place on October 24, 2015. All members are welcome so please notify Planning Staff if interested.

Staff stated that the Zoning Commission is having a kick-off meeting for the Water Resource Protection District (WRPD) amendments with the consultants on Wednesday, September 30, 2015 at 6:30 p.m. in CR1 at the Town Hall Annex and has asked the Planning Commission to attend. Staff will notice this as a joint meeting with the Planning Commission.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 9:10 was made by Tarbox, seconded by Zod, so voted unanimously.

Jeffrey Pritchard, Secretary
Planning Commission

Prepared by Robin Silsby
Office Assistant II