

MINUTES  
TOWN OF GROTON  
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS  
JANUARY 25, 2017 – 7:00 P.M.  
TOWN HALL ANNEX – 134 GROTON LONG POINT ROAD  
COMMUNITY ROOM 2

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

I. ROLL CALL

Regular members present: Stebbins, Kravits, Manning, Mencer, Russotto  
Staff present: Allen, Silsby

Public hearing procedures were reviewed.

II. PUBLIC HEARING

1. ZBA#16-15 - 185 Fort Hill Road, Town of Groton/Owner, Connecticut Technical High School System/Applicant, for variances to Section 7.3-6B to allow a sign 58 square feet per side in lieu of the required 24 square feet (sign A), to allow for a sign 12 feet in height in lieu of the required 8 feet (sign B), to allow a third freestanding sign in lieu of the required one (sign B); and to Section 7.3-3B to allow a sign to project beyond the property line (sign B). PIN#260809063886E, R-12 Zone.

Secretary Manning noted that the mailings were reviewed and found to be in order. The public hearing notice was read. The applicant submitted the original mailing, for the record.

Those present were Bill Richter, President of Richter & Cegan Landscape Architects, David Symonds of Moser Pilon Nelson Architects, and Denis Tovey of the State of Connecticut. Richter reviewed aerial plans showing the existing Grasso Tech School and gave details about the new school. Richter explained the reasoning behind the need to install a sign at the school's Fort Hill Road entrance as being the fact that the school building is located approximately one-third of a mile away from the entrance and is not visible from the road. As such, the need for signage is critical so visitors and students know where the school is located. Various plans and other documentation were submitted. Information about the existing easement within Sutton Park for the Grasso Tech driveway entry was given. Sign specifications and setbacks were noted. Photos of other signs at State tech schools were submitted.

Discussion followed about the benefits of having a message board. Staff stated that the existing sign is non-conforming because it is the 2<sup>nd</sup> sign on the property, whereby only one is allowed in a residential zone per zoning regulations.

Inquiries were made about the sign specifications and increasing the non-conformity. Comparisons to the sign at Fitch High School were raised.

Chairman Stebbins asked if there was anyone to speak in favor or against this application and there was no one.

Manning read a memo from the Planning Commission dated 1-25-17, which advised Sign A be scaled down in size to be comparable to the existing sign.

Manning expressed his viewpoint that since there aren't any residential homes in the immediate area, he doesn't feel the digital message board would be a hindrance.

The Public Hearing closed at 7:36 p.m.

III. MEETING FOLLOWING PUBLIC HEARING

1. ZBA#16-15, 185 Fort Hill Road, Town of Groton/Owner, Connecticut Technical High School System, LLC/Applicant

Russotto understands the uniqueness of the location as the school building cannot be seen from the road and direction is needed. He noted that as technology has improved over the years, having a digital message board is more efficient. He does not have a problem with the requests.

Staff stated that 24 square feet is the maximum dimension allowed for the sign.

Manning pointed out the importance of identifying the school and understands the need for proper signage to direct people. He explained that safety is an issue.

Mencer feels that because of the lay of the land, a hardship exists.

Stebbins explained why he cannot justify approving Sign B as no hardship exists. After hearing Stebbins' concerns, Manning changed his opinion noting that Sign B is not a necessity.

After some discussion, the Board decided to break the requests out as two motions.

MOTION: To approve Sign A, as requested

Motion made by Russotto, seconded by Kravits, so voted unanimously

MOTION: To approve Sign B, as requested

Motion by Russotto, sec by Kravits, 3-2 Motion failed.

IV. CORRESPONDENCE – None

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. November 9, 2016

MOTION: To adopt the minutes of November 9, 2016, as written.

Motion made by Russotto, seconded by Kravits, so voted unanimously

2. November 30, 2016 (Special Meeting)

MOTION: To adopt the minutes of November 30, 2016, as written.

Motion made by Russotto, seconded by Kravits, so voted unanimously

VI. OLD BUSINESS - None

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Election of Officers

MOTION: To Re-elect Ed Stebbins as Chairperson, Floyd Kravits as Vice Chair, and Manning as Secretary

Motion made by Mencer, seconded by Russotto, so voted unanimously

2. New Applications

It was decided that the February 8, 2017 meeting would be cancelled due to lack of new business.

VIII. REPORT OF STAFF

Staff referred to the Connecticut Federation of Planning and Zoning Agencies quarterly newsletter, pointing out that the Annual Conference will be held on March 23, 2017 at the Aqua Turf in Plantsville, CT. Board members should notify town staff if interested in attending.

Staff stated that the Zoning Code Enforcement/Planner I position has been filled by Tom Zanarini of North Stonington. Mr. Zanarini will most likely be taking over the Zoning Board of Appeals at some point in the near future.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 8:10 pm made by Russotto, seconded by Mencer, so voted unanimously.

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Thomas Manning, Secretary  
Zoning Board of Appeals

Prepared by Robin M. Silsby  
Office Assistant II