

MINUTES
TOWN OF GROTON
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
JULY 13, 2016 – 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 1

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

I. ROLL CALL

Regular members present: Stebbins, Manning, Kravits, Mencer, Russotto

Absent:

Staff present: Allen, Silsby

Public hearing procedures were reviewed by Chairman Stebbins.

II. PUBLIC HEARING

1. ZBA#16-05 – 0 North Road, Christ United Methodist Church/Applicant, City of Groton/Owner, for variances to Section 7.3-3 B to allow a sign to project beyond the property line, and Section 7.3-7 to allow a freestanding sign on a parcel not containing the principal use, and to allow for a 1 foot setback on Hazelnut Hill Road and a 3 foot setback on North Road instead of the required 10 feet. PIN#169920812360 E, IP-80C Zone – Continued

Manning stated that this public hearing is being continued from the May 11, 2016 meeting. He read the Call of the Hearing and stated that mailings were previously found to be in order.

Austin Alvarez of 33 Pheasant Run Drive, Gales Ferry, and Larry Timpano of 341 Brook Street, Noank, both Trustees of the church, presented the application. Alvarez reviewed a map showing where the proposed 14 square foot sign would be erected and submitted photos and other documentation. Background information was given about the previous non-conforming sign that had been in place at the site for more than 40 years. He noted that his original application of October 2015 had been denied. This new application proposes a smaller sign in the same location. He referred to his communication with the State of Connecticut. Numerous documents were submitted, including photos, letters and a schematic of what the new sign would look like.

Timpano noted that the church had been notified by the Town of Groton that the sign that had been erected at the site was in violation of zoning regulations and would need to be removed. He referred to attending a Planning Commission meeting whereby the Commission stated that a directional sign would be most appropriate in that location on North Road. Timpano stated that the City of Groton, the owner of the property, has given approval to install a sign.

Alvarez explained the hardship being that the church building is not visible from the bottom of Hazelnut Hill Road where it intersects with North Road. The existing “dead end” sign is also a deterrent. He stated that people are not able to locate the church without the sign and attendance has dropped off drastically. He spoke about the many benefits that the church affords to the community. Alvarez thanked Staff for their assistance and hopes the Board approves his request.

Chairman Stebbins asked if there was anyone in the audience to speak in favor or against this application.

Jane Nemeth, 137 Sharon Road, a Trustee of the church, submitted a letter of support and explained why a hardship exists.

Jill Martin, 808 Eastern Point Road, highly recommends this sign and submitted a letter for the record.

Carol Alvarez, 33 Pheasant Run Drive, Gales Ferry, spoke in favor of this application. She referred to the many benefits the church adds to the community, such as a 12-step addiction rehabilitation program. She believes the hardship is that the church is at the end of a dead end road.

Audrey Davis Smith spoke in support of this application. She gave information about her involvement with the church since her childhood and urged the Board to approve a directional sign.

Carol Patterson, a previous resident of 952 North Road, recalled when she moved to town and searched for a bible school for her young children. She is very thankful that this church welcomed her and her family with open arms. She hopes and prays that another sign is allowed in the proposed location.

Manning read a memo dated 7/13/16 from the Planning Commission who had no comment. He stated that 24 letters/emails of support have been accepted into the record, to which Staff attested was correct. Additional letters of support were noted. A summary of a meeting that Alvarez had with the State of Connecticut was also submitted.

Staff stated that last year, an application for a variance to replace a longstanding non-conforming sign with a much larger new sign was denied. As reflected in the minutes of that meeting in October 2015, the Board advised the applicant that it would consider without prejudice and be likely to approve an application for a sign no larger than the old sign. The sign proposed in this most recent application is not larger than the old sign.

The Public Hearing closed at 8:12 p.m.

2. ZBA#16-08 – 324 Flanders Road, Timothy Marshall/Owner for a variance to Section 5.2 to allow a side yard setback of 6 feet in lieu of the required 20 feet and a rear yard setback of 20 feet in lieu of the required 30 feet. PIN#260914329654, RS-20 Zone.

Manning read the Call of the Hearing and stated that mailings were reviewed and found to be in order.

For the record, Manning stated that his wife used to work with the Applicant's Mother. Manning does not feel that that has any bearing on this application.

Timothy Marshall, 324 Flanders Road, reviewed a map and his application to build a garage. He pointed out the narrowness of his lot and his house being situated in an angular manner. A map and elevation plans were submitted as exhibits. He stated that his neighbors support his proposal. He spoke about the

driveway and setbacks. He believes that the hardship is that the property is extremely narrow.

The size of the garage was discussed. The location of the well and septic system were noted. The Board felt that there were no other alternative locations for the garage and that a number of hardships exist.

Manning read a memo dated July 13, 2016, from the Planning Commission, who had no comment. Staff stated that the garage will have no live-in space.

The public hearing closed at 8:32 p.m.

III. MEETING FOLLOWING PUBLIC HEARING

1. ZBA#16-05, 0 North Road, Christ United Methodist Church/Applicant, City of Groton/Owner

The Board understands the uniqueness of the hardship and would support a sign. Manning referred to town regulations, noting that people don't know the church exists up the hill because it is not visible from North Road and because a "dead end" sign hinders people from driving up the hill.

MOTION: To grant the variance as requested

Motion made by Mencer, seconded by Kravits, so voted 4 in favor, 1 abstention (Russotto). Motion passed.

2. ZBA#16-08, 324 Flanders Road, Timothy Marshall/Owner

The Board is comfortable with this application because the lot is very narrow.

MOTION: To grant the variance as requested

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

IV. CORRESPONDENCE

Staff distributed the Connecticut Federation of Planning & Zoning Agencies quarterly newsletter.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. June 22, 2016

MOTION: To adopt the minutes of June 22, 2016

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

VI. OLD BUSINESS – None

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. New Applications

Staff reviewed the new applications listed below.

- a. ZBA#16-09 – Laird Residence, 96 Midway Oval
- b. ZBA#16-10 – New Central Hall, 18-22 West Main Street
- c. ZBA#16-11 - Boggio Home Renovations, 2 Bradley Lane

VIII. REPORT OF STAFF - None

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 8:45 p.m. made by Mencer, seconded by Russotto, so voted unanimously.

Tom Manning, Secretary
Zoning Board of Appeals

Prepared by Robin Silsby
Office Assistant II

NOT APPROVED