

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
TOWN OF GROTON
GROTON ZONING COMMISSION
OCTOBER 18, 2017 – 6:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 1

I. ROLL CALL

Regular members present: Hudecek, Marquardt, Sayer, Smith
Alternate members present: Edgerton, Archer
Absent: Sutherland
Staff present: Glemboski, Jones, Reiner, Gilot

Acting Chairperson Hudecek called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m. and seated Edgerton for Sutherland.

II. ITEM OF BUSINESS

1. Commission Workshop – Zoning Regulations Rewrite Project

Acting Chairman Hudecek said the commission would not be taking any public comments at this meeting. Those will be taken at the next regular meeting on November

Jeff Davis and Nate Kelly, Horsley Witten Group reviewed the progress of the regulation rewrite.

Draft Restructure Outline

Jeff Davis discussed the uses, the use table, and consolidation of districts. Mr. Davis noted that he hoped the new layout would be more user friendly, with a preface on how to use the document.

Definitions – they will compile all the definitions throughout the document; they will be listed in alphabetical order by topic. Also, a single alphabetical list with the page number of the definition will be listed, similar to an index.

Mr. Davis provided an overview of the various sections. Hyperlinks would be included in the web version. The commission had comments on multi-use paths and bicycle parking as a number of zones as described as pedestrian and bicycle friendly. Mr. Davis explained that the formatting and sub-numbering of sections will be addressed as they get closer to a final draft. Sayer said an explanation of the number associated with each zoning district (such as R-12, RS-12, RU-20 - minimum lot size or units per acre) should be included.

Draft Updated Map

Mr. Davis discussed the major changes and consolidations of the various residential zones, and explained that they recommended getting rid of RU-80; those parcels would be added to the RU-40. The R-6 from R-8 zones will more closely align with the current existing building stock.

The RMF zones and RU-20 zone will remain mostly the same. One major change will be the addition of an Open Space zone. Larger permanently protected open space parcels were identified on the map. This zone also includes Groton Utilities watershed land which is currently zoned as residential. The industrial zone, with some commercial and retail uses,

general industrial, mixed use centers and neighborhood commercial sites were identified and discussed. Mr. Davis also reviewed commercial heavy, the proposed TIF district at Routes 184 and 117, the various mixed use zones including , the smaller village center nodes around Old Mystic and Poquonnock Bridge. He noted the new MYS zone, currently the WDD with the addition of four targeted parcels (currently in R-8) added to that zone. He described WW - water oriented businesses. The goal is to limit or lessen dimensional non-conformities. Most changes are to make more conforming properties. There are a lesser number of zones. The RU-80 would be merged with RU-40. The "R" districts would allow single family and two-family houses by right. RU (rural) allows residential single family homes and other uses not allowed in typical RS zone. Unless a use is abandoned, the current uses are grandfathered in. The commission will need to decide if they want to tier the mixed use zones.

Section 3

The dwelling sizes in the R zones were discussed; porch setbacks and the size of the porches were discussed and might be a possible concern for the commission. Staff said the commission could look at a street or a couple of streets to see what the change would be in the number of non-conforming lots. Cottage-style developments or tiny homes were discussed.

All uses for each district would be on a table at the end of the section. Dimensional standards and maximum building coverage graphics would be included for each district. Garage standards, setbacks, accessory structure dimensions, etc. need to be reviewed. The commission said garage height should be no higher than the house. Sayer said it would be helpful to see a graphic with several houses on a road. The impervious coverage standards was already reviewed with the WRPD rewrite and applies to commercial but not residential. Family compounds were discussed. They could be allowed in RU-40. Provisions for allowing two detached homes on one lot of at least 60,000 square feet were discussed.

Commercial mixed use zones – The commercial zones currently allow residential. The commission discussed eliminating the residential from the new commercial zones. There are not many places that currently are strictly commercial, so the commission needs to consider if they want any residential in these zones and the impact their decision will have on existing houses in the commercial zones. They discussed whether all commercial zones should allow for mixed use, or does the commission want to push the mixed use to certain areas of town, so that it becomes a place, rather than having isolated mixed use developments scattered throughout the town. Currently there are only four areas proposed for mixed use; the commission needs to decide if they want the mixed use zones to creep into commercial neighborhoods.

Mixed use districts (page 20) – The intent or purpose of the mixed use districts (MYS, MTC and MVC) was discussed. Mr. Davis said he would like to do a more detailed analysis of the existing WDD (MYS zone) in terms of the impact of the proposed changes.

Mixed use areas – There will be different language to distinguish open space from public space. One requirement will be the publicly accessible landscaped areas, how much is regulated by the zoning regulations as opposed to design guidelines. Design guidelines were discussed; how they would be enforced, whether they have any regulatory weight, and how are they changed.

Other considerations/Guidelines (page 29) – These may or may not be included in the regulations, or may be a separate document; the guidelines will include such items as general site layout, street pattern, building and parking design standards, etc.

Mixed use industrial (page 35) - Height considerations were briefly addressed.

Open Space districts (page 37) – Open space may be categorized as one of two types: open space conservation and open space recreation zones. The open space parcels shown on the draft map include large, permanently protected lands owned by the town, Groton Utilities, open space groups and the State. Every piece of protected open space is not shown as there are many small isolated pieces embedded in subdivisions. Staff said they have not yet had a conversation with Groton Utilities relative to parcels their watershed parcels. The water filtration plant and Pequot Health Center are not shown as an open space zone.

Mr. Davis said the goal at this meeting was to have the commission generally comfortable with what was presented for the map, the zoning districts and the zoning regulations. Horsley Witten will address those red flags raised at tonight's meeting.

Staff said the Nautilus Memorial Design District (NMDD) is shown to be changed to Commercial Neighborhood (CN). That seemed the most logical choice for that node. The existing housing and military-owned land was discussed, and the commission concurred to leave that area as it is zoned now. Mr. Davis said mobile home parks are addressed by uses. With regard to mobile homes, staff was concerned with legal issues on the definition of housing types. Current regulations have standards on how existing mobile home parks should be expanded and rearranged, but not new ones. With cottages and tiny homes, the commission discussed converting mobile home parks to tiny homes, and whether the standards would be the same.

Food trucks will be included in the new table of uses and some conditions will be written for the commission's consideration.

Hudecek was concerned about having use tables included in each zone description in addition to an overall use table for the whole town. He doesn't like the duplication and thinks it will lead to mistakes when the tables are amended in the future.

Sayer said Stonington has a shopping area also named Old Mystic Village, which may create some confusion with the new name of the Old Mystic mixed use village area. Staff said Stonington is looking at their side of Old Mystic as well, and they will see how Stonington addresses the area.

Next steps

Definitions – Staff will send the draft use definitions and the table of permitted uses to the commission. The conditions for conditional uses have not been developed yet. Staff said there are no applications for the November meeting, so the commission can continue their discussion at the regular meeting. Staff said they want the commission to concentrate on the big picture items and complete the policy details, and then they can wordsmith.

Horsley Witten will provide staff with a draft timeline in advance of the November 1st meeting.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 8:20 p.m. was made by Sayer, seconded by Smith; so voted unanimously.

Susan Marquardt, Secretary
Zoning Commission

Prepared by Debra Gilot
Executive Assistant

NOT APPROVED