

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
TOWN OF GROTON
ZONING COMMISSION
MARCH 15, 2018 – 6:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – 134 GROTON LONG POINT ROAD
COMMUNITY ROOM 1

I. ROLL CALL

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

Chairperson Sutherland called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and seated Archer for Marquardt.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. January 31, 2018

MOTION: To approve the minutes of January 31, 2018 as written.

Motion made by Archer, seconded by Sayer, so voted unanimously.

2. February 7, 2018

MOTION: To approve the minutes of February 7, 2018 as written.

Motion made by Archer, seconded by Smith, so voted unanimously.

III. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Commission Workshop – Zoning Regulations Rewrite Project

Staff said tonight's meeting will be to get direction from the commission with regard to the general areas or boundaries of the mixed use zones.

Jeff Davis, Horsley Witten, said Union Studio is working on design guidelines for the Poquonnock Bridge Village area, and he will provide the Commission with an update on the proposed village center.

RS-12 and R-12 Zoning District Analysis

Davis began with a PowerPoint presentation and discussion of building area and impervious coverage as they relate to dimensional standards.

The building and construction related definitions which have been edited by the Building/Zoning Official were distributed to the commission.

Davis read the definitions for impervious coverage and impervious surface, with specific examples provided. The definitions of building coverage and building area were reviewed. Examples of each were shown. Impervious coverage is not included in building coverage.

Staff explained how the previous 20 percent coverage for some residential districts prevented people from putting decks or sheds on their property. By increasing to 25 or even 30 percent for smaller lots, it eases the requirement for variances for simple property improvements. The commission also considered a higher percentage of lot coverage for lots below the minimum lot size within the zone.

Staff said they have been working with a consultant on the housing stock in Groton, and it has become clear that residents are not investing in property, so anything that can be done to help people reinvest in their property will ultimately increase the grand list.

The commission discussed lot coverage percentages for the R-12 and RS-12 zones, and concurred with the changes proposed by Horsley Witten for the R-12 and RS-12 zones (minimum lot size 12,000 sq. ft., 30% lot coverage, covered porches could encroach up to 10 ft. within the front setback).

Mixed Use Design

Poquonnock Bridge Village Center Zone – Davis briefly reviewed the historic architecture, the location as the civic center of town with town hall, schools, library, and the park; the POCD considerations, floodplain impacts, greenway potential, and the potential that certain properties in the area could be part of a historic district or register. The commission would like to see a slideshow of the potential historic properties. Flood zones in this area need to be considered with the design of Route 1, access to the airport, and planning for future resiliency so that roadways are not inundated. The streetscape should be designed to slow traffic. The location has access to transit, a bikeway, existing recreational trails, and will serve as a gateway to the town from I-95. The design district and zoning district do not need to be concurrent.

The map of existing uses was reviewed by Davis. He would like the commission to consider where it is most appropriate to have the “town center mixed use zoning”, and where the boundaries should be. The boundaries should be property boundaries. The police have concerns with the large number of driveway cuts, bad site lines and the large number of accidents that have happened in this area over the last five years. They are working with CONNDOT on ways to reduce the speed. The properties that should be considered the “core” area within the zoning district were reviewed. The area along South Road, and the flood plain concerns were discussed. North Road is primarily residential and may be a good area to allow for R-7 or cottages.

Davis showed slides of Groton, Vermont as an example of what a mixed use town center looks like. He hoped to get the commission’s recommendations as far as building heights, etc., for the village center zoning district.

Sutherland would like to look at what the grand list is now, and what could it be. She would like the number of allowed uses in this area to be increased.

Redevelopment options of the farmland on Route 1, and the many opportunities with the waterfront view should be considered when reviewing the allowed uses.

Sayer would like to see some height, some increased density, pedestrian linkage between the senior center, library, town hall, new civic center. Staff also noted that when the Claude Chester School is vacated by the town, the building will be taken down and more play fields will be incorporated into Poquonnock Plains Park, with connections between the senior center, library and those fields. The school presents a sort of barrier to pedestrian traffic at this time. Traffic and speed on Route 117 may be more difficult to slow down.

Archer said that with regard to height, the Marriott, which is in a more isolated location, looks fine with six stories. But in the more dense area, five stories should be the absolute maximum, or you could end up dwarfing buildings that you don't want to dwarf. If someone wants to invest in that area, they wouldn't want someone to put a seven story condominium complex next door.

Sutherland said she would like to see the mixed use zone expanded further to include the Fort Hill Homes area. Staff suggested that redevelopment would most likely start on South Road, as there is already an existing mix of uses. If necessary, the residential neighborhood could be looked at in a few years.

Staff noted that Plan of Conservation and Development recommends expansion of the commercial or WDD zone on the Mystic side of Route 1, but it does not propose expansion of the commercial zone in the Fort Hill Homes area.

The general boundaries for the village district were discussed, and it was the consensus of the commission to keep the height at generally no more than forty feet.

The next meeting will be April 4th; some conditional uses will be on the agenda. Hudecek said he will not be at the April 4th meeting.

Davis and Kelly reviewed the commission's timeline for the zoning regulation rewrite. Some commissioners feel the regulation rewrite is becoming disjointed by meeting in two-hour segments. They don't see how the regulations are coming together and it was the consensus of the commission, staff and consultants that an all-day workshop might be helpful as they get further into the process.

Mobile Manufactured Homes

Davis said the topic of mobile manufactured homes was resolved at the last meeting.

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

Susan Marquardt, Secretary
Zoning Commission

Prepared by Debra Gilot
Executive Assistant