

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
TOWN OF GROTON
ZONING COMMISSION
APRIL 18, 2018 – 6:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – 134 GROTON LONG POINT ROAD
COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL

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

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

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. March 29, 2018

MOTION: To approve the minutes of March 29, 2018 as amended.

Motion made by Sayer, seconded by Smith. Motion passed 4-0-1, 1 abstention (Hudecek).

2. April 4, 2018 - Postponed to the next meeting.

III. OLD BUSINESS

1. Commission Workshop – Zoning Regulations Rewrite Project

a. Work-to-Date

Staff said the text was revised to reflect the comments of the last meeting. Commissioners should replace everything currently in binder with the new materials distributed tonight.

Staff began with a PowerPoint presentation reviewing the changes from the last meeting.

Sayer said she would like to see “Preface” changed to “How to Use These Regulations”. This would also be an appropriate place to note the areas of the town that are not regulated by this document, and perhaps include a map of those districts not under the town’s zoning jurisdiction.

Edgerton would like a table listing the names of the zones in Section 3 before the detailed description of each zone.

The Chair asked staff if they had any success in getting more people interested in attending the Zoning Commission meetings. Staff said all land use agencies, the

Town Council and the RTM will be sent the agenda packets with a link to the zoning website; staff will be attending an upcoming meeting of each of the land use commissions to provide a zoning update; the one-pagers from Horsley Witten will be printed and prominently displayed in various public buildings such as Town Hall, the library, etc. The commission asked for dates of meetings so that someone can attend those meetings if possible.

Application (pg. 6) – clarified and simplified language.

Smith said the 3rd paragraph in Application, Page 6, is negative – staff will try to reword the language.

In addition to clear and consistent, the commission would like “plain language and easy to understand”.

Diagrams and tables will be used as much as possible to provide clarity. Staff is keeping a folder, but none have been integrated yet into the regulations due to the costs for graphic art. Staff advised the commissioners to keep a list of where they would like diagrams added in the final document.

Formatting: Staff said the old revision dates noted in the existing zoning regulations will not carry into the new document. Staff said there will be a List of the Terms and each word listed at the beginning of the definition section. Hyperlinks will be included in the final document. Hudecek said “also see” should be included where appropriate. Sayer said in the “for example” boxes, *examples may include...* seems redundant and could be deleted.

Accessory Dwelling Unit: Clarify “...in size and accessory to *the* one-unit...”

Edgerton noted that Johnson’s Hardware is selling chicks, and asked if there should be certain exemptions for this under the “kennel” definition.

Staff is still working on clarifying some definitions in Section 2, which have not been discussed with the commission yet, and others still need review.

Section 3: Formatting of zoning districts and map – Staff said some towns put allowed uses under each zoning district in Section 3. The commission concurred they only want it in the Use Table; it will be easier to change or update if it’s only in one place.

Staff asked the commission if they want a dimensional standards table such as the one in Section 5.2 of the existing regulations. The commission agreed they would like to keep that.

Section 3: Staff asked the commission if they wanted to list selected references on the bottom of the residential districts, with a hyperlink. Some examples would be fence requirements, landscaping, buffering, use table, height restrictions, etc. Staff said this is used in Clearzoning, and thought this would help to make the regulations easier to understand. Following discussion of references to topics such as wetlands or how to comply with zoning, it was decided that might be included in the “How to Use” section at the preface.

Staff is still working on standards for the RM, MDD, MTC and MVC districts.

Sutherland said she would like a side-by-side comparison of the mixed use district standards.

Staff will clarify the grammar in the bullets in the District Boundaries section on page 66.

Lots Lying in More than One District (pg. 66) – Staff said there are many along Route 184. Currently, the less restrictive use district can go 30 feet into the more restrictive district for development. Staff asked the commission if they wanted to increase that amount, up to 100 feet. Staff clarified that the less restrictive district would be based on uses in the district. The commission preferred that the owner could choose which district, but they would have to use the design standards for the chosen district for that property. Staff showed some of the areas in town where the property lines are split by zone lines, mostly on Route 184. Staff said an option is to extend the commercial zone to the property lot line. The commission and staff discussed the boundaries of some of the properties on Route 184 in the “split district” area. Most of the commissioners agreed with increasing the allowed encroachment to 100 ft. for now; Sutherland said she would like to review a little more.

Existing Lots (pg. 82) – The commission discussed the minimum lot area requirements for the zones. The commission agreed that the front yard should stay at what the zone requires.

Height Limitation (pg. 83) - Staff is still reviewing “reasonable and necessary”. Telecommunication towers – If the CT Siting Council does not need to approve, staff can approve up to 10 feet above maximum elevation of zone. Staff is still working on the language for this section.

Lots Adjacent to a Railroad (pg. 83) – Reworded for clarity.

Required Frontage and Access (pg. 84) – Still under staff review.

Accessory Dwelling Units (pg. 86) - The commission previously indicated that they wanted design standards for accessory units. Staff recommended a few design standards for discussion. Staff said they have not yet seen a problem with design. After discussion, the commission concurred that they want several of the architectural design standards listed. They had some modifications.

Storage containers – Staff said the Zoning Official stated that there are no people living in Groton in storage containers at this time.

Home-Based Business (pg. 88)

Home office – Staff said the Zoning Official requested some form of review or permit requirements due to enforcement issues. A checklist would be associated with the zoning permit requirement. The checklist would be the same as standards for a home office occupation.

The commission questioned why a permit would be required for people who bring a laptop home for work or have a home office. The commission still wants to

remove the home office requirement. The commission wanted to remove “up to 1” from minor home occupation. Staff left this for further discussion.

Home Agriculture – Sales – Staff created standards for the section.

Commercial Kennel – changed to 5 acres for riding stable, 3 acres for a kennel; soundproofing added for consideration. The commission agreed to 100 feet.

Pet grooming: 60,000 sq. ft. (in RU district) required.

b. Preliminary Zoning Map

Staff reviewed the preliminary map.

MDD – Staff and commission discussed adding some properties on Bank Street in downtown Mystic to the MDD zone, but did not change them on the map. The commission would like an informal public session on the zoning map before they go to public hearing.

RS 8 to R7

MVC - The Poquonnock Bridge area and Old Mystic village area changed to Mixed Village. The boundaries of the Poquonnock Bridge village zone were discussed.

MTC - Staff noted that downtown Groton will now be one mixed use downtown center.

NMDD – Staff recommended that the commission keep the NMDD at this time. In coordination with the Joint Land Use Study the Council of Governments has applied for a Department of Defense grant to do an analysis on what zoning works for the base and the town, and to do the rezoning as part of the grant. Staff said this zone could be revisited by the commission at a later time, but it should be left as is for now.

RU-80: Staff asked if the commission wanted to consider changing the RU-80 zone in the northeast corner of town (including River Road) to RU-40, to consolidate the number of zones. One of the reasons that area was initially designated RU-80 was the preservation of the coastal resources, and the importance of that hasn't changed, so the commission chose to keep it as RU-80.

RU-40 and IP-80 zone, between Flanders and Noank Ledyard Road, near I-95, will be changed to RU-20. It was recommended in the POCD to remove the industrial zone in that area. Staff said there are no utilities in the industrial area, so industrial development would be unlikely.

Some RS neighborhoods will be changed to R-12: Bailey Hill, the Ginger Drive/Johl Drive off Poquonnock Road in the Trails Corners area. This change would allow more uses, such as duplexes. It is a denser area of town, and this would be a way to add to the housing stock and get people to invest in their homes. Sutherland would like to know the effects of some of these changes would have on the grand list. Sutherland was concerned with the potential financial implications of some of these decisions. Staff said there is no funding for such a study. Some commissioners were

concerned with the parking and the increased number of cars in those areas. The commission voted to leave as an RS district.

OMF districts: Gold Star Highway (Route 184), Long Hill Road, the Poquonnock Mixed Village Center, and CN on Long Hill Road – change to CN, MTC or MVC depending on the area and uses. This is to eliminate the existing OMF zone. The commission concurred.

CA-12 zone: Change to CN or CR, depending on the area and existing uses: Route 12 to CR, which would allow the auto dealerships to be a conforming use. The possibility of changing the Pleasant Valley School zoning to CR was discussed. Staff said it is right next to multifamily housing, which might be a better option for that area; once the town starts marketing that school, they will have a better idea of where that would go. Marketing of the school isn't anticipated to start until January.

Potential MTC circle – staff is waiting for the TIF boundary to be clarified, so this may change.

IV. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

David Atkinson, 1184 River Road, thanked the commission for their work and said he was glad they are not changing the RU-80 zoning for River Road.

Zell Steever, 81 Main Street, said he will not speak tonight. He would like to do some more homework based on what he heard at tonight's meeting.

V. REPORT OF CHAIRPERSON - None

VI. REPORT OF STAFF - None

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 8:45 p.m. was made by Hudecek, seconded by Edgerton; so voted unanimously.

Susan Marquardt, Secretary
Zoning Commission

Prepared by Debra Gilot
Executive Assistant