

MINUTES  
TOWN OF GROTON  
ZONING COMMISSION  
APRIL 4, 2018 – 6:30 P.M.  
TOWN HALL ANNEX – 134 GROTON LONG POINT ROAD  
COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL

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

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

II. PUBLIC HEARING - None

III. CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC HEARING - None

IV. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Chairperson Sutherland said they will take public comments and asked that the comments be limited to five minutes.

Zell Steever, 81 Main Street had the following comments:

- He asked if the commission would reconsider taking comments from the audience during workshop meetings, at the conclusion of any presentations. He said it is difficult to take notes and then make comments two weeks later. It would make the process go faster to be able to comment at the workshop meetings.
- He also asked that information sent to the commission be out at least two days prior to the meeting. Mr. Steever would like to see how commuter train and bus services might help promote mixed use development and how those might be connected to major employers in town. In particular, Route 1 is within half mile of Pfizer, EB and the Navy.
- In February he proposed to name the Route 1 Corridor the Groton Town Center but it wasn't properly reflected in the minutes. That would make it more clear to the public.
- Said the Poquonnock Bridge Village District should be called the Groton Municipal Center District.
- Said the mixed use village district shouldn't be included in the zoning regulations at this point or the Route 1 corridor will be diluted, from Buddington Road up to McDonald's. That should be focus rather than focusing on other areas as well.
- He said he sees nothing in the timeline regarding natural resources, topo, etc.
- He recommended that staff contact firms that have done work at Pfizer, such as internationally known consultants who have experience with mixed use, ask them what is needed in the zoning code, have them make a presentation. There are folks in the community who could assist. The authors of *Suburban Nation* could be contacted to give an additional perspective on how it's used.

The chair polled the commissioners about taking public comments at the end of each session. It was the consensus of the commission to allow the public to comment

after the presentation. Going forward, it will be clearly stated on the agenda for the workshop meetings.

Jim Furlong, 57 Fishtown Lane, Mystic, said he was glad that the commission didn't change the existing "Purpose and Authority" section, and carried over the statement that the Zoning Commission must consider the restoration and protection of the ecosystem and habitat of Long Island Sound.

Larry Dunn, 91 Crosswinds Drive, a member of the Conservation Commission, spoke about the mixed use presentation. He felt it was positive and fits in with the conservation plan for the town. He had spoken with Warren Burrows about the Burrows Farm land, and his plan for their property fits in with the proposed direction for that area. One of the items he has worked on for the Conservation Commission is an economic model to measure the impact of an open space based on a variety of factors; that will be part of the conservation plan. He hoped this tool would be part of the Conservation Commission's contribution. He offered to provide comments and support for the open space development section of the regulations. Dunn said he tried to make the analysis usable. The Zoning Commission agreed they would be interested in seeing the analysis.

V. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

1. March 29, 2018 - Postponed to the next meeting.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

1. Commission Workshop – Zoning Regulations Rewrite Project
  - a. Project Schedule - Update

Jeff Davis, Horsley Witten, reviewed the updated project schedule. Sections 1 through 4 are mostly complete. Section 5 will be discussed today.

The commission would like the Economic Development Commission to become more involved in this process. The commission is also interested in getting more public input prior to the public hearing. They asked if staff could send the agenda packets to all land use commissioners and the Town Council. The commission discussed various ways to get the public involved in the process.

Mixed use will be discussed in July. The scope of the area for each of the proposed districts will be determined. The Route 184/117 center will be determined after the TIF district is set.

The Chair is concerned with the Poquonnock Bridge area because it has very little impact on taxes and she doesn't see people investing in that area. She would rather spend time on some areas that will have more impact on the tax revenue. Staff said the primary objective for this district is not solely to generate revenue, but to add more flexibility, support what the district is by allowing more uses, not intensive uses, and creating a sense of place. The commission discussed graphics. Mr. Davis said they would be done when the project is finished rather than spending the budget on graphics at this point in the process.

- b. Work to Date

Staff distributed notebooks to the commissioners at the March 29<sup>th</sup> meeting. Completed sections will be printed and distributed to commissioners as the rewrite progresses. Currently, Sections 1 -4 are included in the notebooks.

c. Non-Use Related Definitions – (Section 2)

Davis reviewed some of the highlighted edits and asked the commission for their feedback on some of the definitions.

- Simplified site plan – minor changes to an existing site plan that would not require professional design, location or documentation. An administrative site plan does not go to Planning Commission.
- Yard space (formerly open space); open space, useable open space (publicly accessible landscaped area) – public space – needs work for an appropriate name.
- Non-disturbance area – definition for buffer area may need to be added.
- Building – accessory structures, over 30 inches in height, what needs to meet building setback standards.
- Premises – a lot with all buildings and structures.
- Building height, average finished grade, finished grade, corner lot clarifications for lot lines and minimum lot width. Diagrams will eventually be included.
- Flood protection, signs and floor area – staff is still reviewing these.
- Abbreviation for square feet should be SF rather than sq. ft.

d. Use Conditions

- Accessory Dwelling Units – size, design discussed. Davis asked if the commission wanted design standards for accessory dwelling units. Basic design guidelines would be desired for those in the front yard, but not in the back yard. The commission asked about the definition of “occupied”; staff said lived in – 6 months plus 1 day. Sutherland had concerns with shipping containers as accessory units.
- Drive-through facilities – Storage should be changed to stacking; drive-in should be changed to drive-through.
- Home based business – Three levels proposed: home office, minor home occupation, and major home occupation. Staff said these businesses should be registered, with a business license and reviewed so that it is not taking up the whole house. After discussion, the commission concurred that they do not want an Administrative Site Plan requirement for a home office.
- Airbnbs – zoning is currently silent on this.
- Aquaculture, commercial agriculture and commercial nurseries and greenhouses – Davis reviewed the proposed changes. The language for

Agriculture, Commercial, C. Sales, a. – sales area needs to be clarified. Also, ground water needs to be added to E. Waste.

- Home agriculture – A. Sales: home agriculture – 2 – 4 acres of land. Sell anything they raise on the premises, subject to home-based business rules. This should be clarified to keeping of livestock. The sales do not require two acres, only animals. Staff will address the number of customers per day.
- Keeping of Other Livestock Animals: Clarification of exception for miniature pig, *miniature* goat, *miniature* sheep may be kept. Also, definition of “pet”.
- Lot Size and # of Animals: Setbacks increase with size of animal. Any agriculture on 5 acres or larger is no longer home agriculture.
- Community Garden – new use reviewed.

Stormwater language – Discussion of whether the language needs to be included in the conditions.

- Commercial kennels – Minimum sizes, setbacks, exceptions for cats; three acres might be small for riding stables and kennels – the commission wants to increase to five acres for stables, three for kennels.
- Veterinary Services & Pet Grooming Establishments – Minimum lot size kept at 60,000 sq. ft. in RU district.

Davis asked the commission if they saw any need to set a minimum for any commercial use in RU zones-general commercial use in a building. Maybe allow only in RU-40 and RU-80, or maybe split the RU zones – some uses allowed in RU-40 and not in 20 is an option. He explained a special permit would be required for commercial uses in residential zones for some controls within the residential area. The commission concurred to keep the 60,000 square foot minimum for some uses.

#### Dimensional standards (Section 4)

- Accessory Units: change from 60 feet to 40 feet from any street line.
- Existing lots: reduce dimensional standards as approved by ZBA – change to follow the least restrictive district to which the lot area most clearly conforms.
- Unimproved existing lot – may comply with the zoning regulations that were in effect at the time of the subdivision.
- Front yards –Review of setbacks for front yards; average front setback.
- Height limitation: Discussion of building height, telecommunication towers, whether staff should be allowed to approve anything ten feet above the maximum elevation for the zone, anything above that must go to the commission, and it would require standards. At this time, no hardship is necessary. Davis will bring the term “reasonable and necessary” to attorney for advice. Neighbors’ views are not a consideration for a decision.

- Common wall agreement – change to party line agreement; placement of party line discussed.
- Projection into open space – change to projection into setbacks. The commission preferred “yard space” rather than setbacks.
- Depth of projection – two feet over setback line.
- Required frontage and access – staff is still reviewing.
- Zero lot line – new standards reviewed. Staff said party wall agreement is for commercial; zero lot line refers to residential dwellings. Mechanism for additions needs to be included.

The commission asked for clarification of the lots adjacent to a railroad.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Report of Commission - None
2. Receipt of New Applications

IX. REPORT OF CHAIRPERSON - None

X. REPORT OF STAFF - None

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 8:35 p.m. was made by Archer, seconded by Sayer; so voted unanimously.

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Susan Marquardt, Secretary  
Zoning Commission

Prepared by Debra Gilot  
Executive Assistant