

MINUTES
TOWN OF GROTON
ZONING COMMISSION
AUGUST 2, 2017 – 6:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – 134 GROTON LONG POINT ROAD
COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL

Regular members present: Smith, Sayer, Sutherland
Alternate members present: Edgerton, Archer
Absent: Hudecek, Marquardt
Staff present: Jones Reiner, Gilot
Other Staff: John Burt, Town Manager

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

II. PUBLIC HEARING

1. Zoning Map Amendment #ZCH 17-01, 91 & 105 Walker Hill Road and 55 Seely School Drive, PIN #'s 168911557477, 168911556226 E, 168915641769 E, R-12 Zone. Proposal is to change the zoning district of two lots on Walker Hill Road and one lot on Seely School Drive from R-12 Zone to CA-12 Zone. Review is per Section 8.2 of the Zoning Regulations. (Town of Groton Zoning Commission, Applicant)

Chairperson Sutherland read the legal notice.

Staff explained the application to change the zone of the noted properties. The Town initiated the application, and staff notified neighbors well beyond the normal 150 ft. buffer. Staff detailed the location and zoning of the abutting properties. The 2016 POCD recommends expansion of the Route 12 commercial node west to these properties and is indicated on the Future Land Use Map. The existing utilities and changing demographics were reviewed. Staff read the referrals from other agencies and commissions into the record:

- Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments – no inter-municipal impact.
- CT Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection – no conflict with Coastal Management
- Planning Commission – no comment
- Conservation Commission – no comment
- Economic Development Commission – supported the change
- City of Groton (distributed to the Commission tonight) – recommended enhanced buffers be required, and restricting vehicular access through residential areas to the site

Staff distributed the Table of Permitted Uses from the Groton Zoning Regulations to the Commission. The uses allowed in the R-12 and CA-12 zones were highlighted.

Some of the uses allowed in the R zone include one and two family dwellings, residential life care communities, agricultural uses, campgrounds, fairs, recreational facilities and daycares. The CA zone allows residential, retail, cultural, financial, institutional, personal services, hotels and medical facilities. It allows less intense

commercial uses than the CB zone. Staff anticipates the future development will be multi-family rather than commercial.

Staff said the Seely School was closed in 2004. The Town Council wanted to sell the property and a purchase and sale agreement was approved by the Town Council about two years ago. Potential uses by that developer included multifamily, retail, office or commercial. The agreement was cancelled earlier this year. A town-wide market analysis identified the need to create a sense of place in Groton; 80 percent of our workforce commutes to Groton. Multifamily housing is needed. The site is not earmarked for affordable housing; that is not a preferred use by the town, and the town has more than the required ten percent. The town owns the property and can guide the use of the property and coordinate the development of the site. Staff discussed the neighboring properties, and stressed that Route 12 is the preferred location for the main access to the site. They hope to attract unique living spaces and produce a development that is an asset to the town and to the neighborhood, as indicated through the market analysis.

Since 2004, the school has been used for town activities, and never actively marketed. A "For Sale" sign will be going up at the property in the next week. The town hopes to attract a buyer who will develop multi-family, mixed use or commercial development closer to the road. A number of developers have expressed interest, but the current zoning does not allow multifamily housing.

The Chair asked what that property could generate for net taxes to the town, and if any other uses would be better. Staff said they had not done renderings of specific plans yet but depending on the number of units, hundreds of thousands of dollars in tax revenue could be expected. Staff will include a reverter clause in the contract to require development with time line requirements. Unit types will determine whether children will be at the property. Multi-family housing developers are approaching the town with regard to these properties, based on the expected future need for housing with EB's expansion.

The Commission asked staff if they anticipate a need for changes in wording for that zone as they go forward with the regulation rewrite. Staff said it may be revisited in the future, but the commission is analyzing on the code as it is written today.

The Chair asked for comments from the public and asked that comments be limited to five minutes.

Susan Dowling, 22 Leeward Lane, a member of the Economic Development Commission along with Catherine Young, vice chair of Economic Development Commission, read the commission's referral memo into the record.

John Burt, 67 Ledgewood Road, Town Manager, spoke in favor of the rezoning. He said this was a big goal of the Council and the town and concurred with the comments made by staff. He asked the Commission to support the change.

Patricia Tefft, 7 Senkow Avenue, expressed concern over why the zoning for the water tower and the small house needed to be changed.

Ken Nash, 91 Walker Hill Road, said the Table of Permitted Uses is confusing. He runs a business out of his home and spoke in support of the change, but wanted it on record that he can live there and would still be able to sell his property as a residence.

Thomas Potter, 154 Walker Hill Road, commended staff for their efforts with the Seely School property and requested that any future purchase and sale agreement require the primary access to the property must be from Route 12 rather than Walker Hill or Seely School Drive.

Ken Nash, 91 Walker Hill Road, asked about changes to his taxes. Reiner said he thinks it would be on the next grand list, but Mr. Nash should call him and they could talk to the Assessor and find out for sure.

Gretchen Chipperini, 87 Phoenix Drive, said she is the largest abutter. She read a prepared statement in favor of the application.

Smith asked staff if they would be able to make assurances that access to the site will not be through the residential neighborhood. Staff said they want the main access through Route 12, and specific language regarding preferred access points would be included in any agreements with future developers.

Staff reviewed utility access to the site, location of the wetlands on the site, and height restrictions for the new zone.

Linda Fox, 31 Riverview Avenue, asked about the use for the portion of the site that is ledge. She also suggested that the town consider a community center for the site, as it is being used now.

John Burt, 67 Ledgewood Road, Town Manager, said the plan is to continue to move all the current activities at Seely School into Fitch Middle School. Improvements are being made to Fitch Middle School to accommodate the uses.

Thomas Potter, 154 Walker Hill Road, asked why they needed to change the zoning of the properties at 91 and 105 Walker Hill. Staff said the change is proposed in order to keep the whole site consistent with the current land uses, and allow compatible uses, as called for in the POCD.

Gretchen Chipperini, 87 Phoenix Drive, spoke about the Groton Utilities water tower. She would prefer that the tower be relocated further back on the site.

The public hearing was closed at 7:22 pm.

III. CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC HEARING

1. ZCH 17-01, 91 & 105 Walker Hill Road and 55 Seely School Drive (Town of Groton Zoning Commission, Applicant)

MOTION: To approve the Zoning Map Amendment (ZCH17-01) changing 91 & 105 Walker Hill Road and 55 Seely School Drive from R-12 to CA-12 pursuant to the following findings and reasons for approval:

The Commission finds that the Zoning Map Amendment is consistent with the 2016 Plan of Conservation and Development and the 2016 Future Land Use Map.

The effective date of this Map Amendment shall be September 2, 2017.

Motion made by Smith, seconded by Sayer. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS - None

V. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

1. May 31, 2017 Special Meeting

MOTION: To approve the May 31, 2017 Special meeting minutes as written.

Motion made by Smith, seconded by Archer. Motion passed unanimously.

2. June 7, 2017

MOTION: To approve the June 7, 2017 meeting minutes as written.

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

3. June 19, 2017 Special Meeting

MOTION: To approve the June 19, 2017 Special Meeting minutes as presented.

Motion made by Archer, seconded by Edgerton. Motion passed 4 – 0 – 1 (1 abstention, Smith).

VII. OLD BUSINESS

1. Zoning Regulations Rewrite Project

Staff said they received a draft of the entire regulation document from Horsley Witten Group. There were a lot of “gray box” questions, and staff is working through those questions. When completed, they will provide the commissioners with the entire document, and then create a plan for discussion and review.

Staff expects the Town Council to discuss the Planning and Zoning Commissions at the second Committee of the Whole meeting in August or the September Committee of the Whole. Staff said their recommendation to the Council would be that the Town Council allow the Zoning Commission 18 months to finish the zoning regulation project. If the Town Council does not allow that, the zoning rewrite project will be slowed down.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Report of Commission - None

2. Receipt of New Applications

a. ZCH17-02, 1 Bank Street, Mystic – Set public hearing date

A public hearing was scheduled for September 6, 2017.

Staff said they also received a special permit application for outdoor seating at the Ancient Mariner on West Main Street in Mystic. The public hearing date was set for September 6, 2017.

IX. REPORT OF CHAIRPERSON

The Chairperson asked everyone to listen to the July 1st Town Council Meeting. Elissa Wright spoke under Citizen's Petitions about the Planning and Zoning Commissions and said a solid study should be done first.

X. REPORT OF STAFF

Staff distributed the spring CFPZA newsletter to the commissioners.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 7:32 p.m. made by Smith, seconded by Edgerton, so voted unanimously.

Susan Marquardt, Secretary
Zoning Commission

Prepared by Debra Gilot
Executive Assistant