

MINUTES
TOWN OF GROTON
ZONING COMMISSION
OCTOBER 5, 2016 – 6:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – 134 GROTON LONG POINT ROAD
COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL

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

Acting Chairperson Hudecek called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

II. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

James Furlong, 57 Fishtown Lane, Mystic, spoke to the Commission about proposed changes to the WRPD. He said that much discussion up to now has dealt with the quality of water, but little time has been allotted to the quantity of water. He asked the commission to consider if the proposed changes will allow this area to keep filling up the reservoirs or will sewers and more construction diminish the quantity of water. The buildout analysis requested should be applied to figure out future water quantity before changes are made. Wide buffers on streams and feeder wetlands rule out acreage for certain uses.

Rick Stevens, Groton Utilities, read a letter of thanks to the staff for allowing them to participate in the review of the WRPD regulations.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. September 7, 2016

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the September 7, 2016 meeting as presented.

Motion made by Sayer, seconded by Smith. Motion passed 3-0, 1 abstention (Marquardt).

III. OLD BUSINESS

The commission amended the agenda to move Item 1, WRPD to a. and Definitions to b.

1. Zoning Regulations Update

a. WRPD Permitted Uses

Nate Kelly, Horsley Witten Group, reviewed a map of the WRPD showing parcels which would have a significant amount of land constrained by the 50 ft. non-disturbance area in the WRPD, and compared it to another map showing a non-disturbance area of 100 ft. Commercial and industrial parcels were also shown with the 50 ft. area and the 100 ft. area. Mr. Kelly maintained his recommendation of a 50 ft.

non-disturbance area. Staff said they met with Groton Utilities and they concurred that a 50 ft. area was sufficient. Anything beyond that protects the habitat, but doesn't improve water quality. Stormwater treatment would provide additional protection in addition to the non-disturbance area. The commission asked about enforcement. Staff said they do enforce it now and discussed flagging or marking of the non-disturbance area. Stormwater discharge is required to be an additional 50 feet back from the non-disturbance area line. The Commission engaged in discussion with Mr. Kelly and staff on stratified drift area, inspections performed by staff and Groton Utilities, and improving stormwater treatment controls. The commission asked if the town has the capacity to measure all of these and do all reviews. Staff said the town has the ability to hire outside consultants if needed.

Mr. Kelly reviewed the hazardous waste section (page 14 - 16 of draft regulation - D).

"Minor" – uses that don't specifically deal with hazardous materials; incidental, no real risk of a large spill; prepackaged, household type materials; amounts displayed or stored for retail, is considered minor.

"Other than minor" – The requirements for hazardous materials other than minor would be more intense; a new car dealer with 55 gallon drums, not prepackaged single – use bottles.

Staff said there will be an appendix showing items that should be part of a materials management plan, a spill prevention plan, or spill kit.

The commission said they prefer to use "category A" and "category B", or some other term, rather than "minor" or "other than minor".

The buildout analysis was discussed. Based on assumptions presented, the consultant, staff, and the commission concurred there would be minimal impact to the buildout; maybe less development due to the changes.

The commission and staff discussed including the WRPD in table of uses; identify specific uses that need to see "X" in the section. Staff is still trying to figure out the best mechanism to tie the WRPD to the use table without making it unduly long.

Staff said there was a memo in the agenda packet from Groton Utilities regarding technical items in the WRPD and stated that Groton Utilities is satisfied with the latest revisions in terms of setbacks, buffers, and underlaying stratified drift.

The commission stated they were satisfied with the 50 ft. non-disturbance area.

Staff would like to prepare a text amendment application for the WRPD. The table currently included in the WRPD section may eventually come out if they find a way to incorporate it into the table of permitted uses. A presentation for the public hearing will be prepared by staff and the consultants. Staff said they will engage stakeholders who may be impacted by the changes prior to the public hearing. Staff said the public hearing would be in January at the earliest and they hope to have the application received by the commission at the next meeting in November.

b. Definitions/Table of Permitted Uses

Mr. Kelly said the definitions that were distributed are those associated with the uses. Definitions for the uses will be written out in the categories only; the alphabetized use list will say “see category for definitions”.

Staff suggested changing the “amount of gallons” to “building square feet” for the alcohol production description. The commission agreed.

Staff said they met with the Town Attorney who is reviewing the housing definitions. Staff feels these proposed definitions may change.

The commission reviewed the proposed draft of definitions and clarified some of the definitions with staff and Horsley Witten. Staff said these definitions will probably be modified as the commission moves forward with the regulations. The commission and staff discussed whether each of the definitions listed were going to be regulated.

Airbnb – Staff said the Zoning Official has had no complaints at this time and doesn’t want to create a problem where there isn’t one. Staff will do some research for the commission and will send the commission any literature they find.

Community gardens - locations where they may be prohibited, development standards and parking, were discussed.

“Family day care home” definition needs to be clarified. The state statute definition is currently used; also, “family” should be changed to “household units”. The definition of dwelling was discussed.

Staff said they need direction from the commission on policy issues. The WRPD is almost done. The regulatory audit identified changes that need to be made. Horsley Witten is now going to do a preliminary revision of the entire regulation document and present it to the commission to make it easier to proceed with these revisions. It should take them about 3 months for this preliminary document.

The commission discussed some items they would like to see in the new document, such as color, graphics and pictures, tabbed headers, hyperlinks, etc. The commission wants to be sure that the consultant can produce a document that will meet their expectations. Staff expects they will get a draft in February 2017.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

1. Report of Commission

Sayer asked staff to distribute to the commission, staff and consultants, a document from www.plainlanguage.gov.

2. Receipt of New Applications - None

V. REPORT OF CHAIRPERSON - None

VI. REPORT OF STAFF

Staff said there will be a FOIA presentation hosted by the Committee of Chairs on Wednesday, October 19th at 6 pm in CR-1. Thomas Hennick of the Freedom of Information Commission will be the speaker. All commissioners are invited.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 8:11 p.m. was made by Smith, seconded by Sayer, so voted unanimously.

Susan Marquardt, Secretary
Zoning Commission

Prepared by Debra Gilot
Office Assistant III