

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
TOWN OF GROTON
ZONING COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 17, 2016 – 6:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL

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

Chairperson Sutherland called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and seated Smith as a voting member.

II. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Chairperson Sutherland invited the audience to speak and if there was time after the presentation they would have another opportunity. There were no comments at this time.

III. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. WRPD – Discussion with Horsley Witten Group

Nate Kelly, Horsley Witten Group, provided background and an update on their progress on the WRPD, consolidation of zoning districts and the use table.

Structure – Mr. Kelly explained what the zoning regulations govern and in order to have oversight of storage, floor drains, etc., inside the building may require an ordinance. It was recommended that the use allowances in the WRPD section be moved to the use table. The commissioners asked about the track record of the use of an ordinance within the water protection districts. He explained that they are mostly used with stormwater regulations, but they would provide more control for the town; enforcement with a code of ordinances is more flexible. The Commission had concerns with committing the town to a greater workload if an ordinance was adopted. Discussion ensued on what existing businesses within the WRPD would be impacted by an ordinance. The commission thought the use table was difficult to follow.

Process – Expanded language was provided on how a WRPD district boundary could be challenged and modified. Erosion and sediment controls, site plan review and stormwater plans need to improve how they interplay with the WRPD regulations. A new subsection dealing with the alteration of sites that contain non-conforming uses was discussed. The commission considered what amount of increased non-conforming would be allowed, whether a smaller amount than the existing 50 percent should be considered, or raise the percentage for additional protections, or incentivize with additional controls.

Standards - The commission reviewed recommendations of not allowing pervious pavement, specific stormwater BMPs for surface water supply protection, water quality volume requirements and replacement of underground storage tanks and septic locations.

Code of ordinances – Mr. Kelly noted the ordinance would identify potential pollutant sources, standards for specific uses, and inspections/penalties.

Staff concerns and next steps were reviewed, including review of the stormwater standards, inspection and enforcement for the town, consistency, and definitions.

The commission discussed percentages of impervious on a site that would require treatment, sites with poor treatment systems or extensive impervious; older sites with constraints that may need incentive for redevelopment, and pre-existing non-conforming sites that would be subject to new rules with a code of ordinances.

The commission said they prefer to use redlined drafts showing the actual changes.

Mr. Kelly and the commission reviewed the WRPD map that showed existing sewers and non-conforming WRPD uses. Discussion ensued on the law with regard to reducing the non-conforming uses, standards for abandonment of the non-conforming uses, and standards for granting variances or special permits for abandoned or non-conforming uses. Mr. Kelly reminded the commission that changing zoning does not change what exists. The commission considered what to keep as prohibited, what can stay with standards, and the balance between the economy and the environment.

Jim Furlong, 57 Fishtown Lane, Mystic, spoke about the proposed minimum 50 ft. buffer, and that the town may be justified in increasing the buffer if the town is responsible for the water, it would be a good argument that was not arbitrary. He asked if this would carry over to wetlands.

Sydney Van Zandt, 3 Front Street, Noank, spoke about runoff discharge, and her concern with 100 or 500 year storms in recent past. She suggested using 100 or 500 year storms rather than 25 year storms for the standards. She suggested more wording on pervious pavement for new development, or taking away pervious. She suggested that the town look at the active senior housing and stormwater runoff language.

Zell Steever, 81 Main Street, Groton, said he spoke two sessions ago about wetlands and FEMA flood hazard maps. He is concerned with regulatory requirements to meet FEMA standards and wetland requirements. He said he would like to see all three standards integrated onto one map in an overall plan; concerned with what would happen if all three standards went in different directions, especially for new development or redevelopment. He spoke about the expansion of residential housing in FEMA flood hazard zones, and the Town's need to consider sea level rise. He said the Town needs better management of its town's resources; treatment of polluted water becomes the expense of the town. He asked them to think about the long-term development of the community, and the POCD.

Mike Cherry, Planning & Zoning Commission Chairman, Town of Ledyard, spoke about protection of the drinking water as well as other water, adaptive reuse, and pre-existing non-conforming issues.

Joan Smith, 37 Island Circle, spoke about inspections, stormwater treatment, concerns that inspection schedules must be written in the regulations or ordinances, or it won't happen. She recommended pervious with vegetation, and pervious with collection beneath it. She said they shouldn't abandon pervious but upgrade the required treatment and design standards.

2. Table of Permitted Uses

Jeff Davis, Horsley Witten Group, presented a draft of proposed new residential zones, which consolidate the existing districts, based on the recommendations of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin's audit. Each of the proposed districts was explained for the commission.

Mr. Davis said the commission may want to consider one or maybe two multifamily zones, as well as creating a zone specifically for open space, which could be two tiered – one for active recreation, one for passive recreation. He said the town should consider the potential merging of the existing R8 zone with the WDD to create a village zone. He discussed overlay zones such as the WRPD and historic district consideration in the village district. He suggested they could consider a maximum number of units for older single family home that may be split into multi-family.

An open space district for town-owned parks and state-owned parks will need to be added to use table.

Mr. Davis reviewed the proposed consolidation of the commercial districts, and the uses allowed in each. He recommended keep the WF-20 waterfront district as marine dependent only.

Joan Smith, 37 Island Circle, had concerns with keeping businesses from creeping into the residential area in a combined Mystic district.

Zell Steever, 81 Main Street, had concerns with losing commercial parts of communities, maybe should not be so rigid; diversity should be considered.

Mr. Davis reviewed the proposed industrial zones, and asked if the commission saw a need for a mixed use industrial.

Staff said they preferred the consolidated districts and the uses would need to be reviewed for the use tables.

3. Draft Text Amendments (MacKenzie)

Staff detailed the changes made based on the Commission's comments from their previous meeting and discussed including drive-through stacking spaces for certain uses like banks. She stated that the Town Attorney was comfortable with the language proposed.

MOTION: To schedule a public hearing for the Mackenzie text amendments for April 6, 2016.

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

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 8:30 p.m. made by Hudecek, seconded by Smith, so voted unanimously.

Susan Marquardt, Secretary
Zoning Commission

Prepared by Debra Gilot
Office Assistant III