

MINUTES
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
ZONING AND PLANNING COMMISSIONS
WATER RESOURCE PROTECTION DISTRICT REGULATION KICKOFF
SEPTEMBER 30, 2015 - 6:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 1

Chairperson Sutherland called the joint meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Zoning Commission members present: Sutherland, Sayer, Hudecek, Smith
Planning Commission members present: Sherrard, Kane, Steinfeld, Zod
Staff present: Reiner, Jones, Glemboski, Silsby, Attorney Carey, Consultant Nathan Kelly.

Chairperson Sutherland appointed Smith to sit for Marquardt.

II. COMMISSION WORKSHOP WITH LAND USE REGULATION UPDATE
CONSULTANTS (HORSLEY WITTEN GROUP) AND OPDS STAFF

Planning Director Reiner explained the importance of updating the zoning regulations. He noted that the Zoning Commission approves the regulations and the Planning Commission reviews any draft documents. Both commissions use them to review projects. He introduced Nathan Kelly from the Horsey Witten Group, the consultant who will be assisting with the update to the Water Resource Protection District (WRPD) portion of the regulations. Background information was given about Mr. Kelly's experience and expertise in this field. Reiner explained the purpose of updating the regulations is to make them more clearly understood and to be more in line with today's technology. He added that the zoning regulatory audit draft being prepared by another consultant, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB), may soon be ready to be reviewed.

Nathan Kelly gave background information about his company, which was founded in 1988 as a water resource firm. He spoke about the scope of the work, which includes the orientation phase, learning about Groton, and researching other communities that have an aquifer or water resource overlay district. Kelly noted Groton is unique in protecting a surface water reservoir. He referred to his meetings with Town staff and other organizations including Dicesare-Bentley Engineers, Groton Utilities, and Groton Open Space Association (GOSA).

Sutherland noted that half the reservoir's watershed is in Ledyard and asked whether they have a similar zone to protect water quality. Kelly will look into this further. Reiner noted that he could look into what Ledyard's long range plan is but pointed out that Groton does not have regulatory authority in Ledyard. Sutherland said that Groton should collaborate with Ledyard, since they are piping water to Groton.

Attorney Carey spoke about water supplies being regulated by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and the Department of Public Health, noting that an agreement exists to extend a pipe under the Thames River.

Reiner stated that Groton Utilities is being included in the process.

Kelly reviewed his preliminary findings. He mentioned that basic readability issues need to be clarified as well as issues with the mechanics of the regulations. The hope is to make the regulations congruent and more user-friendly. A tiered approach is being considered, as well as upgrading stormwater regulations and making other policy changes. He intends to summarize the findings from today's visit and layout policies that will need to be reviewed.

Sutherland noted the importance of discussing the special permit process. Sayer inquired about Groton's overlay district, benefits, and whether this is the best way to protect water quality. Hudecek expressed concern about the complexity of the application process. Information was given about current policies, buffer distances, and Groton Utilities. In regards to Zod's inquiry, Kelly will look into buffer sizes. Sutherland noted the importance of taking into consideration standards for regulating stormwater runoff. Kelly noted that concerns have been expressed to him about managing stormwater standards.

Steinfeld expressed concerns about stormwater runoff going into the reservoir from I-95, State owned land. Kelly stated that Groton Utilities is monitoring the surface water from State roads. He stated that elevated levels of salt have been found within the reservoir. Concerns were raised about using salt and its biggest threat to the community, relative to stormwater discharge. Stormwater utilities were discussed. Kelly stated that Groton Utilities monitors the entire WRPD watershed and submits a report to the State annually. An inquiry was made as to what the Council of Governments' (COG) involvement is. The importance of the water resource protection district was noted.

Reiner explained what he hopes to accomplish from tonight's input.

Sayer inquired about design performance standards, conditional approvals, and aquifer standards. Kelly stated that performance standards can be part of the zoning regulations and conditional approvals can be by right or approved by the Commission.

Sutherland thanked everyone for their input tonight. She asked whether the public would be able to give their input going forward, to which Kelly stated that is the plan. It was noted that other agencies should be included in this process, such as the Inland Wetlands Agency, and possibly other land trusts and interest groups. Sutherland noted the importance of considering the potential impacts on Long Island Sound. Steinfeld felt the shell fishing industry should also be considered.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Smith, seconded by Hudecek, so voted unanimously at 7:23 p.m.

Doug Smith, Acting Secretary
Zoning Commission

Prepared by Robin Silsby
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