

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
GROTON ZONING COMMISSION  
SEPTEMBER 19, 2007 - 7:00 P.M.  
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 1

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Brandt, Cady, French, Haviland, O’Neill, Marquardt  
Staff: Murphy, Davis, Cullen, Silsby  
Absent: Hudecek and Sutherland

Acting Chairman Haviland opened the meeting at 7:04 p.m. and appointed Marquardt to sit as a voting member for Hudecek. He welcomed new member Richard Cady. He read the Call of the Hearing and opened the public hearing at 7:05 p.m.

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Special Permit #298, RU-20 zone. Proposal to build 211 active senior housing units on 104.84 acres on the northerly side of Fort Hill Road and the westerly side of Flanders Road. Review is per Section 7.1- 45 + 8.3 of Groton Zoning Regulations. (Hawthorne Development Partners, LLC/applicant) PIN#’s 260805194125, 260805181161, 260917105068, 260918209459, 260917109798, 260806295974, 260805198421, 260805292763.

Attorney Harry Heller of the Law Firm of Heller, Heller & McCoy, of Uncasville, represented the applicant Hawthorne Development Partners, LLC. The proposal is to build 211 active senior housing units on 104.84 acres on the northerly side of Fort Hill Road and the westerly side of Flanders Road; located in the RU-20 zone. He distributed an agenda, introduced project team members, and gave a presentation (hard copy submitted), which included the overall architectural design of the project, traffic report, market analysis, ecological report, and architectural elevations. He referred to sections of the zoning regulations, comparing them with his proposals, and spoke about the special permit process and the criteria that will be used for the Commission’s consideration. He spoke of storm water management and referred to the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), egresses and ingresses, density, and wetlands. He spoke about parcel allowances, wooded buffers, setbacks, and distance separation. Parking, handicapped accessibility, utilities, the Flanders Road Shed area, and building heights were noted. He spoke of outdoor amenities such as a trail system and tennis courts. Discussion followed about secondary sales, traffic congestion, mail delivery, open space, and the different types of units available. He gave details about the “match pair analysis”.

Staff gave details about the Planning Commission’s responsibilities.

Robert Silverstein, Certified General Appraiser for Miner & Silverstein Appraisal Company in New London, presented a report dated April 20, 2007. He spoke about the impact to the market values of neighboring properties caused by the development of a proposed age-restricted residential development and spoke about the comparables used in this report. It was determined that there is no evidence that the values of residential properties in the immediate area of Mystic Woods will be adversely affected by the

proposed land use. It was found that the sales of homes located in close proximity to similar neighborhoods would have no adverse impact on value or marketability. It was also determined that local residential traffic from this age-restricted development would not affect neighborhood values. Discussion followed about the “matched-pair” analysis and the current real estate market.

Jim Bubaris of Bubaris Traffic Associates located in Cheshire, CT. explained the specifics of a traffic study dated 3/11/07 and an updated traffic study dated 9/12/07, which was based on traffic volume measured in July 2007. He spoke about the specific study areas, site drives, trip generation, demographics, accident experience, and travel patterns in the area. Accident experience shows there is currently no problem. He stated that the level of service is quite good projected out to 2010. He spoke about both project entrances, which includes one emergency ingress only, and explained why another lane could not be provided at the Fort Hill exit. This exit will be a right-turn only out. Sight-lines and possible traffic concerns were discussed. He does not feel that this project will reduce levels of service or create safety hazards.

The meeting recessed at 9:10 p.m. and reconvened at 9:18p.m.

Andrew Bevalocka, with the project engineering firm of Diversified Technologies spoke about the environmental analysis and the progression of the project. He spoke about site access, wetland areas, and the functioning and potential service of utilities. He referred to water service and tying loops together in order to gain more efficient functioning. He spoke about design options, storm water issues, guidelines, raingards, and deep catch basins.

George Logan of REMA Ecological Services located in Manchester, CT. spoke about inland wetlands issues and referred to a document dated 3/21/2007. He spoke about the Fort Hill Brook, natural resource surveys, vernal pool habitats of Wetland Area 11, and the protection of ground and surface water. He explained about nitrogen removal and gave a description of proposed conditions. He referred to storm water management basins, an Invasive Plant Species Management Plan, and Landscaping and Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPM), and conservation easements. He explained that all components of the eco system that have the highest quality have been avoided and protected.

Attorney Heller referred to the evolution that occurred as a result of the discussion of storm water issues and the public’s participation in the wetland process. He referred to nitrogen levels in Mumford Cove and spoke about submerged gravel wetlands. He spoke of the importance of the environmental compatibility and explained how this project ties into the goals of the POCD.

A discussion followed regarding storm water management, rainfall, and a comprehensive sediment control plan. It was noted that an independent erosion manager would be on site daily during the construction and will report to staff weekly.

Staff gave an overview of the sedimentation management regulation being the responsibility of the Planning Commission and Inland Wetlands Agency. Details about the special permit process, the environmental analysis, the wetlands permit, and the POCD were given. Staff noted that the forthcoming Flanders Road Utility Committee Report should be factored into the analysis.

Staff gave a report of all the submittals that have been received by the Planning Department such as the public offering statement, the original application, and the traffic evaluation, just to name a few. The required mailings have been checked and completed by staff. All these documents are on file in the Planning Department.

Staff referred to the environmental efforts and the Council adopted ordinance related to funding. Reports will be provided when available. It was noted that the Flanders Road Utility Committee is discussing the sewer line. How this would benefit the Town was explained. Continuing the public hearing was suggested in order for more significant recommendations to be determined.

Acting Chairman Haviland asked for public comment in favor or against.

Tom Morris, 20 Affeldt Dr. has lived with low density living for 46 years and does not want to deal with increased traffic. He was upset that a Senior Center Supervisor was approached about this project. He referred to a member on the Inland Wetland Agency who has mixed emotions about this project. Mr. Morris believes that this development should be denied.

Joan Smith, 58 Mohegan Rd., a member of GOSA, read into the record a letter from GOSA's Attorney Peter Cooper. Attorney Cooper recommended that the application for this development be withdrawn in order to make the necessary revisions, and then be resubmitted for review. He referred to condition #17 of the Inland Wetlands Agency's permit granted on 9/14/07, which relates to limiting construction on steep slopes. He believes that the conditions from the Inland Wetland Agency should have been considered before submitting a formal application and that a revision to the application should be made.

Jim Furlong, 57 Fishtown Ln., a member of GOSA, agreed with Mrs. Smith's statement. He spoke about density issues and the current regulations relating to the RU zone and the minimum amount of square footage allowed with single family housing. He explained why he believes that not all this land is buildable under current regulations. He thinks that compact development does have its advantages and welcomes a conservation easement but would like to see more in favor of concentrated development. Too many units are being proposed and he feels that the Commission should exercise discretion relating to density being too dense.

Lloyd Hutchins, 21 Stonecrest Rd., lives east of the proposed development site. He gave his professional engineering background, noting that he has a Masters Degree in mechanical engineering and was a professional Registered Engineer in New Jersey for over 30 years. He referred to the Inland Wetlands Agency and the impacts of this development. He spoke about the proposed hillside location, which may require high maintenance. He referred to the "Slope Stability Analysis" and the potential for instability of downhill slopes. He spoke about safety issues and consultant's reports. Other issues brought up were sight lines, the traffic study, and the predominant entrance to the proposed development. Concerns about density were raised.

Patricia Olivier, 75 Hemlock Rd., at Hillcrest Estates referred to the canvassing of neighborhoods. She spoke about her concerns with wetlands and the need to reduce the number of proposed units in the RU-20 zone. She explained how these houses will impact her property, for which there are no buffers. She spoke of walking trails, open space, traffic, and age restrictions. She explained why she doesn't understand how this proposed

development compares to the developments of StoneRidge or Mystic Way. She spoke about the sewer benefits to the Town and Flanders Road. She is not against the development of active senior housing but is concerned about the protection of the environment and buffers. She encouraged the Commission to look long and hard at density issues.

Jim Zamzes, 248 Fort Hill Rd. spoke against this project. He referred to purchasing his property 10 years ago because of the privacy factor which will be taken away if this project is built. He believes his property will devaluate. He urged the Commission to look at this very carefully.

Attorney Heller explained in detail about GOSA's concerns regarding wetland approval and the special permit and site plan approval process, indicating that there is no procedural reason to withdraw the application.

Staff explained about the process for wetland applications and noted that the Inland Wetlands Agency granted a permit with conditions last week. Staff referred to sewer lines and density.

Staff noted that wetland action may modify the plan but that is typical and does not create a procedural defect.

There were no further comments at this time.

It was determined that a special meeting to reconvene the public hearing would take place on Monday October 15, 2007.

### III. ADJOURNMENT

With a consensus by the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 10:48 p.m.

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Richard Haviland, Secretary  
Zoning Commission

Prepared by Robin M. Silsby, Office Assistant II