

PLANNING COMMISSION
JUNE 14, 2005 – 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Roper, Kane (7:05 p.m.), Steinfeld, Pritchard, and Munn

Staff: Discordia, Goodrich, Glemboski, and Murphy

Acting Chairman Steinfeld opened with roll call at 7:02 p.m.

Acting Chairman Steinfeld appointed alternate Kane to sit for Sherrard.

Acting Chairman Steinfeld opened the public hearings at 7:45 p.m.

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Acting Chairman Steinfeld read an opening statement describing the public hearing procedures and guidelines.

1. Petri Subdivision, 65 Pequot Avenue (2 lots)

Roper read the legal ad for the public hearing.

Michael Scanlon, DiCesare-Bentley Engineers, 100 Fort Hill Road represented the applicant, Steen Petri. The project is a two-lot residential subdivision with road frontage on Pequot Avenue and Allyn Street. All access is from Pequot Avenue. There is a waiver request for Section 5.4(1) Building Permits. The applicant is requesting to omit a reservation of open space and to omit or reduce the sidewalk requirements. The parcel is approximately 2.5 acres and has one existing residence. The existing home will be on approximately ½ an acre and the other 2 acres will be for the proposed new lot. The applicant is proposing a shared driveway to serve both lots. The existing driveway will be abandoned and a new driveway built on the south side of the property. Both houses will be served by public water and sewer and all utilities will be underground. The application has received a wetlands permit.

Mr. Scanlon reviewed the wetlands and clearing limitations on the new lot. Mr. Scanlon stated that there are 20-foot arborvitae along the back of the existing property and they would remain to provide a buffer between the two lots. Mr. Scanlon stated that Pequot Avenue doesn't have any sidewalks, therefore they are not proposing sidewalks on Pequot Avenue. The sidewalks along Allyn Street terminate at this property. The site has 550 feet of frontage along Allyn Street and 150 feet of frontage on Pequot Avenue. The applicant is requesting that he not be required to construct 550 feet of sidewalks along Allyn Street.

Staff stated that a unique aspect of this subdivision is that there is only a small area of the proposed new lot that can be built upon due to wetland constraints. Staff stated there are no outstanding issues with the project. Staff reviewed the sidewalk issues. The applicant has asked that if the Commission is going to require a sidewalk that it be 150 feet on the east side of Allyn Street instead of Pequot Avenue as Pequot does not have any sidewalks. Staff stated that sidewalks are recommended on Allyn Street in the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Munn stated that he is in favor of providing the full 550 feet of sidewalks on the west side of Allyn Street.

Kane stated that he was in favor of building a sidewalk along the west side of Allyn Street.

Mr. Scanlon asked the Commission if they would consider requiring only 150 feet of sidewalk, which is equal to the frontage on Pequot Avenue, be constructed.

Roper asked if this home could be a duplex. Staff stated no, it is an RS zone. Roper stated that he felt 150 feet of sidewalk is reasonable and he would like to see it on the west side of Allyn Street.

Pritchard asked if there were any stone walls on this property. Mr. Scanlon stated that there is only a wooden fence.

The Commission asked where the 50-foot buffer for wetlands was and Mr. Scanlon pointed it out on the plan.

Acting Chairman Steinfeld asked if there was an existing garage on lot 1. Mr. Scanlon stated there is an existing garage. The applicant is proposing to reverse the garage doors to accommodate the new driveway location.

Mr. Scanlon stated the plans that have been submitted to the Commission show sidewalks on the east and west sides of Allyn Street. Acting Chairman Steinfeld stated that he recommends a 5-foot wide sidewalk and feels that 150 feet is too few. He recommended 200 to 250 feet. General discussion followed on potential future development in the area that could provide additional sidewalk connections.

Acting Chairman Steinfeld opened the hearing for public comments.

Steen Petri, the applicant for this subdivision, asked that the Commission consider not requiring them to put a sidewalk on Allyn Street, as this is only a 2-lot subdivision.

MOTION: To close the public hearing for Petri Subdivision, 65 Pequot Avenue (2 lots)

Motion made by Roper, seconded by Pritchard, so voted unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES of May 24, 2005 and May 31, 2005 Special Meeting

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the May 24, 2005, Planning Commission meeting with the following modifications:

1. Page 1, under PUBLIC HEARINGS, 1st paragraph, 1st sentence, delete “. Mr. Scanlon” and insert “;”.
2. Page 1, under PUBLIC HEARINGS, 4th paragraph, 4th sentence, replace “regulations” with “regulation”.
3. Page 2, 3rd paragraph, delete “open,”.
4. Page 2, 7th paragraph, 3rd sentence, replace “loosing” with “losing”.
5. Page 5, 3., under MOTION, 2nd sentence, delete “also”.

Motion made by Roper, seconded by Pritchard, so voted unanimously.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the May 31, 2005, Special Planning Commission meeting.

Motion made by Roper, seconded by Pritchard, so voted unanimously.

IV. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Staff stated they received 3 letters for the Terra Firma site plan applications. The applicant has withdrawn the site plan application for lot #10 and requested a 65-day extension for lots 4 and 11 of the Leonard Drive Subdivision.

MOTION: To add Terra Firma, Leonard Drive Lots 4, 10 and 11 to the agenda as item 2. under VI. SITE PLANS.

Motion made by Pritchard, seconded by Roper, so voted unanimously.

Staff stated they received a request for a bond release for the Lestertown Heights Subdivision, Lestertown Road.

MOTION: To add Lestertown Heights Subdivision, 167 Lestertown Road to the agenda as 5. under V. SUBDIVISIONS.

Motion made by Roper, seconded by Pritchard, so voted unanimously.

Acting Chairman Steinford asked if the public had any communications and there were none.

V. SUBDIVISIONS

1. Petri Subdivision, 65 Pequot Avenue (2 lots)

MOTION: To approve a waiver of section 5.4(1) for Petri Subdivision to permit issuance of a building permit prior to completion of public improvements provided all improvements are completed prior to issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy for Lot 2. The Commission notes that this meets 1.10 of the Subdivision Regulations.

Motion made by Pritchard, seconded by Roper, so voted unanimously.

MOTION: To approve the Petri Subdivision, 65 Pequot Avenue, with the following modifications:

1. A 5-foot wide concrete sidewalk shall be installed along the western side of Allyn Street for a length of 150 linear feet, which is equivalent to the property's frontage on Pequot Avenue and the plan modified to reflect this location.
2. Technical items raised by staff shall be addressed.

Motion made by Pritchard, seconded by Roper, so voted unanimously.

2. Hickey Subdivision, 287 Briar Hill Road (5 lots) – Schedule a Public Hearing

A public hearing was scheduled for Hickey Subdivision, 287 Briar Hill Road (5 lots) for July 12, 2005.

3. O & C Subdivision, 120 Godfrey Road (4 lots) – Schedule a Public Hearing

A public hearing was scheduled for O & C Subdivision, 120 Godfrey Road (4 lots) for June 28, 2005.

4. Common Grounds Subdivision, 236 Pumpkin Hill Road (3 lots) – Schedule a Public Hearing

A public hearing was scheduled for Common Grounds Subdivision, 236 Pumpkin Hill Road (3 lots) for July 12, 2005.

4. Lestertown Heights Subdivision, 167 Lestertown Road – Maintenance Bond Release.

Staff stated that the Department of Public Works has agreed to the release of the maintenance bond for Lestertown Heights Subdivision and recommend the balance of \$746.00 be released.

MOTION: To release the maintenance bond of \$746.00 for Lestertown Heights Subdivision, 167 Lestertown Road.

Motion made by Roper, seconded by Pritchard, so voted unanimously.

VI. SITE PLANS

1. Watrous, 212 ½ Fort Hill Road

Staff stated that this site plan is not ready for a decision from the Commission, but the applicant would like to review some outstanding issues before finalizing the plans. The applicant is proposing a contractor's storage and equipment building. Staff stated that in this residential zone it is an allowed but conditional use. Staff stated this building would be on it's own lot and not an accessory structure. Staff reviewed access issues. Staff has asked him to move the driveway so that it does not cross property owned by other people. The applicant wanted to know how the Commission would feel about reducing the 25-foot buffer on one side of the lot due to building setbacks and wetlands issues.

Staff stated the Department of Public Works has no comment on the application. The Fire Marshal stated that the driveway is fine for emergency access. The applicant stated the driveway is paved part of the way. It starts off at 24 feet wide and narrows to 13 feet wide. The garage will be 28 x 34 feet.

Acting Chairman Steinfeld asked if the Town has any say to improve that driveway. Staff stated there is a note on the plans for the 1980 subdivision regarding making part of this a Town road if any more subdivisions/homes were added.

Pritchard asked if there would be a lot of traffic during the day and the applicant stated no that it would be more for materials storage such as doors, windows, etc.

Roper supported moving the driveway and adding additional landscaped screening along the frontage.

Mr. Watrous reviewed the ownership of the right of way and legal documents from his attorney. Acting Chairman Steinfeld asked if this structure would be one level. Mr. Watrous stated it would have a loft above it.

Mr. Watrous suggested changing the building drawings to look more like a barn to fit in with the residential zone. Kane asked if there would be any outside lights. Mr. Watrous stated no.

Munn asked if there were any materials that would pose a threat to the nearby brook. Mr. Watrous stated there wouldn't be any plumbing or hazardous materials, just tools and building materials. Mr. Watrous stated that there was only going to be electrical power to the building, no water or sewer.

Acting Chairman Steinford asked about requiring paving for the rest of the driveway. Staff stated that the Fire Marshal thought the driveway allows adequate emergency access, therefore staff didn't feel the need to recommend any improvements to the driveway.

The Commission was concerned that there was potential for this building to become a workshop, and without sanitary facilities, that could pose a safety problem. Staff will confirm the uses for the building.

2. Terra Firma Lots 4 and 11 site plan applications, Leonard Drive Subdivision – Requesting a 65-day extension for rendering a decision on the site plans.

MOTION: To approve a 65-day extension for Terra Firma Lots 4 and 11 site plan applications, Leonard Drive Subdivision.

Moved by Roper, seconded by Pritchard, so voted unanimously.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

1. Review of procedures for seating alternate members.

Staff talked with the Town Attorney regarding case law that impacts the procedure for seating alternates on the Commission. Staff stated that they would like to bring in the Town Attorney to discuss these issues.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Report of Commission

Roper stated there was a Mystic Cooperative Task Group meeting on Monday, June 20, 2005 at 8 a.m. at the Chamber of Commerce.

Roper submitted an article, "Sizing up Downtown", to be reviewed by staff.

Munn attended the panel discussion hosted by the Ledyard Town Council regarding the use of Groton Utilities property. Al Dion, representing Groton Utilities, stated that there are more regulations pertaining to access to the public watersheds now. Munn stated that there is no follow-up meeting scheduled.

Acting Chairman Steinford stated that the construction at Stop & Shop looks hazardous as the shopping carts are parked between the two entrances. Staff stated they would inspect the site.

Acting Chairman Steinford noticed that there is an increase in storage "pods" on property. He asked if these are temporary and do we need to examine our regulations regarding these storage sheds. Discussion continued on appropriate regulations and duration for storage "pods" on residential property.

2. Town initiated Subdivision Regulation Amendment to Section 4.9 – Schedule a Public Hearing

A public hearing was scheduled for Subdivision Regulation Amendment to Section 4.9 for August 9, 2005.

Motion made by Pritchard, seconded by Roper, so voted unanimously.

3. Referral from City of New London for June 29, 2005 Public Hearing

Staff reviewed the referral. It is to accommodate the Learn Marine Science Magnet School.

The Planning Commission is concerned with the conversion or development of open space, especially waterfront parcels. General discussion followed. Staff will prepare a letter of response.

4. Referral from City of Groton for June 21, 2005 Public Hearing

Staff reviewed the referral.

The Planning Commission had no comment.

IX. REPORT OF CHAIRMAN - None

X. REPORT OF STAFF

Staff and the Commission congratulated Commission member Munn for being appointed as a regular member of the Planning Commission.

There will be site walks with the Inland Wetlands Agency for the O & C Subdivision and the Common Ground Subdivision on Monday, June 20th starting at 4:30 p.m. They will meet at 120 Godfrey Road and meet at 5 p.m. at Pumpkin Hill Road.

The City of Groton budget was approved last week and they adopted the Mayor's proposal that included funding for a full time planner. Staff stated that they weren't sure how long it would be before the City would hire a new planner.

The Economic Strategic Plan meeting was cancelled and rescheduled for August.

Staff stated that Odd Fellows Home has shown interest in the Burrows/Copp property.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 10:03 p.m. made by Pritchard, seconded by Roper, so voted unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Roper