

PLANNING COMMISSION
JANUARY 24, 2006
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL

Regular members present: Munn, Pritchard, Roper, Sherrard, Steinfeld
Alternate members present: Kane (arrived at 8:46 p.m.)
Staff present: Glemboski, Goodrich, Murphy, Stanowicz

Chairman Sherrard opened the meeting with roll call at 7:03 p.m.

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Subdivision Regulation Amendment – Section 3.4 – Digital Data

Chairman Sherrard opened the public hearing at 7:50 p.m., and announced that the public hearing procedures are available for reading.

Steinfeld read the legal ad.

Staff provided the Commission with background for this amendment. This will require digital data submittals of all approved subdivisions at the time the plans are recorded. The digital data is not intended to replace the paper subdivision plans but will allow the subdivision spacial data to be integrated into land records digitally rather than manually.

Brett Flodine, Town of Groton IT Department GIS Coordinator, gave a PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Flodine used the digital data for a subdivision plan provided by DiCesare-Bentley Engineers as an example of how the Town will use the data to update the Town's system including property boundaries, road center lines and drainage. Mr. Flodine said that using the digital data submittals will save the Town a significant number of man hours. The work the IT staff puts into entering the data for a 50 lot subdivision can be reduced from 1½ weeks to 2 days. Many layers of data will be included and the IT Department will have the option to choose what information they want to use. A list of examples of data layers was distributed to Commission members.

Staff reviewed the language that would exempt applicants who could not provide data in digital format.

Staff read the Town Attorney's response to the referral, which suggested minor formatting changes, and submitted a revised regulation amendment it proposed that incorporated the Town Attorney's comments into the record.

Munn stated that it is not clear that digital data submission is an option. Staff explained that it is a requirement for the applicant unless they are exempt as noted in the amendment. Munn agreed with the revised amendment as recommended by the Town Attorney. He inquired if the amendment should indicate the minimum amount of information that must be included in the data. Staff explained that it will be less burdensome for the engineers if they can just submit what they have prepared. Munn recommended that the title of 3.4(2) be changed to include the phrase, “If in digital format’. Staff said they would prefer to leave the language as it is, so there is no question that the applicant must provide the digital data as requested.

Kane asked if digital data would replace the paper plans some day. Staff responded that the data submitted digitally is not the official record. The mylars filed in the Town Clerk’s office are the official record. The digital data allows the Town to input the information into the GIS system earlier and easier. Kane asked if the developer does most of this work already, as part of his preparation of the plans. Staff answered yes.

Steinford asked how much labor savings is involved for the IT Department or Planning Department if digital data is submitted. Mr. Flodine said it is dependent on the number of lots; the larger the subdivision, the more savings there will be. A larger subdivision like Great Brook could result in savings of about one week in man-hours.

Roper asked who will check the accuracy of the digital data submitted. Staff stated that the planning technician will have to check the data.

Roper asked if there was a discrepancy between the Town data and the submitted data, which would take precedence. Mr. Flodine stated the A-2 survey is most accurate.

Pritchard stated that the amendment sounds like a resolution. Pritchard feels that the requirement is an advantage to the Town only and is just more of a burden to the developer.

Pritchard said 3.4(1) should be eliminated, and 3.4-2(c) should state the Town can accept an earlier version. Mr. Flodine said the wording is intended to allow the engineer to use any version. Pritchard would like the amendment to state what the mandatory requirements for the digital data are.

Sherrard asked how the developers know what features to provide to the Town. Mr. Flodine responded that they would provide all the plan data, but only certain layers are required. This makes it easier for the engineer to comply with the regulation.

Sherrard asked if this amendment was presented to any developers to get their opinion. Staff answered that it was not but engineers like DiCesare-Bentley provide this information without a problem. Staff stated that Ledyard already requires this, and Manchester charges the developer \$25 if it is not submitted.

MOTION: To close the Subdivision Regulation Amendment public hearing.

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

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF January 10, 2006

MOTION: To table approval of the minutes of January 10, 2006.

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

IV. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Roper attended the Thames River Basin Partnership meeting and handed out the information from the meeting.

Pritchard attended the Economic Development Strategic Plan presentation on January 19, 2006.

Sherrard said he was called by Greg Stone, an editor for “The Day” newspaper, and asked about the Allyn - Bohlander building.

V. SUBDIVISIONS

1. Subdivision Regulation Amendment – Section 3.4 – Digital Data

Discussion ensued on the proposed amendment to the regulation. Pritchard stated he was concerned with the specificity of the submittal requirements.

MOTION: To modify and adopt the proposed amendments to Section 3 – “Specifications for Documents to be Submitted” to add a new Section 3.4 – Digital Data for All Subdivisions, as modified in the revised amendment dated January 24, 2006.

Motion made by Steinford, seconded by Roper.

MOTION: To amend the amendment to change the title to “Requirements for Subdivision Data Submitted Digitally”.

Motion made by Munn, seconded by Roper.

Pritchard stated he was opposed to the amendment as this is a requirement.

Motion to amend defeated, 1 – 4 (Steinfeld, Sherrard, Roper, Pritchard)

MAIN MOTION: 4 – 0 – 1, 1 abstention (Munn abstained).

2. Mt. Kineo Subdivision, Route 1

MOTION: To reduce the performance bond held for Mt. Kineo Subdivision by \$19,690 to \$12,370.

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

3. Downes Patterson Subdivision (a.k.a. Mystic Highlands), Ledgeland Drive

Staff stated that Ledgeland Drive, Waterhouse Lane, Bolles Lane, the public improvements and the open space and recreation areas are ready for acceptance. Parks & Recreation and Public Works agree that these improvements are ready for acceptance. The Traffic Authority has also approved the acceptance.

Steinfeld asked if all the sidewalk extensions were complete. Staff explained they were.

MOTION: To accept a portion of Ledgeland Drive, Waterhouse Lane, Bolles Lane, public improvements and open space from Downes Patterson Subdivision (a.k.a. Mystic Highlands).

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

4. Crosswinds Subdivision, Groton Long Point Road

Staff explained Crosswinds is a phased development. Phases I and II have been accepted. Phase IV has some ponding issues that need to be addressed before the Town can accept.

MOTION: To accept a portion of Leeward Lane and Windrose Drive (Phase III) and Talewinds Lane (Phase V).

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

VI. SITE PLANS

1. Atkinson Residence, 1184 River Road (CAM)

David Atkinson, owner of property at 1184 River Road, presented his application to build a single family home on his River Road property. There

previously was a log cabin built on the property in early 1960's. The cabin has been removed; the foundation is still there but will be removed.

There is an existing cesspool on the property, which will be removed and a new septic system installed. There will be less than ½ acre of land disturbed.

Staff explained that Mr. Atkinson received a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals for a 20' rear yard setback and to increase lot coverage from 10% to 12.5%. Mr. Atkinson will be building the new home within 100 ft. of a coastal resource, which is the reason for the CAM application. There will be no additional disturbance of the site than what already exists. Erosion control will be installed. The existing stone walls will be maintained. The driveway will remain gravel.

Pritchard asked if there is any impact from runoff due to the larger house. Staff said there was nothing significant.

Roper asked about the removal of trees. Atkinson said he removed only the pines that were not doing well, and a large oak draping over the house.

Munn asked if an erosion and sediment control plan was necessary. Staff explained that because of the minimal amount of disturbance there is no official erosion control plan required.

Sherrard asked if we have any requirement to notify Stonington since it is a CAM. Staff said that notification was sent to the Town Clerk in Stonington.

MOTION: To approve the Coastal Area Management application for the Atkinson Residence, 1184 River Road, because, it is consistent with all applicable coastal policies and includes all reasonable measures to mitigate adverse impacts and causes no unacceptable adverse impacts.

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

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Report of Commission

Roper attended the Economic Development Strategic Plan Meeting. He said it was well attended and well received by the attendants.

Munn shared an announcement of a Zoning Seminar. Staff will review it to see if it would be useful for the Commission.

2. ZBA Referrals for January 25, 2006 & February 8, 2006 Public Hearings

- a. ZBA #05-35 – Apple Tree Lane (John & Elizabeth Wilson, Owner/Robert Andrew, Applicant)

Staff explained the referral. The Commission had no comment.

- b. ZBA #06-01 – 1056 & 1064 Poquonnock Road (DiCesare-Bentley Engineers, Inc., Applicant's Agent/JJMA Realty, LLC, Owner)

Staff explained the referral. The Commission had the following comment:

The Planning Commission feels that due to the existing conditions at the site, the location of the stacking lane within the front yard would create a situation whereby there is no separation of internal traffic and the stacking lane as required by Section 7.1-36 E of the Zoning Regulations.

The Planning Commission feels that due to the existing conditions at the site, the location of the stacking lane within the front yard does not minimize traffic congestion and does not promote pedestrian safety as required in Section 7.1-36 G. The Planning Commission recommends locating the stacking lane on the site where there is minimal potential for: interfering with internal traffic patterns; blocking onsite parking areas; making it possible for stacked traffic to spill out onto Poquonnock Road, and for the stacking lanes and through traffic to impede pedestrian access within and to the site.

The Planning Commission notes that if the variance to Section 7.2-3 (J) is granted, there will be no provision for parking for employees of the restaurant.

Accordingly, the Planning Commission feels that public health and safety will be adversely impacted by both variances and strongly recommends denial of both.

- c. ZBA #06-02 – 2 Essex Street (Paul Fox, Owner/Robert Mercer, Applicant).

Staff explained the referral. The Commission had no comment.

3. Inland Wetland Agency Referrals for February 8, 2006 Public Hearing

- a. IWA #05-26 - Kolnaski Elementary School

Staff explained the referral. The Commission has no comment.

4. Discussion of Economic Development Strategic Plan

Munn updated the Commission on the Economic Development Strategic Plan. The plan centers on a number of goals and recommendations. Included are a

series of projects that will contribute to Groton's economic development. The main focus is on downtown redevelopment. The meeting on January 19, 2006 was well attended. There were 4 RTM members, 2 Town Councilors, 3 Planning Commission members, representatives from Groton Utilities, and 18 residents in the audience. The comments were very favorable, especially on the downtown recommendations. Only one negative comment was received by email later that the downtown area shouldn't be emphasized as much as it will not bring economic development into the area.

The Committee has another meeting in February and on March 30th there will be a public hearing on the plan.

Staff noted that the draft of the Economic Development Strategic Plan is going to be put on the website. The PowerPoint presentation is also being edited and put on the website. Gladys Alcedo, a reporter for The Day, will be doing an article on the plan.

Sherrard asked that a line item be added to the February 14th meeting agenda under Old Business so the Commission can collectively offer some comments on the plan before the Steering Committee meets again on February 23rd.

VIII. REPORT OF CHAIRMAN

Sherrard reported that there was not a Committee of Chairpersons Meeting. The Town Manager will work with the Mayor to set up a 2006 meeting schedule.

IX. REPORT OF STAFF

Staff said the issue of fees in lieu of open space was discussed at the last meeting. The Planning Department's approach is to accept 10% of the land or 10% of the value of the land. If the Town takes only 3% in land, they should take the difference in a fee.

Pritchard asked if the fee is based on the additional value of the second lot. Staff said it is 10% of the fair market value of the entire parcel less improvements or buildings on the land before the division.

Staff reviewed the in-house tracking system for requirements such as sidewalk agreements. The Planning Department is going through the files manually to find any that need to be reviewed or updated. In the future the Hansen system will be utilized.

Steinford commented on the 99 Restaurant sidewalks. Staff said we are in discussion with them, and a modification will be forthcoming.

Staff said there have been several CIP meetings with the Public Works staff and Education staff and staff hopes to have the document ready by the end of January. The Commission may want to schedule a special meeting in February to discuss the CIP.

Staff distributed a questionnaire from SCCOG pertaining to the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development. Staff asked the Commission members to give their comments to staff prior to the next meeting on February 14th so staff can compile the responses.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 9:54 p.m. made by Steinford, seconded by Munn, so voted unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Margil Steinford