

PLANNING COMMISSION
MAY 23, 2006 – 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL

Regular members present: Munn, Pritchard, Roper, Sherrard, Steinfeld
Alternate members present: Fitzgerald, Kane
Staff present: Cullen, Glemboski, Goodrich, Murphy, Stanowicz

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

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Colonel Ledyard Estates, 0 Colonel Ledyard Highway

Chairman Sherrard opened the public hearing at 8:13 p.m.

Paul Hallisey, Civil Engineer with Hallisey Pearson & Cassidy, represented the owners, Fairway Estates Ltd. Mr. Hallisey reviewed the proposed 15 – lot open space subdivision. Due to the slope, the driveways for Lots 1, 2 and 3 have been reconfigured to include a level area in front of the proposed garages. Mr. Hallisey has been in contact with the neighbors at the intersection of Quakertown Road and Colonel Ledyard Highway to inform them of the proposed intersection reconfiguration.

Mr. Hallisey said there are no stone walls on the site, only boulder outcroppings. Conceptual elevations of the proposed houses have been provided to staff, including three possible designs to meet regulations.

The grading rights have been received from the three adjacent neighbors on Deerfield Ridge. The Town Parks & Recreation Department submitted their specifications for the playground equipment, surface and installation. The Old Mystic Fire Marshal has approved the plan. The Inland Wetland Agency has approved the plan. The Town Manager has granted permission for grading rights on Town-owned property. The Town Manager's letter dated May 16, 2006 was read into the file. The Town Traffic Authority has presented three requests for the new reconfigured intersection with Quakertown Road, which were just received today by the applicant. The applicant will grant an extension to the next meeting, and leave the public hearing open for the purpose of reviewing the Traffic Authority's recommendations.

Pritchard asked for a detailed description of the 4 ft. sidewalk on the southern end of Colonel Ledyard Highway. Staff showed the grading and the location of the guardrail, behind the sidewalk. Pritchard expressed concern for pedestrian safety. He would prefer the guardrail be placed between the sidewalk and the traffic. Steinfeld concurred that he would like some protection in place for pedestrians at that sidewalk area. Staff said they would investigate the appropriate possible solutions to the safety concern at this location. The slope of the sidewalk and drainage of the sidewalk were discussed.

The sidewalk and the Quakertown Road intersection are the outstanding issues.

There were no comments from the public.

MOTION: To accept the applicant's extension to June 13, 2006 and continue the public hearing to June 13, 2006.

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

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES of May 9, 2006.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of May 9, 2006 as amended.

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

IV. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Roper said there will be two public meetings for public input on the update to the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development. The first will be on Monday, June 5, 7:00 p.m. at the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments office in Norwich, and on Thursday, June 15, 7:00 p.m. at the Groton Town Hall Annex.

Staff said the Planning Department received notice of the Woodlands' pending certificate from the State Traffic Commission.

Additional information regarding the UConn discharge permit renewal has been received for the Commission to review. Sherrard stated that he received another notification of a permit renewal for Electric Boat.

Staff asked the Commission to add two new referrals to the agenda. They are both Special Permits submitted to the Zoning Commission for the June 7th meeting. Special Permit #288 is for Girard Nissan Collision Care Center, 425 Gold Star Highway. Special Permit #289 is for Central Hall, 18-22 West Main Street.

MOTION: To add two new referrals to the Planning Commission agenda, May 23, 2006.

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

V. SUBDIVISIONS

1. Colonel Ledyard Estates, 0 Colonel Ledyard Highway (15 lots)

The public hearing was continued to June 13, 2006.

2. Maple Glen Subdivision, Pleasant Valley Road North, Gungywamp Road & Briar Hill Road (14 lots)

A public hearing for Maple Glen Subdivision, Pleasant Valley Road North, Gungywamp Road & Briar Hill Road was set for June 27, 2006.

VI. SITE PLANS

1. Center Groton Booster Pump Station, Candlewood Road at Route 117

Ray Valentini and Karl Acimovic from the City of Groton Utilities presented their application to build a new booster pump station at Candlewood Road and Route 117. The new building would be a one story, 14 ft. x 40 ft. prefabricated building. The existing water lines will tie to the building and be pumped to the Ledyard border. The building will be windowless with a board and batten exterior. The station will be unmanned.

Staff said this parcel was given to Groton Utilities by the State of Connecticut. It is an odd shaped lot surrounded by stone walls. The pump station will boost the water pressure in this area and up Route 117. Some of the land is used and maintained by the neighboring property. The station will create little disturbance to the area. A substantial existing lilac buffer will be kept. This site is located in the Historic District. A Certificate of Appropriateness was received from the Historic District Commission. The building is intended to look like a barn, as requested by the HDC, to fit into the area. The Zoning Official requested one parking space large enough for a truck. The parking space and access driveway will be gravel, as this is in the WRPD area.

Pritchard asked if there is access for maintenance of pumps. Mr. Valentini said the pumps are small, and no special trucks will be needed.

Roper asked about sidewalks. Mr. Valentini said frontage sidewalks will be installed along all frontages. Roper asked if there will be any security at the building. Mr. Valentini said the alarms are radio controlled. There will be no signage. Roper asked if there will be any problem with the neighbors using that property. Mr. Valentini said they will continue to allow the neighbor to use the property.

Steinford asked if the emergency generator is diesel and the fuel tank will be contained. Mr. Valentini said the generator is diesel and the fuel tank will be double walled with an alarm. Munn asked what area the pump station will serve. Mr. Valentini said the station will serve the area of Route 184 to Candlewood and north up Route 117 to Ledyard. Future needs were taken into consideration when designing the system and the building. They will be able to expand up to Rogers Road and Flanders Road. The Utilities' Master Plan shows connections to Flanders Road and Rogers Road.

Steinford asked if it was the intent of the Utilities that this will become the Ledyard water line connection? Mr. Valentini said yes. Steinford asked if more boosters will be needed. Mr. Valentini said no.

Sherrard asked if the station would handle potential future development on Route 184. Mr. Valentini said yes.

MOTION: To approve a site plan for the Center Groton Booster Pump Station with the following modifications:

1. Add a note to the plans that states "Site Lighting shall be shielded to direct light and glare away from all adjoining properties" and add exterior light detail to the plans.

2. Additional appropriate frontage and buffer trees shall be added to the plans to meet 7.4 of the regulations.
3. Add a note to the plan that all stone walls are to remain.
4. Technical Items raised by staff shall be addressed.

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

2. D'Angelo Realty II LLC, 141-145 Gold Star Highway

MOTION: To table D'Angelo Realty II LLC, until June 13, 2006.

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

3. Marine Science Magnet School Sewer Line (CAM), 155 Thomas Road

Greg Smolley, JCJ Architecture, represented the applicant, LEARN. The coastal site plan application is for the installation of a 1,100 ft. force main sewer line for a proposed 250-student magnet high school on Thomas Road. Mr. Smolley reviewed the location of the future school on Thomas Road at the Spicer Tree Farm. The installation of the sewer line connection will be placed along the location of the Town's proposed future bike path, within the Town's right of way. Mr. Smolley said all comments from staff and Groton Utilities have been addressed.

Staff reviewed the coastal issues and resources associated with the site. It is located in a coastal flood hazard area. There are coastal wetlands and inland wetlands adjacent the property and the development along Thomas Road. No disturbance of the wetlands is proposed. Additional wetland issues will be addressed through the Inland Wetlands Agency permit process, and the tidal wetland will be addressed by the State.

On the western side of Thomas Road several trees and fence (along the golf course area) may need to be removed. If the fence is disturbed, the applicant will replace the fence. De-watering basins on the school site would be within the wetlands regulated area. There were several species in this area identified on the State's DEP Natural Diversity Database Map. This will have to be addressed before the de-watering basins or staging area is installed. Staging, erosion control and construction parking were reviewed. The location of the sewer pipe has been agreed upon with Groton Utilities. The final plans will show the exact location.

Munn asked about the purpose of the de-watering basin. Mr. Smolley said it is to remove ground water during construction.

Kane asked what the diameter of the pipe would be. Mr. Smolley said two-inch diameter, with a grinder pump. Kane asked if other properties along Thomas Road would be able to utilize the sewer line. Mr. Smolley said no, it is only for this property. Kane asked if those properties wanted to do this, would there be ample room in the road for another. Mr. Smolley said another pipe could be laid right next to this one.

Steinford asked if the trees that have to be moved belong to the Town. Staff explained the trees shown that are to be removed are the Town's. The large

row of evergreens are not on Town property. If those trees have to be removed, that will be discussed with the property owner. Steinfeld asked if the existing fence is on Town property. Mr. Smolley said he is not sure. Steinfeld said the location of the fence should be addressed with this project. The exact locations of the bike path will be reviewed in the future. Steinfeld asked if the fence has to be moved for this project. Mr. Smolley said the applicants will put the fence back and the Town will not have to pay for the fence.

Roper asked how this construction will affect automobile traffic. Mr. Smolley said they may need traffic controls at certain times which will be coordinated through the Groton Police Department. One lane may be closed at times. Roper asked about the safety of the walkers and joggers on Thomas Road. Mr. Smolley stated that the pedestrian traffic may have to use the other side of the road during construction. Mr. Smolley expects the project will take about seven to ten days in the fall. Roper asked how the path will be finished. Mr. Smolley said it will be graded and seeded, and the compacted fill will be comparable to what is already there. It will not be ready for the bike path. Staff said Town Public Works will be inspecting to be sure it is finished correctly. Coastal management policies were addressed, including limiting the ability to overdevelop the coastal flood hazard area. Pritchard asked how the construction schedule is phased. Mr. Smolley read the construction sequence that was on the plans.

Fitzgerald asked that if the neighbors want sewer, will they have to dig this line up and put a bigger one in. Mr. Smolley said they would put a second line in. This sewer line connection will be owned and maintained by the school, not the Town.

MOTION: To approve the Coastal Area Management application for the Marine Science Magnet High School Sewer Line at Thomas Road because, with the following conditions, it is consistent with all applicable coastal policies contained in CGS 22a-19, and includes all reasonable measures to mitigate adverse impacts and creates no unacceptable adverse impacts. Also, this sewer line development in the coastal flood hazard area is designed to service only a future Marine Science Magnet School use at 155 Thomas Road.

1. The applicant shall acquire all other applicable permits from the Federal, State and Local agencies prior to any disturbance of the site for this sewer line.
2. A current field study to verify the existence of several species previously listed on the Natural Diversity Data Base shall be performed and the testing and reporting shall be coordinated with the appropriate State agency prior to any disturbance of the site. Any modification to the location of the sewer line, de-watering basin, and/or the staging area shall require additional review by the appropriate Town agency.
3. The staging area shall be minimized to the extent possible and shall be for the temporary storage of the materials used for the sewer line installation. No hazardous materials shall be stored on the site. If equipment is stored overnight then a provision shall be made for emergency spills and clean-up.

4. Any fence that is removed shall be replaced with a similar or better fence, as approved by the Town of Groton Planning Department and Department of Public Works. A detail of the replacement fence shall be shown on the plans.
5. An appropriate separation distance shall be maintained between the sewer line and the 20" water main as required by Groton Utilities. The final design shall be reviewed and approved by Groton Utilities and the Department of Public Works.
6. All staff technical items shall be addressed.

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

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Report of Commission

Roper attended a meeting of the I-395 and I-95 Transportation Investment Area Committee with the Transportation Strategy Board in Norwich. Roper said some progress is being made on transportation issues.

On Monday, May 22nd, Munn attended an Economic Development Strategic Plan Steering Committee meeting. The plan will be submitted to the Committee of the Chairs.

Roper said he was a delegate at the Democratic State Convention. He had the opportunity to speak with the democratic gubernatorial candidates on the Regional Transportation and Transit plan and the Mystic Streetscape plan. All of the candidates were concerned about CONNDOT's position in this matter and supportive about ways to improve the situation.

2. Referral from Town of Stonington for Public Hearing on June 20, 2006

Staff explained the referral. Pritchard asked if there would be any impact on Groton from this amendment. Staff stated that the areas affected by this amendment are adjacent to the river and in these cases open space along the river would normally be protected from development, so there should be no real impact on Groton. Setbacks and driveway widths were discussed. Staff will be forwarding more information to the Commission.

Chairman Sherrard asked to table until the next meeting.

3. Special Permit #288 – Girard Nissan Collision Care Center, 425 Gold Star Highway

Staff explained the referral. The Planning Commission has no comment.

4. Special Permit #289 – Central Hall, 18-22 West Main Street

Staff explained the referral. The number of parking spaces for the proposed building and the number of residential units as opposed to the available parking were discussed.

MOTION: It is the consensus of the Planning Commission that the nature, size and intensity of the project should require the applicant to provide broader public benefits and improvements than were intended with earlier project approvals for the Allyn-Bohlander site. In furtherance of this, public access to the river should remain a key element, any parking provided by the Town for private use on the pump station site should be balanced with the need to retain adequate public space and boardwalk as envisioned in the Mystic Streetscape project, the underutilized parking area between Gravel Street and Pearl Street, located on the former Tift Building and Grover Insurance sites, should be adequately designed and improved to facilitate parking and pedestrian movement during day and evening hours, refuse collection areas should be designed and located to improve site layout and prevent negative impacts to the environment, and a series of measures should be incorporated to build the supply of parking. These measures could include leasing additional spaces and providing for parking validation.

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

VIII. REPORT OF CHAIRMAN

Chairman Sherrard said he will not be at the next meeting on June 13th.

IX. REPORT OF STAFF

Staff discussed the multi-modal transportation study funding. Staff is looking for a better way to get the study done, such as having SCCOG coordinate the study, rather than forfeit the grant funds. Stonington has been seeking to cancel the study.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 9:41 p.m. Motion made by Munn, seconded by Steinford, so voted unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Margil Steinford