



Town of Groton, Connecticut
Zoning Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes

Office of Planning and
 Development Services
 Town Hall Annex
 134 Groton Long Point
 Road
 Groton, CT 06340
 860-446-5970

Wednesday, September 05, 2018

6:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 2

Chair

Chair Susan K. Sutherland

Secretary

Secretary Susan Marquardt

Members

Member Susan Sayer

Member Douglas A. Smith

Alternates

Alternate Susan Archer

Alternate Mike Edgerton

Staff

Glemboski, Jones, Reiner, Gilot

I. ROLL CALL

I.1. ROLL CALL

Chairperson Sutherland called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and seated Edgerton for Hudecek.

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS - None

III. CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC HEARINGS - None

IV. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS - None

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

V.1. August 15, 2018

Motion to approve the minutes of August 15, 2018 as written.

Moved by: Smith, Douglas A.		Seconded by: Edgerton, Mike		
Committee Members	YES	NO	ABSTAIN	RECUSE
Susan K. Sutherland	X		X	
Susan Marquardt			X	
Susan Sayer				
Douglas A. Smith	X			
Mike Edgerton	X			
MOTION PASSED				

VI. OLD BUSINESS

VI.1. Commission Workshop - Zoning Regulations Rewrite Project

VI.2. Signage Regulations

Jeff Davis, Horsley Witten presented a PowerPoint on signage regulations addressing the undecided items from the last meeting when the commission began their discussion of signage.

- Calculating sign area: The commission concurred to keep calculation as currently done.
- Construction signs: Allow as temporary, without a zoning permit or a permanent sign with a zoning permit. The commission was ok with either.
- Illumination in residential districts: It was the consensus of the commission that illuminated signs are not allowed in residential districts. Exception for institutional use (public buildings, schools and religious assembly), and limited to two colors.
- Digital signs: The majority of the commission agreed that digital signs should be allowed in residential districts for institutional (public buildings, schools and religious assembly), limited to two colors, and the message can change every minute.

The commission would want to allow more than two colors in non-residential uses.

- Smith noted that the text on page 5, Section 7.3-2 should be edited from sign “must be” to “may be”. Also, the regulation states that signs in green districts require a zoning permit; staff will check on signs in the green districts.
- People signs: The Zoning Official is opposed to people signs, and there was some previous concern about protest vs. non-protest and first amendment rights. The commission concurred to allow people signs.

The commission discussed size limits on signs on private property such as an existing sign on Fort Hill Road. Staff said the Zoning Official would take enforcement if it was too large.

VI.3. Open Space Subdivision Regulations

Mr. Kelly said there were several policy questions regarding the open space subdivisions that need to be addressed.

1. Number of lots: A developer should be able to get the same number of lots as a conventional subdivision. To determine the basic number, there are two methods used. The first method is a yield plan, a site plan with conventional lots laid out. The second method is to use a formula: total area of the site less constraints and less infrastructure, divided by the minimum lot size.
2. Minimum lot size: Smaller lots allow more open space, but can look very different than the existing pattern. Design standards can address the character difference (visual impacts). It was noted that the town tries to connect open space parcels to other existing

open space but this may not work with open space subdivisions. Generally, a 50 percent reduction in lot size allows for 25-30 percent for open space. Sutherland said you also have to consider the quality of the open space. She would like to see some existing open space subdivisions in town.

3. Two-unit housing in open space subdivisions: As a reference point, determine where they are allowed in a conventional subdivision. Design standards can be used to specify they type of two-unit, such as horizontal, and would the two-unit be allowed in other zones, such as RS.
4. Open space composition: Determine what development and uses if any, would be allowed in the open space; passive - stormwater management, bike paths, etc.; active – active recreation, agriculture, or solar use. Determine how much wetland would be allowed as part of the preserved open space - would it be a fixed percentage or a sliding percentage based on existing conditions.
5. Design issues for grading and slopes: Standards are needed to limit the change in grade between properties, limit steep grade changes, and limit slopes for driveways and intersections. Design standards could be required for two-unit houses.

The commission discussed public benefit vs. profit, and concerns with ownership and maintenance of open space. The commission also discussed the purpose of open space subdivisions to reduce roads, reduce impervious and create better community cohesion. Staff said some examples of existing open space subdivisions in Groton are Mystic Weigh, Stanton Farm, Wolfebrook (Noank Ledyard Road), Mystic Highlands (Cow Hill Road). Staff showed a map of existing open space subdivisions. Groton's current regulations for open space subdivisions require water and sewer and a minimum of 10 acres. Staff said the commission needs to determine whether to offer open space subdivisions in Groton if there is some public good, such as conservation of resources, or recreation, or both. The commission asked if there is land available in Groton, and if this would incentivize developers. Permitting and costs would be similar to a conventional subdivision. Connections of open space would be desirable for the town. The Planning Commission would determine the open space location in a development. The town could also relax the requirement for either public sewer or water and then there would be land that could be developed along Route 184, in the Center Groton area. That is a sewer avoidance area, so if sewers are required there won't be any open space subdivisions there. Staff said the current regulations are not terribly outdated; the commission could add some design standards to the existing open space subdivision regulations, and leave them as they are. The current regulations use a formula method to determine the number of lots allowed based on removing 20 percent open space from the lot area.

Staff will create a map showing some of the developable areas which have both sewer and water; they will also include lots which are constrained by lack of sewer or water or both, so that the commission can decide what they might consider for open space subdivisions.

VI.4. Mixed Use Standards for MTC, MVC, and MDD

Nate Kelly, Horsley Witten, reviewed his memo which was provided in the agenda packet, to begin discussion of design standards and guidelines for mixed use districts. There were ten main items that need to be considered. He began review of the items with the biggest impact.

1. Property Frontage – where the street meets the front of the building (public realm), where a developer can create a space between the edge of pavement (bike lane or car parks) and a doorway. That distance at a minimum needs to be ten feet, which allows five feet for trees and furnishings (furnishing zone), and a five foot wide walkway (pedestrian zone). The next zone would be frontage to allow for outdoor seating or dining, displays, hanging plants; this could be up to 40 feet. There is also interior frontage, such as could be in the Big Y plaza. They would need to meet the frontage standards. Standards rather than guidelines should be required for frontage.
2. On-site circulation – Need to be standards. Visual cues that pop, such as surface change, need to be used. Connections between different properties also should be used.
3. Parking location – Ideally, parking would be in the back, away from the frontage. Design standards would provide visual cues for pedestrians; the edge of the parking area needs a decorative barrier so that people can see into the parking lot for safety, but it sets an edge.
4. Lighting (for public areas) – Design standards should allow for more decorative lighting but this type of lights is not necessarily as good for the night sky.

Due to the time, the presentation was postponed to the next meeting to allow time for comments from the public relating to the zoning regulations.

VII. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS-ZONING REGS

VII.1. Public Communications-Zoning Regs

Larry Dunn, Conservation Commission, submitted a memo to the Zoning Commission, what they would like to see. *Support open space subdivisions as an option. They identify areas where they want full subdivision or open space – incentivize for developers.

Zell Steever, 81 Main Street, Groton, said he would like to see the revised open space subdivision map. He was concerned with sprawl and would recommend that open space subdivisions require water and sewer. He would like to see more on the mixed use development.

The commission asked staff to include the Conservation Commission's memo with the map for potential development.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

VIII.1. Receipt of New Applications - None

IX. REPORT OF CHAIRPERSON

IX.1. Report of Chairperson - None

X. REPORT OF STAFF

X.1. Report of Staff

Staff said the Town Council will hold a public hearing on the first Tuesday in October to

extend the time of the Zoning Commission to July 31, 2019 to allow the commission time to complete the regulation rewrite.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

XI.1. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 8:29 p.m.

Moved by: Smith, Douglas A.		Seconded by: Sayer, Susan		
Committee Members	YES	NO	ABSTAIN	RECUSE
Susan K. Sutherland	X			
Susan Marquardt	X			
Susan Sayer	X			
Douglas A. Smith	X			
Mike Edgerton	X			
MOTION PASSED				