



ESSEX PLANNING COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, November 10, 2016

7:30 p.m.

Essex Town Hall – Meeting Room A

DRAFT MINUTES

1. Call to Order and Seating of Members

Chairman Alan Kerr called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. In attendance were Members George Sexton and Ralph Monaco. Seated for Tom Danyliw (vacant seat) was Alternate Jane Siris. Seated for Member John Bairos was Alternate Erin Bogan. Also in attendance was Planner John Guskowski.

2. Approval of Minutes: October 13, 2016 Regular Meeting

Motion to approve minutes of October 13, 2016 by Jane Siris, **seconded** by George Sexton. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Motion to add new business item 3b, Zoning Map Amendment Referral, Limited Industrial Zone Expansion by Jane Siris, **seconded** by George Sexton. **Motion carried unanimously.**

3. New Business

a. Zoning Amendment Referral – Section 90 (Limited Industrial) – Allowing Marine Facilities Dealing in Storage and Repair of Boats and Trailers

John Guskowski introduced the two proposed amendments (one text, one map change) that are being forwarded to allow a property owner along Plains Road to repair boats and RVs in the Limited Industrial District. The applicant's properties are currently in the Business District, and he is proposing to move the zone line northward to include two parcels, but not including the parcels directly fronting Plains Road. He stated that in his review, the most significant addition that he would suggest is the requirement for screening or fencing of the use so views from Route 153 would be limited.

The Commission discussed the applications, agreeing that screening was appropriate, but it was not clear exactly what type or height would properly obstruct the activities, particularly with tall

boats. Chairman Kerr noted that the description of “occasional” brokering and sales was a meaningless phrase that was unenforceable.

Member John Bairos arrived at 8:05 p.m.

Erin Bogan pointed out that ship-building and repair was an important part of Essex’s heritage, and the Commission generally agreed that the use category was appropriate. Jane Siris suggested that only registered boats and RVs be included to avoid the use becoming a junkyard. Ralph Monaco discussed the possibility of setbacks for stored vehicles. The Commission reviewed the current Section 90.C.2 of the Zoning Regulations that requires adequate screening.

Chairman Kerr determined, by consensus, that the Planning Commission would issue a favorable finding on this proposed amendment, with the notes that the requirement of screening/fencing represented by Section 90.C.2 should apply to the new use in the Limited Industrial District, that the boats or vehicles to be serviced all be legally registered, that stored vehicles be set back from property lines (though not to the full 75 foot front-yard setback), and that the intent of the word “occasional” brokering be clarified because in its current state is a meaningless regulatory tool.

b. Zoning Map Amendment Referral, Limited Industrial Zone Expansion

John Guszkowski noted that this was an accompanying application to the prior amendment to include two contiguous properties currently zoned Business to be added to the Limited Industrial District. After a brief discussion, Chairman Kerr found that there was a strong consensus by the Planning Commission to issue a favorable comment on this proposal.

4. Old Business

a. Accessory Apartment Regulations Discussion – Public Hearing Report and Proposed Modifications

Chairman Kerr described the October public hearing of the Zoning Commission receiving the modified formatting of the accessory apartment proposal and how the November 21 meeting would be more of a substantive discussion. John Guszkowski suggested that a modified letter of referral from the Planning Commission in favor of the proposal would be useful. Chairman Kerr determined that the Commission continued to find the proposal to be a strong implementation action of the Plan of Conservation & Development and would issue a comment to that effect.

b. PoCD Implementation and Zoning Working Group Participation

John Guszkowski stated the Working Group was continuing its work at reorganizing and simplifying the current Zoning Regulations, and that Group Chairman Al Wolfram had acknowledged that following the reorganization, the Zoning Commission would proceed with a broader overhaul, including the use of an outside consultant. John Guszkowski expressed frustration at the process, which was targeted to finish in the spring. Jane Siris suggested that the Zoning Commission could begin the process of bringing in an outside consultant now to help get underway quickly to avoid a lag. John Guszkowski stated that he agreed and would forward this suggestion to the Working Group.

John Guszkowski also noted the Connecticut Fair Housing Coalition materials on development of a preferable zoning approach to promoting affordable housing and suggested that the Planning Commission could seek to convene a standing or ad-hoc Committee with inter-board participation to work on the broader housing effort. Chairman Kerr will consider the matter and revisit it at the December meeting.

c. Grant Project Updates – STEAP and TAP

John Guszkowski reported that the STEAP grant to improve the sidewalks and streetscape on Main Street Centerbrook had been awarded, and First Selectman Needleman would be seeking to undertake a design in mid-November following the elections. He also reported that he was working on a Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) grant that would propose a sidewalk along Plains Road between Route 9 and Bokum Center. There would be great value in this corridor, given the planned construction of 52 apartment units adjacent to the Steam Train.

5. Report of Committees and Officers

a. Report from Inland Wetlands Representative

The Planning Commission has no active representative to the Wetlands Agency. John Guszkowski noted that in filling Tom Danyliw's vacated seat, there may be a possibility for cross-representation.

b. Report from RiverCOG Representative

Alan Kerr reported that the RiverCOG meeting was cancelled for lack of a quorum.

c. Report from Economic Development Commission Representative

George Sexton stated that the EDC was strongly in favor of the Planning Commission's position relative to the Zoning Working Group. He noted that Olive Oyl's would be moving into the former Village Provisions building, and "That's the Spirit" package store was now open across from the Steam Train. He stated that the Essex Village Post Office building was under contract and would likely remain in office use.

d. Planner's Report

John Guszkowski reported that in addition to the work on the TAP grant application, he had been taking the lead in coordinating the Town's response to the FEMA/USGS request for information in updating their Flood Maps.

6. Correspondence & Invoices

There were no invoices or items of correspondence.

7. Adjournment

Chairman Kerr noted that the December meeting was traditionally the meeting at which the Chairman and Vice-Chairman are elected. He encouraged all Members to consider serving in those roles, and indicated that he would be willing to continue if there was no other interest.

Motion to adjourn by Jane Siris, seconded by Ralph Monaco. Motion carried unanimously.
Meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John Guskowski
Consulting Town Planner

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
11/14/2016 at 9:00 A.M.
Yvonne M. Fogiel
ESSEX, CT - ASSIST. TOWN CLERK