



ESSEX PLANNING COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, May 12, 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 7:30 p.m. In attendance were Members Tom Danyliw and Ralph Monaco. Seated for Member John Bairos was Jane Siris, and seated for Member George Sexton was Erin Bogan. Also in attendance was Town Planner John Guskowski.

2. Approval of Minutes: April 14, 2016

Motion to approve minutes of April 14, 2016 by Tom Danyliw, seconded by Jane Siris. Chairman Kerr noted that the description of accessory apartment units in New Business Item 4a would be clearer if the sentence read “While accessory apartments are unlikely to be deed-restricted and thus *would not* qualify for the State’s definition of “Affordable” units...”

Motion carried, with Ralph Monaco abstaining.

Vice-Chairman George Sexton arrived at 7:35. Chairman Kerr decided to retain Erin Bogan as a seated voting member.

3. New Business

a. Subdivision Filing Extension Request – Ed Cook, Hunter’s Trail Extension

John Guskowski reviewed the approval timeframe for this subdivision and stated that Mr. Cook was requesting the last of his available 90-day filing extensions.

Motion to approve the 90-day filing extension request by Tom Danyliw, seconded by Ralph Monaco. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Main Street Investment Fund – “Civic Campus Phase II”

John Guskowski introduced the latest round of Main Street Investment Fund grants, which were announced in late April and due on May 31st. The Town had previously used this grant fund to make sidewalk and infrastructure improvements in Ivoryton Center. This grant is to be

used for the implementation of existing plans dealing with infrastructure and economic development.

He described the process by which First Selectman Needleman convened a small group of town staff to review priorities and select a direction for a grant proposal. Parks & Recreation Director Mary Ellen Barnes had prepared a proposal to improve the pedestrian connection between Grove Street Park/Town Hall and Hubbard Field, as well as making a number of improvements to Hubbard Field. John Guskowski stated that this was not specifically the implementation of an existing plan, but was the project of choice for the First Selectman. He stated that the support of the Planning Commission would be useful in submitting the grant proposal.

Jane Siris stated that the current sketch plan was insufficient in its detail. Tom Danyliw stated that this proposal was not specifically in the PoCD, and that both the Plan and the Planning Chairman should have been included in discussions of potential projects. John Guskowski agreed, but also stated that the Planning Commission's priorities has been reflected in several recent grant applications, including Ivoryton Center and the pending STEAP grant application for Centerbrook Main Street sidewalk improvements. Chairman Kerr stated the Planning Commission should be consulted, and should have a list of priority infrastructure projects for future grants. Ralph Monaco agreed that the Commission should have been more closely consulted, but supported the improvements of sidewalks between Grove Street and North Main Street. Tom Danyliw stated that he thought the Planning Commission could support the proposal in concept, but with three caveats: 1) The Planning Commission should have been consulted and involved in decisions involving public improvements; 2) The PoCD contains a number of other high-priority options for projects and should be more closely reviewed; and 3) The Commission, through its Chairman, should be integral to these discussions going forward.

Chairman Kerr stated that he believed the Commission had reached consensus that the proposal would be supported by the Planning Commission, with the reservations stated by Tom Danyliw, and subject to review and participation by the Commission should be grant be awarded.

Motion to add New Business Item 4c – Affordable Housing Discussion by Ralph Monaco, **seconded** by Jane Siris. **Motion carried, with Tom Danyliw abstaining.**

c. Affordable Housing Discussion

Jane Siris expressed concern about the lack of control that the Zoning Commission had over recent affordable housing applications in both Essex and Old Saybrook, noting that the scale of development seemed particularly problematic for small towns. Chairman Kerr asked for clarification of the specific problems. John Guskowski reviewed the purpose and background of the statutes and how the Essex Place and Essex Station applications were the first Affordable Housing Appeals projects in Essex since CGS Section 8-30g has been a law. Ralph Monaco reviewed the statutory parameters that the Zoning Commission have available to review these applications. Chairman Kerr stated that the Commission should be a bit more educated on the matter, and requested that John Guskowski reach out to the HOPE Partnership and Partnership for Strong Communities for guidance and information about affordable housing approaches and implications.

4. **Old Business**

a. **Accessory Apartment Regulations Discussion**

John Guskowski reviewed the sample regulations from other communities regarding accessory apartments and focused on a couple of issues for clarification. The Commission agreed that accessory apartments should be as-of-right and approved via either a staff-level review or a Site Plan (non-public-hearing) review by the Zoning Commission. They agreed that each property should be eligible for a maximum of one accessory unit, and that the unit should retain the essential character and appearance of a single-family (or nonresidential) use. No additional front-facing entrances would be allowed. The Commission agreed that owner-occupancy of either the primary or accessory unit should be required, but there should be no restriction on lot size, other than the capacity of septic systems, water system, parking, and lot coverage.

Jane Siris suggested that John Guskowski should compile these elements and prepare a “recommended” amendment to the Commission. Chairman Kerr requested that John have this prepared for the June meeting.

b. **UConn Landscape Design Project**

Chairman Kerr, Tom Danyliw, and George Sexton discussed their impressions of the student projects as presented and were impressed with the thought and creativity put into the design work. John Guskowski stated that Professor Miniutti would be working with the Essex Foundation and the Steam Train to pursue further steps on landscape master plans for the Gateway area.

5. **Report of Committees and Officers**

a. **Report from Inland Wetlands Representative**

The Planning Commission has no active representative to the Wetlands Agency. Chairman Kerr requested a volunteer to serve. John Guskowski apologized for neglecting to include Wetlands minutes in the packet.

b. **Report from RiverCOG Representative**

Alan Kerr stated that the RiverCOG meeting was cancelled.

c. **Report from Economic Development Commission Representative**

George Sexton reported that the EDC had a presentation by Herb Clark about the expansion of an engineering firm on one of his properties on Westbrook Road, bringing in several new jobs. He also reported that a new restaurant – Essex House – would be opening on Main Street in Centerbrook, bringing in 30-40 part time and full time jobs. They also had a presentation by Hiram Peck about Simsbury’s approach to Form-Based Codes. He reported that the EDC would be hosting a Business Forum on May 24th at 7:00 p.m.

d. **Chairman’s Report**

Chairman Kerr had no further report.

e. **Planner's Report**

John Guskowski reported that the Safe Routes to School bid had been opened and the Town would be moving forward with contracting shortly and construction this summer. He noted that the Zoning Commission had invited the Planning Commission to attend the June 20 Zoning meeting to discuss overhauling the Zoning Regulations. Chairman Kerr suggested that if Planning approved a draft Accessory Apartment amendment at its June 9 meeting, it could submit for receipt at that time. John Guskowski stated that if a quorum of Planning Commissioners would be able to attend, he would post it as a Special Meeting. He also reported that he is moving forward with LoTCIP grant application for the Main Street/Dennison Road intersection as well as working with WPCA on their Wastewater Facilities Plan RFQ. Chairman Kerr volunteered to be part of the review committee for these proposals.

6. **Correspondence & Invoices**

There was one invoice from CME Associates and Chairman Kerr signed authorization to pay under the Commission's annual contract with CME.

7. **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn by Ralph Monaco, **seconded** by Jane Siris. **Motion carried unanimously.**
Meeting was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John Guskowski
Consulting Town Planner

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
6/5/16 2016 at 11:25 A.M.
Yvonne M. Rogiak
ESSEX, CT - ASSIST. TOWN CLERK