



ESSEX PLANNING COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, July 14, 2016

7:30 p.m.

Essex Town Hall – Meeting Room A

DRAFT MINUTES

1. Call to Order and Seating of Members

Vice Chairman George Sexton called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m. In attendance was Member Tom Danyliw. Seated for Alan Kerr was Alternate Erin Bogan, and seated for Ralph Monaco was Alternate Jane Siris. Also in attendance was Town Planner John Guskowski.

2. Approval of Minutes: June 9, 2016

Motion to approve minutes of June 9, 2016 by Jane Siris, **seconded** by Tom Danyliw.
Motion carried unanimously.

3. New Business

a. Discussion of Essex Station Proposed Revisions

John Guskowski presented an update on the Zoning Commission's decision on the Essex Station apartment project, which was approved with a number of conditions that the applicant found problematic. The appeal period had passed without filing, and the applicant was going to be seeking a compromise modification to the terms of approval at the July Zoning meeting. The applicant transmitted a request to the Planning Commission seeking its opinion of the conditions of approval and the proposed modifications. John Guskowski stated that while he personally believed that a strict adherence to the conditions of approval would damage the project aesthetically, the Planning Commission had no clear statutory ability or role in formally commenting on this request.

Tom Danyliw stated that he believed that this request was an overreach and the Planning Commission had no business commenting. He was concerned about both perception and precedent and argued the Planning Commission should only comment when specifically referred business by the Zoning Commission itself.

Motion to deny the request to comment on Essex Station modifications on the basis that the request exceeds the statutory authority of the Planning Commission by Tom Danyliw, **seconded** by Erin Bogan.

Jane Siris expressed her continuing concern about the Essex Station project scale relative to surrounding properties and even the Essex Place senior housing project nearby. Tom Danyliw stated that he was unwilling to participate in a process that might have negative legal implications for the Town should the applicant or other aggrieved party which to involve the Planning Commission in this manner. John Guszkowski stated that while he agreed with that approach, he believed that the Zoning Commission handled the overall application process inappropriately and would be willing to offer support and guidance to its staff. Tom Danyliw stated that it should not be official communications from the Planning Commission.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. Old Business

a. Affordable Housing Discussion – Next Steps

John Guszkowski stated that the Planning Commission’s application for a Zoning Amendment to replace Section 45 concerning Accessory Apartments had been received and scheduled for a August 15 Public Hearing. The Board of Selectmen has waived the application fee. At the request of ZEO Joe Budrow, he prepared a brief draft narrative on the background and justification for the amendment. Tom Danyliw suggested a few edits concerning the Planning Commission’s motivation and timing for submitting the request. John Guszkowski stated that he would make those changes and pointed out that the PoCD Implementation Guide repeatedly assigned the Planning Commission to work closely with the Zoning Commission on regulatory revisions.

John Guszkowski stated that he would remind the Commission as August 15 got closer and to determine if there was a quorum likely that would necessitate the posting of a Special Meeting. In addition, he would continue to invite affordable housing experts to Planning Commission meetings to assist in moving a community conversation forward.

b. Grant Project Updates

John Guszkowski reported on modifications to the submitted LOTCIP (transportation) grant, which was shifted from the Dennison Road/Main Street intersection to the proposed one-way conversion of Route 621, as the former project did not meet minimum cost thresholds to be considered. The Commission had a general discussion about the revised project and the wisdom or necessity of adding parallel on-street parking along Route 621. John Guszkowski noted that it was uncertain if the DOT would agree with that parking, but it largely reflected a maximum utilization of the wide right-of-way width remaining after a one-way conversion. The project attempted to take one step toward the multi-modal connection between the PoCD development nodes. He also reported on Safe Routes to School sidewalk construction progress and pending Main Street Investment Fund and STEAP grants.

5. Report of Committees and Officers

a. Report from Inland Wetlands Representative

The Planning Commission has no active representative to the Wetlands Agency.

b. Report from RiverCOG Representative

John Guszkowski noted that Chairman Kerr had emailed prior to the Commission meeting indicating that RiverCOG's meeting had been cancelled and he had no further report.

c. Report from Economic Development Commission Representative

George Sexton reported that the EDC did not have a quorum at their last meeting, but discussed the proposed inter-board discussion to be convened by First Selectman Needleman on September 14. He stated that this discussion, which will include EDC, Zoning, and Planning, should be focused on working together. He suggested that the Planning Commission should do a short overview of the goals of the new PoCD.

d. Planner's Report

John Guszkowski noted that the contract extension between the Town and CME Associates had been fully executed for FY 2016-17. He stated that he was working with WPCA on their revised request for proposals for a Wastewater Facilities Plan, which was due shortly. He would be working with WPCA and Chairman Kerr on the selection process. Finally, he reminded the Commission about email communication protocols relative to himself as staff and encouraged the Commissioners to communicate freely with him but to avoid "reply all" email conversations about Commission matters.

6. Correspondence & Invoices

Vice Chairman Sexton noted the correspondence and approved the monthly Planning Consulting invoice from CME Associates.

7. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Jane Siris, seconded by Erin Bogan. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John Guszkowski
Consulting Town Planner

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
07/15 2016 at 9:00 A.M.
Yvonne M. Fogliak
ESSEX, CT - ASSIST. TOWN CLERK