



ESSEX PLANNING COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, February 8, 2018

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 George Sexton, Ralph Monaco, and Erin Bogan. Seated for Member Gary Riggio was Alternate Jane Siris. Also in attendance were Member Gary Riggio (arrived at 7:35 – not seated for meeting) and Town Planner John Guskowski (arrived at 7:35).

2. Approval of Minutes: January 9, 2018 Regular Meeting

Motion to approve minutes of January 9, 2018 by George Sexton, seconded by Ralph Monaco. Motion carried unanimously.

3. New Business

a. Zoning Text Amendment Referral: Section 45- adding “apartments” to Accessory Dwelling Unit Regulations

The Commission reviewed the proposed Zoning Amendment and discussed the differences in concept between accessory dwelling units and apartments. Much of the discussion focused on the limitations of unit numbers in non-residential structures. The Commission was, by consensus, generally uneasy with the blanket authorization of apartment units in the Limited Industrial District, which had been removed from the original Section 45 amendments as proposed by the Planning Commission in 2016.

Motion to issue a favorable opinion of the proposed Zoning Amendment with the exception that the Planning Commission recommends any apartments proposed in the Limited Industrial District be subject to the Special Permit/Special Exception process rather than Site Plan review by George Sexton, seconded by Ralph Monaco. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Zoning Text Amendment Referral: Increasing building height to 35' in all districts

The Commission discussed the proposed amendment relative to current regulations, which range between 30' and 35', and the types of structures which could be built at various heights, as well as fire safety considerations.

Motion to issue a favorable comment on the proposed Zoning Amendment by Jane Siris, seconded by Ralph Monaco. Motion carried unanimously.

c. Zoning Text Amendment Referral: Adding “Dog Day Care Facility” to LI and HGD Districts

The Commission reviewed the proposed amendment, focusing on concerns about noise for neighboring residential properties and the proposed density of dogs per building size.

Motion to issue a favorable comment on the proposed Zoning Amendment with the recommendations that the proposed maximum density of 1 dog per 50 square feet be revisited relative to other regulation examples and removing the parenthetical note about “other numbers here” by Jane Siris, seconded by Ralph Monaco. Motion carried unanimously

d. Zoning Text Amendment Referral: Adding definition for “Inland Marine”

The Commission discussed the procedure by which the Inland Marine use was added to the LI District and a facility was permitted without the existence of a definition of Inland Marine. There was general agreement that whether or not the regulations required buffering, screening, or other aesthetic protections, the relatively high-visibility LI corridor along Plains Road was not necessarily the right location for a potentially disruptive business. There was additional discussion about why RVs would be allowed and whether this regulation should be revisited.

Motion to issue an unfavorable comment on the proposed Zoning Amendment with the recommendation that the entire Inland Marine category as an appropriate use in the LI District be reconsidered by the Zoning Commission by Ralph Monaco, seconded by George Sexton. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Old Business

a. Ad-Hoc Committee on Housing Options

Chairman Kerr noted that because of the second-Tuesday schedule, the February Housing meeting had not happened yet. He reported that he and John Guskowski had reached out to the Partnership for Strong Communities with an invitation to present to the Committee, which may happen in the next month or two.

b. Zoning Revisions Subcommittee – Update and Discussion

John Guskowski reported that the complete draft of the Zoning Regulation cleanup had been finished and would be presented informally to the Zoning Commission later in February. It is likely that they will review and discuss the revision for a month before formally receiving it as an application and setting a public hearing. Chairman Kerr clarified that this would be referred to the Planning Commission for comment in advance of the public hearing.

c. Plan of Conservation & Development Implementation Priorities

Chairman Kerr noted that the anticipated light agenda for the Planning meeting, prior to the submission of Zoning referrals, had provided an opportunity to revisit the PoCD and discuss moving forward on initiatives. John Guskowski noted that several high-priority implementation items involved converting the development nodes into zoning districts or overlay districts. There was a general discussion about zoning for redevelopment promotion. Ralph Monaco led a discussion about the role of the Planning Commission vs. private applicants in undertaking initiatives. Jane Siris suggested that the Planning Commissioners review the implementation priorities for discussion at the next meeting.

Motion to table discussion on PoCD to allow Commissioners to review the priority list, focusing on Planning Commission-led items and revisit the topic next month by Jane Siris, **seconded** by George Sexton. **Motion carried unanimously.**

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

Alan Kerr reported that the most recent RiverCOG meeting focused on a proposal from Chester to regulate short term rentals (“AirBnB”) and noted that Sandra Childress had attended and volunteered to be the Town’s alternate representative to RiverCOG.

c. Report from Economic Development Commission Representative

George Sexton reported that Wright’s Restaurant building was available for lease; Cumberland Farms was open and doing well; a brew pub proposal was being prepared for the Witch Hazel property; Walker Loden is closing; the residences at Essex Place are at capacity and have a waiting list; a “paint and sip” business is open at the Post Office building in Essex; that Nalis Engineering was looking to add buildings on Westbrook Road; and that the Ivoryton Congregational Church is seeking to convert to condominiums.

d. Planner’s Report

John Guskowski reported that the HOPE Partnership was moving forward with its plans to convert the upper-level spaces at Spencer’s Corner to condominium units and was seeking Department of Housing funds for affordable housing development. HOPE had requested the Town consider submitting a letter of support for this application. Chairman Kerr determined that, by consensus, the Planning Commission supported this initiative and directed John Guskowski to draft a letter of support. John Guskowski also reported that the Land Use Office would be doing a presentation on March 6 to property owners, realtors, and developers about the regulations and function of the land use permitting process.

Finally, he reported on the recent request for information from the Town's attorneys about the legal status of Evans Lane and the Commission's involvement or recollection about its development.

6. **Correspondence & Invoices**

Motion to approve payment of invoice to Dzialo, Pickett and Allen by Ralph Monaco, seconded by Jane Siris. Motion carried unanimously.

7. **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn by Jane Siris, seconded by George Sexton. Motion carried unanimously.
Meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John Guszowski
Consulting Town Planner

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
02/09 2018 at 2:50 P.M.
Zamir M. Rojick
ESSEX, CT -- ASSIST. TOWN CLERK