



## ESSEX PLANNING COMMISSION

### REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, July 9, 2020

7:30 p.m.

Meeting Held Via GoToMeeting Video Conference

Meeting Recording:

<https://transcripts.gotomeeting.com/#!/s/568ddc154c1a6e724957e1372eea45a78941a2921e4d0a6a93f3e79f92829158>

### 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, via videoconference, for the meeting were Members George Sexton and Ralph Monaco. Seated for Member Erin Bogan was Alternate Jane Siris. Seated for Member Gary Riggio was Alternate Al Wolfgram. Also in attendance were Planner John Guskowski, First Selectman Norm Needleman, and Town Engineer Bob Doane.

#### 2. Approval of Minutes – June 11, 2020 Regular Meeting

Motion to approve minutes of June 11, 2020 by Ralph Monaco, seconded by George Sexton. Motion carried unanimously, with Al Wolfgram abstaining.

#### 3. New Business

- a. Subdivision Application – Two-Lot Subdivision at 23 Charles Street.  
Applicant: Keith and Audrey Knickerbocker (*Application Receipt*)

Bob Doane, representing the applicants, presented to the Commission. The subject property is an approximately 3.22 acre property at the south end of Charles Street, connected to the intersection of Charles and View Streets via a 25' strip of land that is part of the Knickerbocker's property. There is only currently a barn and some accessory buildings on the land. They wish to split the lot into two new house lots, one of approximately 1.84 acres and one of approximately 1.38 acres. The land is in the RU zoning district, with each lot

requiring 60,000 square feet of area. There are no public improvements proposed, and both lots are proposed to be accessed by a common driveway from Charles Street, crossing over a small section of existing easement area over the property of #52 Charles Street. Soil testing has been done at several locations, and potential house locations are shown, along with an accessory apartment envisioned for Parcel A. A waiver of section 7.2.1 of the Subdivision Regulations is requested, to allow the driveway access portion to Parcel B to be excluded from the lot size calculations.

There was a discussion among the Commission of the parcel history and whether it was part of a prior subdivision. Bob Doane explained that the property was an amalgam of excess land from two prior subdivisions – Oak Ridge and Bella. First Selectman Needleman gave some property history about the transfer of the land back in the 1980s. The Commission decided that a public hearing would be appropriate, and Bob Doane expressed no objections. The final easement documents, wetlands administrative sign-off, and septic system approvals by Lisa Fasulo were still pending. Al Wolfgram asked about drainage concerns, and Bob Doane stated there were none.

**Motion to receive the application and schedule the public hearing to open on September 10, requiring no additional technical referrals, by Al Wolfgram, seconded by Jane Siris. Motion carried unanimously.**

**b. Zoning Amendment Referral – Business Offices in VR District**

John Guszkowski presented the proposal to the Commission, which would add Business and Professional Offices as a Special Use in the VR District. The pending overhaul of the Zoning Regulations is scheduled to include this use, but because of the delay in review and adoption of the new Regulations, the applicant wished to proceed with this interim change.

**Motion to issue a favorable report on this referral, finding it compatible with the Plan of Conservation & Development by Jane Siris, seconded by George Sexton. Motion carried unanimously.**

**c. Wastewater Management Update – First Selectman Needleman & Health Director Lisa Fasulo**

First Selectman Needleman gave the Commission an update on the Selectmen's decision to disband the WPCA and absorb the wastewater management function into the Board of Selectmen. He discussed the successes in addressing wastewater management in Ivoryton, establishing a new system for the Blue Hound and Ivoryton Inn, as well as the new system at the Griswold Inn that helped to clear up a lot of well issues in Essex Village. He stated there are no current plans for investigating expansion of public sewer systems, with development urgency being nonexistent. Chairman Kerr asked about future growth for Ivoryton Village, and Selectman Needleman led a brief discussion of potential wastewater disposal sites and redevelopment possibilities for the Piano Factory or facilities for the Ivoryton Playhouse.

He also discussed his plans for the Board of Selectmen to consider merging the Planning and Zoning Commissions, which will be taken up at the BOS meeting on July 15 and then moved to a public hearing and town meeting in September, with the anticipated joint

Commission beginning its work in 2021. There was a general discussion about this potential merger, with Commissioners Wolfgram and Monaco expressing opposition to the idea.

#### **4. Old Business**

##### **a. PoCD Implementation – Next Step Priorities & Sustainable CT**

John Guskowski reviewed the Sustainable CT scoresheet with the Commission, and noted that Tasks 4.1 and 4.2 concerned Planning (PoCD) and Regulations. He stated that the PoCD contained several sustainability elements that could earn points for the Sustainable Essex Committee's efforts to achieve "Silver" certification. The Commission also discussed the possibility of establishing Design Standards or a Development Manual as part of the zoning regulation overhaul.

##### **b. Essex Village – National Register of Historic Places Discussion**

John Guskowski and Jane Siris reported that they had reviewed the existing historic documentation on Essex Village. Jane recommended that the Commission request a proposal from Evelyn Cole Smith to prepare a formal nomination to the National Register, and she and Hope Proctor and John Guskowski would reconvene to discuss that option.

#### **5. Report of Committees and Officers**

##### **a. Report from RiverCOG Representative**

Chairman Kerr noted Sandra Childress' report of the most recent RiverCOG meeting, which included a preview of the webinar kicking off the Regional PoCD process. The Commission will participate in a joint Essex/Chester/Deep River session at the August meeting. John Guskowski distributed a survey to the Commission to review in advance of that session.

##### **b. Report from Economic Development Commission Representative**

George Sexton reported that the EDC had not met in the past month. Chairman Kerr noted that Gather in Ivoryton had been re-opened.

##### **c. Planner's Report**

John Guskowski reported on the update to the Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan. He also noted that the next round of STEAP grants were going to be opened next week, with applications due in July. The Commission discussed a few of the potential project ideas, which included the Civic Campus (Phase II), sidewalks on River Road and Westbrook Road, and potential assistance with improvements at Spencer's Corner.

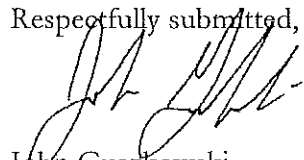
#### **6. Correspondence & Invoices**

There were no items of correspondence. Chairman Kerr noted that he approved the CHA invoice through the Finance Office.

7. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Jane Siris, seconded by Ralph Monaco. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



John Guskowski  
Consulting Town Planner

RECEIVED FOR RECORD  
07/10 2020 at 11:55 A.M.  
Janet M. Rozick  
ESSEX, CT - ASSIST. TOWN CLERK