



# TOWN OF ESSEX PLANNING and ZONING COMMISSION

29 WEST AVENUE – ESSEX, CT 06426  
Essex Town Hall

## SPECIAL MEETING

Tuesday, October 25, 2022 7:00 PM  
Town Hall Auditorium and via Zoom

## DRAFT MINUTES

### 1. Call to Order and Seating of Members

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. In attendance for the meeting were Members Mark Reeves, Gary Riggio, Jane Siris, and Peter Fleischer. Seated for Chris Riley was Jeff Lovelace. Seated for Robert Day was Alternate David Rosengren. Also in attendance were Land Use Official Carey Duques, Commission Counsel Larry Shipman, and Planner John Guskowski.

### 2. Public Hearings

- **PZC Application 22-17 Special Exception** under Section 101J of the Essex Zoning Regulations to build a new detached one-story barn 22' X 36' at **101 Saybrook Road**  
*Applicant/Owner: Harwood B. Comstock (Application was received on September 6, 2022)*

Presenting was Whitney Huber on behalf of the applicant. The expansion of the structures at the property, adding the one-story barn/shed put the total building coverage over 4,000 square feet, which triggers a Gateway review and Special Exception. He believed that the building would be largely unseen from the Connecticut River. He discussed correspondence with Torrance Downes of the Gateway Commission and noted that the building will be a pole barn with limited ground disturbance. The building height will be approximately 17.5 feet, which is lower than the existing house. The Gateway Commission did not object to the project, finding it would have minimal impact on the viewshed from the River.

**Motion to close the public hearing by Mark Reeves, seconded by Gary Riggio.**  
**Motion carried unanimously.**

### 3. Unfinished Business/Action Items

- **PZC Application 22-17 Special Exception** under Section 101J of the Essex Zoning Regulations to build a new detached one-story barn 22' X 36' at **101 Saybrook Road**  
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**Motion to approve Special Exception application 22-17 by Mark Reeves, seconded by Jeff Lovelace. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### 4. Staff Reports

- Town Planning Consultant – John Guskowski reported on several ongoing projects, including a STEAP grant for improvements to Grove Street and North Main Street sidewalks and the recreation facility at Hubbard Field and a sidewalk installation on River Road funded by Community Connectivity. He also stated that the Town finally received comments back on the draft Harbor Management Plan from the CT-DEEP and would seek to finalize the Plan revisions by the end of the year. He also noted that RiverCOG was beginning work on a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, and Carey Duques and he were working with the COG on this project.
  
- Land Use Official
  - o Discussion on 10 Main Street Essex, Professional Office Use – Carey Duques reported that there is a proposed change of use from an art gallery to retail/office use at 10 Main Street. Upon further discussion with the applicant, she determined that they were also interested in adding a spa and acupuncture business within the “office use.” She sought the Commission’s input on categorizing the “spa” category within the list of allowable uses. She noted that the uses were already in existence elsewhere on Main Street. Attorney Terry Lomme, on behalf of the applicant, stated that the use was harmonious with historic uses, and had approval from the Health Director. He discussed the use of the space and distribution of employees, which would likely be no more than four employees at any given time, plus customer/clients in the spa treatment rooms.

Chairman Smith asked about parking differences, and Attorney Lomme noted the available parking controlled by the building owner, and the availability of parking on Main Street. Peter Fleischer asked about regulation of parking, the different professional services, and water use. Attorney Lomme responded that an ADA accessible bathroom will be added, and the Health Director had approved the B-100a change of use permit. Carey Duques noted that each application is dealt with separately relative to parking. Jane Siris asked if the applicant wanted to expand a physical therapy use into the retail space, if they’d have to come back to the Commission. Other uses in the area, such as barber shops and nail salons, had been permitted as “personal services” in the past. Larry Shipman reviewed the interpretation choices with the Commission, who reviewed historic uses and the division of space between offices and retail. The Commission discussed options including revision of Zoning Regulations and interpretation of existing regulations. Chairman Smith determined that there was consensus among the Commission was that if the office space was limited to approximately 2500 square feet and the retail space would be approximately 1800 square feet, a simple change of use permit could be issued by Carey Duques as Zoning Officer.

- o Essex Glen Update – Carey Duques reported that the construction of the cul-de-sac and pavement of Essex Glen Drive had been completed. She was informed that a number of other projects had been completed but was still awaiting a report from Town Engineer Bob Doane on these details. Ben Bossi, President of the Essex Glen homeowners’ association noted that some hydroseeding had been done, but asked about the management of the bond.

They would prefer that the full bond be kept in place until all improvements are installed to the satisfaction of Town staff. The Commission discussed the process of approving of road improvements and the acceptance of the road itself, and how the bonding insured the completion. Herb Clark expressed concern about reducing the amount of the bond that would prevent the developer from completing all of the necessary improvements to bring the road up to full town standards. Attorney Terry Lomme reiterated the need to have inspections completed by Bob Doane sooner than later.

**5. Correspondence**

There were no items of correspondence. Jane Siris confirmed that the public hearing for recreational cannabis retail was next week, November 1, 2022. The Commission discussed moving the Essex Glen updates to the top of the agenda, ahead of the cannabis hearing.

**6. Adjournment**

**Motion to adjourn by Peter Fleischer, seconded by Jeff Lovelace. Motion carried unanimously.** Meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



John Guskowski, AICP  
Town Planner (Consulting)