



ESSEX PLANNING COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, April 9, 2020

7:30 p.m.

Meeting Held Via GoToMeeting Video Conference

Meeting Recording:

<https://transcripts.gotomeeting.com/#/s/d804c23513d2523735f67d2f0bd9ee1dfa50fcd06a18f65b548c218a4f1bf62a>

DRAFT MINUTES

1. Call to Order and Seating of Members

Chairman Alan Kerr called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m. In attendance, via videoconference, for the meeting were Members George Sexton, Erin Bogan and Ralph Monaco. Seated for Member Gary Riggio was Alternate Jane Siris. Also in attendance were Planner John Guskowski and a member of the public.

2. Approval of Minutes – February 13, 2020 Regular Meeting

Motion to approve minutes of February 13, 2020 by Ralph Monaco, seconded by George Sexton. Motion carried unanimously.

3. New Business

a. Open Space and Harbor Management Grants - Discussion

John Guskowski discussed two potential grant opportunities with the Commission. The first was an Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant from the CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP), which is due in July. He noted that these funds could be matched by local Open Space funds, which are in an account controlled by the Planning Commission. The Essex Land Trust had initially approached the Commission to support a grant for an acquisition project, but the negotiations hit a snag and it does not appear that the Land Trust will be ready to pursue this opportunity this grant cycle.

As an alternative, John Guskowski discussed the possibility of seeking funding for acquisition of the DeVinney property, a 0.99 acre open lot on South Cove, which the Commission had given a tax abatement to in recent years. The Commission reviewed the merits of the property and the grant scoresheet, and agreed with the recommendation that it would not be a highly-rated proposal at this time.

The second grant that was discussed was a Long Island Sound Futures Fund project for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). John Guskowski had been working with Jeff Going and the Harbor Management Commission on a long-term strategy to restore Thatchbed Island, which has been significantly eroded. The Commission discussed the project, which would do the testing and engineering to restore the island and armor it against repeated erosion. Chairman Kerr and the Commission agreed that this was a project worthy of support and the dedication of some staff time to prepare.

Motion by Erin Bogan to support submission of a NFWF grant application for the engineering of a restoration plan of Thatchbed Island with the recommendation that plans consider methods to protect against repeated erosion of the Island. Motion seconded by Ralph Monaco. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan Update/Survey

John Guskowski presented an overview of the RiverCOG regional efforts to update a Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan (NHMP) with annexes covering each individual town. This is a five-year plan that allows communities to be eligible for pre-disaster planning and mitigation funding from FEMA. The current planning process includes a request for local input, and a survey has been prepared. John Guskowski requested that the Commission consider completing the survey, linked to from the Essex Planning website, and which can be found at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WNMKMJH>.

4. Old Business

a. PoCD Implementation – Next Step Priorities

John Guskowski discussed the pending status of the three development node overlay regulations (Bokum, Ivoryton, Route 9 Gateway) and the delay in public hearing because of Zoning Commission confusion and the COVID-19 complications. He will work with the Zoning Commission on the public hearing process. Chairman Kerr led a brief discussion about proceeding with drafting another of the two remaining node regulations or waiting to see what the Zoning reaction will be. He also asked that the Commission review the implementation table, which John Guskowski will place in a OneDrive folder, to identify priorities for discussion at the next Planning meeting.

5. Report of Committees and Officers

a. Report from RiverCOG Representative

Chairman Kerr noted Sandra Childress' report of the most recent RiverCOG meeting in the Commission packet and discussed the update to the Regional PoCD, which will likely involve some direct input from the Essex Planning Commission in May or June.

b. Report from Economic Development Commission Representative

George Sexton reported that while the EDC had not met, he was aware that the demolition of the Red Balloon had proceeded, and that updates from the First Selectman had kept local businesses apprised of funding opportunities in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.

c. Planner's Report

John Guskowski reported on the Town Hall status and the challenges of setting up virtual public meetings, particularly when there is a public hearing component. He would continue to work with the Selectman's office and Zoning Commission to keep processes moving, as well as updating the Commission on the Governor's Executive Orders concerning land use application processing.


6. Correspondence & Invoices

There were no items of correspondence or invoices.

7. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Jane Siris, **seconded** by Ralph Monaco. **Motion carried unanimously.** Meeting was adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


John Guskowski
Consulting Town Planner

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
04/13 2020 at 8:30
Jane M. Rogiet
ESSEX, CT -- ASSIST. TOWN CLERK A.M.