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Planning & Zoning Commission
Regular Meeting
March 19, 2024
Draft Minutes

SALLY DUPLICE
TOWN CLERK

The 1751st meeting of the Town of Stonington's Planning and Zoning Commission was held at the Stonington Board of Education Office, 40 Field Street, March 19, 2024. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chairman Charles Sheehan. Also present for the meeting were Ryan Deasy, Gary Belke, Bennett Brissette, Ben Philbrick, Lynn Conway, and Town Planner Clifton Iler. Andy Meek was not present.

Seated for the meeting were Charles Sheehan, Bennett Brissette, Gary Belke, Ryan Deasy, and Lynn Conway.

Per Chairman Sheehan, the Commission received a letter on 3/18/2024 from the applicant of item *PZ2322SPA & GPP Fair Housing of Connecticut, LLC (M. Ranelli)* that they have withdrawn their application.

Minutes:

Mr. Deasy made a motion to approve the minutes of February 20, 2024, seconded by Mr. Belke, all were in favor, 5-0.

Public Comment: None

Correspondence: None

Reports:

- Staff
- Commission
- Zoning Enforcement Violations
- Zoning Enforcement Report - February 2023
- Administrative Review

Old Business:

- a. **PZ2322SPA & GPP Fair Housing of Connecticut, LLC (M. Ranelli)** - Site Plan Application and Groundwater Protection Permit applications for an Affordable Housing Project submitted pursuant to C.G.S. 8-30g. Proposal consists of 120 single-family housing units and associated site improvements. Properties located at 207, 215, and an unaddressed parcel on Liberty Street, Pawcatuck; M/B/L: 16-4-12; 16-4-12A; 16-4-13
 - Public Hearing closed on 2/20/2024
 - As noted above, this application has been withdrawn and removed from the agenda

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Public Hearings:

PZ2401SUP & CAM Precious Memories Place Inc. (Eckersley, LLC)

Edward Wenke, Professional Engineer, briefly discussed the site and its current zoning regulations. It is serviced by municipal sewer and water. This proposal serves to increase the size of the building to allow additional space for more students as there is currently a long waiting list for this business' services. The proposal consists of adding two 'wings', each 16x24 feet with ten new students for each wing. Five additional parking spaces are included as well. There will be a minor increase to the impervious surface. The current bathroom count is adequate for the additional students. Mr. Wenke discussed the additional drainage which was also addressed with the Town Engineer. There is no encroachment on wetlands and Mr. Wenke is not aware of any traffic issues on this lot.

Mr. Wenke confirmed for the commission that their meeting with the Police Commission was postponed. The project does not need DOT approval. Mr. Wenke also confirmed that the parking has been adequate. The Commission confirmed that a detention system is not necessary, due to the parcel's location at the bottom of a watershed. The existing bathrooms will be accessed by students in the new 'wings' through the existing classrooms.

Staff Comments: Mr. Iler confirmed that this application has not been reviewed by the Police Commission however this Board can stipulate upon a potential motion that the applicant meets all needs of that Commission.

There were no public comments.

Mr. Deasy made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Ms. Conway, all were in favor, 5-0. The public hearing was closed at 7:21 PM.

Mr. Deasy made a motion to approve the application as submitted, including the approval of waivers, CAM application, and Special Use Permit, along with the two existing stipulations and an additional stipulation that all comments from the Police Commission are addressed. This was seconded by Ms. Conway, all were in favor, 5-0.

PZ2402SPA & CAM St. Edmund of Connecticut, Inc. (R. Avena, Esq.)

Robert Avena, Esq., briefly discussed that this application is not an attempt to expand on any non-conforming uses; they are looking to conduct renovations and even reduce some of the non-conformities.

Julie Bartlett, Architect, displayed and discussed renderings of the site and the location of buildings. Two buildings will be demolished along with a couple smaller sheds. The location of the largest constructed

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building in this application (Kenyon Cottage) is on the south-west portion of the island. The intent is to centralize the healing / recovering sector of this island's purpose.

Matt Stephan, Civil Engineer, discussed the objectives to enhance the campus experience, improve size accessibility, and minimize impacts from disturbance. Mr. Stephan also discussed the site itself, erosion and sediment control, the improved structures, lighting, etc. Further detail was given regarding Kenyon Cottage and its associated walkways and parking. There will be improved accessibility and a rear patio with outdoor seating space. Stormwater and utilities were also discussed in further detail.

Rachel Salch, BSC Group, Landscape Architect, discussed the landscaping plan, including a 'flowery, coastal image'. Ms. Salch discussed the location of evergreen trees at the corners of the 'cottage' and larger trees towards the rear of the building. Coastal, non-invasive plants will be found in the patio gardens. Ms. Salch displayed 3D renderings of the potential site.

Ms. Bartlett further discussed the overall design and architecture of the new proposed construction, including interior plans. Kenyon Cottage will have twelve 'standard' bedrooms with a resident assistant unit, a studio apartment, and an ADA unit, totaling 15 bedrooms. The building will be similar in architectural style to the Enders House. Construction will consist of insulated concrete, stone veneer, stucco, solar roof tiles where possible, etc.

The applicants provided further clarification to the 'layer cake' septic system style that is being proposed. Its lifespan is about 20 years. There will be gutters and downspouts that will tie into the existing stormwater system.

Atty Avena clarified information for the Commission regarding total parking spaces and the net change in bedrooms on the island. According to Atty Avena they will not be encroaching on the existing parking and there will be no net change in the number of bedrooms.

Father Tom Hoar, St. Edmund's Retreat, further clarified that bedrooms are being shifted across buildings but the overall count will not change.

The Commission asked for a clarification regarding structure height as the plans appeared to have an inconsistency. The Commission is seeking a better idea of the overall lighting plan relative to what is currently in place.

Per Father Tom, the desire for the 'recovery' center to be more secluded is important to the success of their mission.

The Commission asked for more information regarding the timeline of work and how it coincides with the seawall project. The applicants confirmed that they can provide this information and it is not their intention to have the two projects occur simultaneously.

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There was some confusion regarding the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) calculation and how exactly the numerator / denominators were determined. Per Atty Avena, they will address this in a future meeting.

The applicants clarified that there is no additional reserve area for the septic system which was approved by Ledge Light. The Commission would like to see the current reserved area dictated on the plans, along with a phasing plan for the project.

Father Tom discussed the traffic studies that were done on Mason's Island from 2004 and 2018 which can also be shared at the Commission's pleasure.

Staff Comments:

Mr. Iler indicated that the Town has received fifty-six **letters** in opposition of this project and twenty-four letters of support.

Public Comments:

Amy Souchuns, Attorney, Milford, spoke against this application. The issues mentioned by Atty Souchuns involved the FAR calculation, the overall bedroom count, amount of parking space, and ultimately a potential zoning violation due to these issues.

Fred Deichmann, 4 Ice Pond Rd, spoke against this application. There have been attempts to have a 2018 St. Edmund's Island Zoning Report go before a few different Town boards but was never done and should be, especially in regards to this application.

Frank Marco, 23 Skiff Lane, spoke against this application. The traffic count should not be analyzed in terms of percentage but as an overall count of drivers and visitors per day / year. Mr. Marco discussed the context of the ongoing court case between many residents of Mason's Island and St. Edmund's Retreat. Mr. Marco quotes comments from the Judge.

Kay Tower, 2 Yacht Club Road, spoke against this application. Ms. Tower would like more information regarding the parking on Ender's Island.

Ethan Tower, 2 Yacht Club Road, spoke against this application. Mr. Tower is concerned about parking lot expansion and that it was potentially done "unlawfully" in the past.

David Kenny, 7 Canberra Ct. spoke in favor and for general comments. Mr. Kenny has not seen changes in size of the parking lot or to traffic count. The mission of this island is important to the health of the community. Mr. Kenny confirmed that he lives in Bishops Cove.

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Staff Comments:

Mr. Iler clarified that there is an ongoing Zoning Board of Appeals application regarding the Zoning Enforcement Officer's findings for the potential expansion of the parking lot. This is due to be heard in April.

Rebuttal:

Atty Avena submitted into the record a number of letters that have been **directed** towards Father Tom for the Commission to read. Further clarification was given regarding the parking lot and the lack of changes that have occurred. The applicants are prepared to come back to the Commission with the information that was asked of them. Atty Avena clarified that the letters are not necessarily all from Stonington residents; some may be visitors to the island.

Father Tom Hoar spoke regarding his time on the island and its overall mission. He has lived there since 1993 and came as a student in 1969. Father Tom discussed the contested issues with some neighbors on Mason's Island and the associated court case that has ensued. According to Father Tom, there is an annual donation given to the Mason's Island Road fund. He questioned if the island is being treated the same as the Yacht Club by surrounding neighbors. He discussed that some residents of Mason's Island also visit Ender's Island. Father Tom discussed the island's benefit to the community and the merits of their current zoning designation.

Mr. Marco commented that regardless of the nature of the work and its intention, the law must be followed.

The Commission confirmed that all parties will be treated fairly and held to the same standards regarding the Town's zoning regulations.

Leonard Mattano, 184 Mason's Island Rd, explained that all traffic for both islands go by his property. Mr. Mattano has no issues with the traffic and commented on activity that occurred within the meeting room while Father Tom was speaking.

A gentleman from Ashford, Rhode Island, spoke in favor of this application and he himself was a resident at Enders Island and it helped him to become clean from his addictions. He claimed to have lived there in 2005 and that the parking lot has not changed since then.

Patricia Ludwig, 3 Yacht Club Rd, expressed concern regarding construction debris and rocks being left on the road where many kids play.

The Commission went through the list of items, which have been addressed throughout these minutes, that shall be updated for the next meeting.

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The Commission and the applicants discussed the timeline of continuing this application. The public hearing will have to be closed by April 16th and the discussion can be tabled until then; there can be an extension if requested by the applicants.

Mr. Deasy made a motion to table this public hearing until the Regular Meeting of April 16th, seconded by Ms. Conway, all were in favor, 5-0.

Mr. Deasy made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 9:18 PM.