

**SPECIAL MEETING
FINAL MINUTES**

The 1740th meeting of the Town of Stonington's Planning and Zoning Commission was held virtually via Microsoft Teams on Wednesday, October 25, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 7:00PM by Chairman Chuck Sheehan. Also present for the meeting were Commissioners Lynn Conway, Andy Meek, Gary Belke, and Alternate Bennett Brissette. Francisco Gomes, Project Lead from FHI Studio, was also present. Town Planner Clifton Iler joined later in the meeting. Commissioner Ryan Deasy and Alternate Ben Philbrick were not present.

Chairman Sheehan opened the meeting at 7:00 PM and ceded the floor to Mr. Gomes.

Mr. Gomes conducted a presentation covering the following agenda:

1. Discuss Phase One Status
2. Discuss Scope of Phase Two and Review Potential Phase Two Schedule
3. Discuss Potential November Workshop
4. Discuss Draft Online Survey
5. Discuss Priorities for Environmental Resource Protection, Sustainability, and Resilience Review and Amendments
6. Next Steps

The Phase Two schedule was discussed and agreed upon. Chairman Sheehan stated that he thought the extended schedule was much improved over what had previously been proposed and that it represents the minimum amount of time needed. He noted that the schedule may need to remain flexible to accommodate items that may require more time.

The online survey was discussed. Chairman Sheehan noted that the survey appears to cast a wide net. Commissioner Meek suggested that targeted follow-up surveys may be necessary. Chairman Sheehan concurred.

The workshops were discussed and Commissioner Conway recommended holding workshops at times other than just weekday evenings as a means of encourage participation.

Chairman Sheehan noted that combined heat and power developments should be included in the zoning review as a potential permitted use. He also noted that the update should address issues surrounding stormwater management, floodplains, best management practices for stormwater, and electric vehicle charging.

Commissioner Meek asked for a repository for content and research to be provided on Town website or another location available to Commissioners.

Guest Maggie Favretti of the Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed noted that there is a wealth of recent resilience and sustainability research from sources such as the Rockefeller Foundation.

Chairman Sheehan stated that the existing zoning regulations are archaic with respect to site design requirements and protection environmental resources.

Maggie Favretti emphasized the need to think regionally regarding the impacts of Stonington's zoning regulations.

Chairman Sheehan emphasized the importance of looking to surrounding communities and other best practice examples for ideas.

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Commissioner Meek asked about the protection of prime farmland and whether USDA farmland soils maps could be used as a guide. Chairman Sheehan replied that it is possible to combine those maps with GIS data for an analysis. Mr. Gomes replied that those maps are more relevant to the POCD planning process. The pending POCD update was briefly discussed and it was discussed that the more ideal sequence would be to conduct the POCD update and then update the zoning regulations. The POCD update is being advanced by the Town.

Maggie Favretti discussed the importance of low impact design and regenerative design and provided an overview of the features of regenerative design.

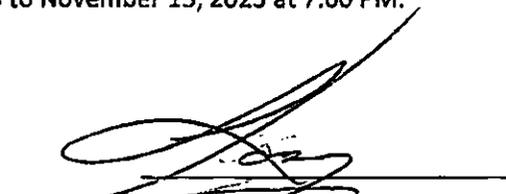
Maggie Favretti asked whether the zoning update would address issues surrounding coastal resiliency and explore tools such as requirements for elevation of homes and managed retreat from the shore. Mr. Gomes responded that all of those options would be discussed with the community. Discussion from multiple participants surround the need to balance the protection of century old or more development along the shore and in Mystic against the reality of impending sea level rise and more frequent and severe storm events. Maggie Favretti emphasized the need to communicate those impacts with the public with modeling, maps, and visuals. Chairman Sheehan concurred.

Commissioner Meek recommended that experts attend and present at zoning workshops.

Discussion was held regarding dates for the first zoning workshop. November 28 at 6:00 PM was identified as the preferred date. Mr. Gomes stated that he would follow up with Mr. Iler regarding the availability of a venue for that evening.

The Commission discussed upcoming meeting dates. In conversation with Mr. Iler, the Commission decided to cancel its next special meeting dated November 6, 2023. The Commission decided to reschedule its next virtual meeting from November 22, 2023 to November 15, 2023 at 7:00 PM.

Chairman Sheehan adjourned the meeting at 8:58 PM.


Lynn Conway, Secretary