

Regular Meeting

The 1536th meeting of the Town of Stonington's Planning and Zoning Commission was held Tuesday, February 17, 2015 at the Mystic Middle School, 204 Mistuxet Avenue, Mystic, CT. The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairman John Prue at 7:00pm. Present for the meeting were Commissioners John Prue, Curtis Lynch, and Frances Hoffman; Alternates Shaun Savoie and Gardner Young, and Town Planner Keith Brynes. Commissioners Bob Mercer and Ben Tamsky were absent.

Seated for the meeting were John Prue, Curtis Lynch, Frances Hoffman, Gardner Young, and Shaun Savoie.

Minutes:

Motion to accept the 1/13/15 minutes by Ms. Hoffman, seconded by Mr. Lynch. Motion approved 3-0-2.

Roll Call: Hoffman - approve, Lynch - approve, Young - approve, Prue - abstain, Savoie - abstain

Motion to accept the 2/3/15 minutes by Ms. Hoffman, seconded by Mr. Lynch. Motion approved 4-0-1.

Roll Call: Hoffman - approve, Lynch - approve, Young - approve, Savoie - approve, Prue - abstain

Commission Initiatives:

Discussion of Plan of Conservation and Development:

Mr. Brynes noted that the final draft of the POCD is complete, and the public hearing is scheduled for April 14, 2015 at 7:00pm at Mystic Middle School.

Discussion of Draft Regulations for Seasonal Agricultural Signs:

Mr. Brynes discussed the language to allow for the use of seasonal agricultural signs, based off of community event regulations and state agricultural guide. Purpose to assist in locating farm stands. Mr. Prue questioned how they can keep farms from posting them in the state right of ways. Ms. Hoffman discussed that sightline is more important. Mr. Brynes expressed that the regulation cannot regulate right of way placement. Mr. Prue suggested it coming before the planning department for a permit, Mr. Brynes is concerned many will just place them rather than go through a process. Mr. Lynch questioned the abuse of signage. Mr. Young questioned the type of signage, sandwich boards for farms versus store owners. Mr. Lynch questioned the safety issue of sandwich board signs. The commission agreed to move forward with finding a solution.

Reports:

Administrative Review:

Denny Smith - informal workshop regarding an "Intentional Community" for Stonington.

Mr. Smith spoke concerning a five lot subdivision of a 2.15 acre parcel in Pawcatuck. Mr. Smith named it an alternative development providing open space. Community planned and built around social ideals and goals, giving back through sustainability and a greener environment. Mr. Smith expressed his concern for sustainable communities. Mr. Smith proposed combining open space development, the draft agricultural regulations, intentional communities, permaculture and tiny houses. Mr. Smith proposed a regulation to remove buffer regulations to promote these communities. Mr. Lynch questioned the action item for the town. Mr. Smith explained he could currently complete this project with a variance, but this may be developed in multiple occurrences. Mr. Prue expressed that the idea needs some more work with staff before it can move forward. Mr. Lynch and Ms. Hoffman expressed that the idea need further development before any decision can be rendered.

Sea Research Foundation (Mystic Aquarium) - Request for clarification of the required permitting process for a proposed Food Truck Rally to be held in the Mystic Aquarium main parking lot from 4:00pm to 9:30pm on 5/15/15 and from 11:00am to 4:00pm on 5/16/15.

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Mr. Brynes explained the event and the regulations that may pertain. Keith Sorensen, VP of Facilities at Mystic Aquarium spoke regarding the application. Mr. Sorensen expressed that the aquarium could support the event even with regular attendance. Mr. Prue expressed a desire to hear more concrete numbers, Mr. Sorensen replied that they expect about 500. Mr. Prue questioned whether similar festivals have obtained special use permits. Mr. Brynes responded that no one has to date. The commission questioned alcohol at the event. Mr. Young questioned requiring a permit for this event would then require many festivals to obtain a permit retroactively. Mr. Savoie expressed that now it has been brought forward they should require events to be brought before the commission. Ms. Hoffman expressed that to protect the safety and public welfare, could be handled by a different means other than zoning. Monica Dmuchowski spoke regarding the liquor permits for the Aquarium, they are covered to serve on premises and off. Mr. Prue expressed that the TC-80 lends to this type of event.

Mr. Lynch moved that the Planning, Police, and Health Departments create a policy concerning special events, seconded by Mr. Young, all in favor 5-0, motion approved.

Ms. Hoffman moved to approve the event with the stipulation that it meets the police department approval, seconded by Mr. Lynch, all in favor 5-0, motion approved.

Old Business

PZ1502CAM Patrick & Sheila Herlihy (Peter Springsteel) – Coastal Area Management Review for demolition of an existing single family residence and construction of a new two-story SFR. Property located at 365 River Rd., Pawcatuck. Assessor's Map 8 Block 3 Lot 3. Zone RR-80.

Motion to table the application by Mr. Young, seconded by Mr. Savoie, all in favor 5-0, motion approved.

The meeting recessed at 8:06pm and reconvened at 8:12pm

Public Hearing

Ms. Hoffman recused herself from the public hearing.

PZ1418SUP & CAM Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center, Inc. - Special Use Permit & Coastal Area Management Review applications for the creation of a nature & heritage center. Site improvements include parking, sidewalks, trails, indoor and outdoor educational areas, and event spaces. Property located at 162 Greenmanville Ave., Mystic. Assessor's Map 172 Block 2 Lot 5. Zones RM-15 & RA-40.

Mr. Brynes brought the commission up to date with the process thus far. Currently it is in the rebuttal process. Mr. Frost stated that the January 30th drawings are the most up to date for the purposes of the commission, some minor technical changes have been made and submitted to town engineer. Mr. Prue questioned whether it would need to come before Inland Wetlands Commission, Mr. Frost explained that nothing has been made larger and an extensive drainage study has been completed and works as it should. Mr. Frost explained the changes to site plan since the previous hearing. The southern driveway was moved to the far southern end of the property, this allow for two additional parking spots. Changes were approved by the Police Commission and the Town Engineer is now satisfied with plans. Mr. Frost explained the erosion & sedimentation control and drainage plans for the site development. Mr. Frost spoke of programs which took place at the Nature Center and Coogan Farm in the past year, the difficulty of quantifying future events, and suggested choosing a limitation that would require Coogan Farm to provide sufficient offsite parking, further explaining the network of community partners that will be called upon to provide additional parking. Mr. Prue questioned the onsite threshold, and Mr. Frost responded that events beyond 100 people would require additional parking.

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Mr. Brynes stated the recommended stipulations for the application. Mr. Lynch expressed concern regarding the event policy.

Public Comment in Favor:

Harry White, volunteer and fundraiser for the Nature Center and Coogan Farm, spoke concerning events at Coogan Farm. The values of the donors and volunteers of the farm guarantee responsible event hosting by the farm.

Steve White, President and CEO of Mystic Seaport, spoke in support of the nature of the project. Mr. White expressed his desire for the commission to favor the application and regarding the farm becoming a gateway to Mystic. Mr. White also expressed support for parking for events on behalf of Mystic Seaport.

Public Comment Against:

Michael McQuade, owner McQuade's Marketplace, has been a supporter but has concerns regarding parking near the supermarket at the trailhead. Mr. McQuade proposed additional spots to the three parallel spots proposed.

Mr. Frost explained the parking developed by the farm. Mr. Frost explained that neighborhood access points to trails typically are planned for two parking spaces. The current plan allows for six, three existing and three parallel to be built if needed.

Mr. Lynch moved to close the public hearing, seconded by Mr. Young, all in favor 4-0, motion approved.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Young, seconded by Mr. Lynch, all in favor 4-0, motion approved. The meeting adjourned at 9:11pm.