

Special Meeting

The 1556th meeting of the Town of Stonington's Planning and Zoning Commission was held Tuesday, December 1, 2015, at the Mystic Middle School, 204 Mistuxet Avenue, Mystic, CT. The meeting was called to order by Chairman John Prue at 7:00pm. Also present for the meeting were Commissioners Curtis Lynch, Gardner Young, David Rathbun, and Frances Hoffman; Alternate Harry Boardsen, and Town Planner Keith Brynes.

Seated for the meeting were John Prue, Gardner Young, Curtis Lynch, David Rathbun, and Harry Boardsen.

Commission Initiatives:

Mr. Lynch met with the Economic Development Commission and would like to take their priorities into consideration for items they need to work together on.

Administrative Review:

PZ1132SUP & CAM Clara M. Coogan Trust – Special Use Permit & Coastal Area Management Review Applications for phased development of a 245-unit Congregate Living Facility (Masonicare) on 18.02 acres to be created through subdivision of a ±52.07 acre parcel. Phase 1 proposes 125 units and Phase 2 proposes 120 units. Property located at 162 Greenmanville Ave., Mystic. Assessor's Map 172 Block 2 Lot 5. Zones RM-15 & RA-40. Request approval for changes to site plan and architectural design.

The item was tabled.

ZON15-236 National RR Passenger Corp. – Zoning Permit application for retail restaurant (Mystic Depot Roasters) in existing Amtrak station. Property located at 2 Roosevelt Ave., Mystic. Assessor's Map 174 Block 17 Lot 5. Zone LS-5.

Mr. Brynes explained the application for a small café and gift shop in the existing train station. There will be 8 seats in the café, and although there are no parking standards for train stations in the regulations, there is sufficient parking in the area. Applicants David & Sherrie Crompton noted that they are contractually required to be open from 7:00am to 9:00pm, retain 10 seats for Amtrak passengers, and maintain the ticket kiosk and informational brochure rack.

Mr. Lynch moved to approve the application, seconded by Mr. Young, all in favor 5-0, motion approved.

PZ0671SUP Stonington Lodge Odd Fellows Corp. – Special Use Permit Application for rehabilitation of existing structure as per ZR 6.6.14. Rehabilitation includes 1st floor retail; 2nd, 3rd and 4th floor residential; parking & landscaping. Request 4-year extension for completion of project.

Mr. Brynes summarized the request, stating that they expect project completion by 2017. Due to the recession and structural issues they have fallen behind schedule.

Mr. Rathbun moved to approve the extension, seconded by Mr. Young, all in favor 5-0, motion approved.

Commission:

Discussion of the Town's Incentive Housing Grant Planning Program with consultant, Milone and MacBroom and the Affordable Housing Commission

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Becky Parkin and Rebecca Auger from Milone and MacBroom presented about the Town's Incentive Housing Grant Planning Program. Ms. Parkin explained how Incentive Housing Zones (IHZ) are regulatory tools that provide incentives for developers to build residential or mixed-use developments with at least 20% of units designated as affordable. There are several guidelines that must be followed for financial incentives. Based on a rise in the median income and a drop in home values, the affordability is increasing. For renters, Stonington's housing is not affordable. Only 4% of all Stonington units meet the statutory definition for affordable housing. Mr. Rathbun questioned whether the Borough was included in their statistics. Ms. Auger explained that the state will be looking at the median income for the entire town. Mr. Lynch asked what the process for applying for preliminary determination requires. Ms. Auger stated they must submit draft regulations for approval by the state. The study is beginning to look at statistics and possible sites. Milone and MacBroom will be creating conceptual plans for specific sites to determine how this will fit into the community. Ms. Auger explained that this zone is looked at on an individual site basis. Mr. Prue asked whether there were any size parameters for consideration of potential sites. Mr. Brynes explained that at this early stage only a few sites have been identified.

Tom Hyland, representative from the Affordable Housing Commission, questioned information in the Milone and MacBroom report that states that the targeted affordable rental and mortgage costs would not be significantly lower than market rate, but then recommends IHZs in Mystic and Pawcatuck villages. Ms. Auger explained that these units would be deed restricted affordable, thus protecting them from future increases in the housing market. Mr. Hyland requested a clarification of that be included into the report. Mr. Prue asked whether the Spruce Meadows and Spruce Ridge affordable housing data had been included in the study. Mr. Brynes said they had not and their impact would be likely negligible as only a small number will be affordable. Mr. Prue said he'd like to see that data included in an update.

Carlene Donnarummo stated that she would like to know what sites are being looked considered. Mr. Prue and Mr. Young noted that, as this is only the preliminary stage, we should wait for the conceptual presentation proposed for March, allowing Milone and MacBroom time to see if any sites under consideration will fit the basic requirements such as public utilities and transportation. Commissioners were in favor of waiting for more solid plans before releasing information on prospective sites. Additionally, property owners would need to be consulted prior to any public discussion. Ben Tamsky agreed with Ms. Donnarummo that both the specific properties and the parameters used for property consideration should be disclosed. Mr. Brynes stated that he is looking at under-utilized properties of no specific size, but would be suitable for development. Ms. Auger explained that they will return with their site recommendations at the January 19th meeting to allow the commission to review and select their top 2 sites. Blunt White, Economic Development Commission, asked about controls regarding aesthetics. Ms. Auger explained that the regulations can be finely drafted to allow for design guidelines in the IHZ. This zone can also allow mixed use development. Mr. White questioned the Area Medium Income (AMI) figure, noting it seemed high and wondered how it compared with other areas of the state.

The meeting recessed at 8:07pm and reconvened at 8:12pm.

Ms. Hoffman arrived.

Minutes:

Mr. Rathbun moved to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2015 meeting, seconded by Mr. Boardsen, all in favor 4-0-1.

Roll Call: Young - approve, Lynch - approve, Rathbun - approve, Boardsen - approve, Prue - abstain

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Ms. Hoffman was seated.

Mr. Young moved to approve the minutes of the November 4, 2015, meeting, seconded by Ms. Hoffman, all in favor 4-0-1.

Roll Call: Young - approve, Lynch - approve, Prue – approve, Hoffman - approve, Rathbun - abstain

Commission Initiatives:

Discussion of 2015 Plan of Conservation and Development Implementation Schedule.

Mr. Brynes explained that the PZC has 24 implementation tasks from the 2015 POCDD that they need to prioritize. When asked by Mr. Lynch what the Economic Development Commission's top priorities for implementation are, Mr. White stated the HM-1 zone and making the Aquarium exist "by right," both PZC tasks. Mr. Prue questioned whether the commission should be updating the M-1 zone or adopting the HM-1 zone. The commission discussed viewing the mill properties for clarification. Mr. Young discussed taking care of quick tasks. Mr. Prue discussed taking care of the larger tasks since the time is right for making these changes. The commission decided their first two priorities are the subdivision regulations and looking at the M-1, HM-1, and IHRD zones. Ms. Hoffman recommended looking at the tasks of open space and low impact development.

Mr. Rathbun moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Lynch, all in favor 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:54pm.



Frances Hoffman, Secretary