

Special Meeting

The 1615th meeting of the Town of Stonington's Planning and Zoning Commission was held Tuesday, June 5, 2018 at the Mystic Middle School, 204 Mistuxet Avenue, Mystic, CT. The meeting was called to order by Chairman David Rathbun at 7:00pm. Also present for the meeting were Commissioners Gardner Young, Ben Philbrick, and Shaun Mastroianni; Alternate Fred Deichmann; and Director of Planning Jason Vincent. Town Planner Keith Brynes, Commissioner Curtis Lynch, and Alternates Robert Hannon and Lynn Conway were absent.

Seated for the meeting David Rathbun, Shaun Mastroianni, Ben Philbrick, Gardner Young, and Fred Deichmann.

Minutes:

Mr. Mastroianni moved to approve the minutes of the May 15, 2018 meeting, seconded by Mr. Young, all in favor 5-0, motion approved.

Commission:

Russell Sergeant – Preliminary discussion regarding a potential Zoning Regulation Amendment to allow Residential Mixed Use by Special Use Permit in the GC-60 (General Commercial) Zoning District.

Mr. Sergeant presented the proposal. The Wilcox building at 19 Old Stonington Rd., has struggled to find a use for the second floor of their building. In 2006, the regulations encouraged protection of the availability of commercial property, with some mixed-use potential. However, the option for attached housing was removed. Mr. Sergeant is proposing a text amendment for the GC-60 zone, reviewing where there is GC-60 zoning throughout the town, noting the varied uses in them. In 2007, the PZC approved a site plan to build an addition and make the second floor of the 19 Old Stonington Rd. building handicap accessible with an elevator. The recession hit and the property has still not been leased. Mr. Sergeant reviewed the study done of the village fringe areas and the Plan of Conservation and Development. The density requirements for the GC-60 zone are prohibitive to mixed use. Mr. Sergeant reviewed Smart Growth principles, discussing those GC-60 area with public utilities. Mr. Sergeant reviewed the proposed amendment, noting they have received seven letters of support for the amendment. Mr. Deichmann questioned whether this should be restricted to village areas. Mr. Mastroianni asked if he saw any negative impacts. Mr. Sergeant stated that we have progressed and now apartments have a stronger demand than single family detached housing. The commission responded that they could submit a regulation text amendment application.

Public Hearing:

PZ1811RA Readco, LLC (T. Ladwig) – Regulation Text Amendment to modify ZR 6.6.20 Height Exceptions for Roof Structures and Architectural Features. Remove 5 percent of building footprint / 200 square foot maximum for commercial structures. Modify ZR 6.6.20.2 to add Commission option to require screening of rooftop equipment as deemed necessary.

Attorney Ladwig presented on behalf of the applicant. The applicant is proposing to remove the limitation for Height Exceptions for Roof Structures and Architectural Features for commercial buildings. The applicant has met with architects and they have responded that it the limitation encourages poorer design and larger boxes. The Architectural Review Design Board has recommended approval of this amendment.

Attorney William Sweeney presented a brief on the proposed text amendment. The current regulation allows for certain roof structures and architectural features, but has a cap. The applicant is proposing to remove the cap for commercial buildings but keep the cap for residential properties. Mr. Sweeney stated that the current regulations encourage bad design and reviewed what the cap means for different size buildings. Mr. Sweeney reviewed a building that will be proposed for medical offices in Pawcatuck. They are in need of this height

Special Meeting

exception for the rooftop units and architectural features. Without this, there will be no screening of the rooftop units and the building will be a box.

Mr. Deichmann questioned what the percentage is for the building they are proposing and whether it is consistent in commercial zones. Mr. Sweeney responded that it really depends on the specific property and does not recommend creating an arbitrary cap, but rather give the commission flexibility to deem what is right for the building. Mr. Philbrick commented about the centralization of the equipment on the roof. They cannot always be centralized, but this would allow for screening of the units and give the flexibility for the commission to weigh in.

No Public Comment in Favor

No Public Comment Against

General Public Comment:

Mr. Vincent read comments from Carlene Donnarummo into the record.

Rebuttal:

Mr. Sweeney stated that this is not carte blanche and must go through the special use permit process. This will allow flexibility, but still the control of the commission without creating black and white rules that prevent good design.

Mr. Mastroianni questioned adding the screening for residential and commercial properties. Mr. Sweeney stated they do not have an issue with that.

Mr. Vincent reviewed the staff's analysis of the text amendment in the staff report. Mr. Vincent discussed shall vs. may language and the variance process. He recommended to allow relief when possible through this commission to make best judgement. Building standards have changed over the years and zoning does not currently take this into consideration.

Mr. Mastroianni moved to close the public hearing, seconded by Mr. Philbrick, all in favor 5-0, motion approved.

Mr. Mastroianni moved to approve the draft resolution with a modification, seconded by Mr. Philbrick, the commission discussed a percentage limit as well as setbacks. The draft resolution includes the Commission's option to require screening of rooftop equipment as deemed necessary. Mr. Mastroianni amended his motion to include a cap of the 75% of the roof area. The amendment was seconded by Mr. Young, all in favor 5-0, motion approved.

Modification:

1. Roof structures and/or architectural features shall not exceed 75% of the roof area.

Mr. Mastroianni moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Philbrick, all in favor 5-0, the meeting adjourned at 8:21pm.



Shaun Mastroianni, Secretary