

Special Meeting

The 1597th meeting of the Town of Stonington's Planning and Zoning Commission was held Tuesday, August 15, 2017, at the Mystic Middle School, 204 Mistuxet Avenue, Mystic, CT. The meeting was called to order by Chairman David Rathbun at 6:30pm. Also present for the meeting were Commissioners Curtis Lynch, Gardner Young, Frances Hoffman, and Shaun Mastroianni; Alternates Harry Boardsen, Lynn Conway, and Ben Philbrick; Town Planner Keith Brynes, and Director of Planning Jason Vincent.

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

Administrative Review:

17-174ZON White Rock Development – Zoning permit application to remove topsoil on west side and install gravel for the storage of incidental goods. Property located at 25 White Rock Rd., Pawcatuck. Assessor's Map 17 Block 2 Lot 5. Zone HI-60.

The applicant is proposing to remove topsoil and install gravel to store large slabs of stone. Outdoor storage is not allowed in the setbacks and must be screened from the road. The Town Engineer has provided comments to be incorporated as stipulations of approval.

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

Stipulations:

1. Outdoor storage shall be a minimum of 25' from all property lines.
2. Screening shall be installed on existing chain link fence as proposed by the applicant.
3. Parking shall not be allowed on the gravel area.
4. No net fill is allowed with this application.
5. Erosion and sedimentation controls shall be established prior to removal of top soil.

17-184ZON Mystic Senior Property, LLC – Zoning permit application to renovate four residential 2-bedroom units to three 1-bedroom units, three studio units, and one community room. Property located at 186 Jerry Browne Rd, Mystic. Assessor's Map 150 Block 1 Lot 25. Zones RA-40 & GBR-130.

Stoneridge is applying to renovate four two-bedroom units to three one-bedroom units, three studio units and one community room. There will be more units but be less bedrooms. Mr. Mastroianni asked how many assisted living units they will have and whether they will be mixed in with regular residential. Allison Ramirez, applicant, stated that the interior corridor will be within the independent living and will keep people with similar needs together. The idea was proposed by the resident council.

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

17-185ZON TOS Recreation Department – Zoning permit application for 2 storage sheds: 8' x 8' and 4' by 8'. Property located at 166 So. Broad St., & 35 Extrusion Dr., Pawcatuck. Assessor's Map 25 Block 1 Lot 19 & Map 36 Block 4 Lot 3. Zones RR-80 & M-1.

The applicant is proposing two storage sheds at the high school/Human Services building. The proposed sheds in in conformance with the zoning regulations.

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

Zoning Enforcement & Violations:

Mr. Vincent gave an overview of their work being done to address blighted properties in Town.

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The meeting recessed at 6:46pm and reconvened at 7:00pm.

Seated for the public hearings were David Rathbun, Shaun Mastroianni, Curtis Lynch, Frances Hoffman, and Gardner Young.

Public Hearing 7:00pm:

PZ1717SPA & CAM Stone Acres Farm – Site Plan and Coastal Area Management Site Plan Review applications for Phase One development, including roadways & paths, locations of utilities & new septic system, & the proposed repurposing of the carriage barn. Property located at 381 North Main St., Stonington. Assessor's Map 81 Block 1 Lot 2. Zone AHD.

Attorney William Sweeney presenting on behalf of the applicant, explained the application is for critical infrastructure for future development and modifications to the carriage house for the first phase of development.

Clint Brown, Project Engineer, presented the site plan. Mr. Brown reviewed the site access, noting that the current drive into the site will only be used for deliveries, special access, and fire department access. The primary driveway will be used to access the site and parking. The applicant will be removing 35 feet of stone wall, 30 feet on either side will need to be shortened by a foot, and two trees will be removed. The stone wall being removed will be reused on the site and new trees will be planted. Mr. Brown reviewed the parking area, stating that there will be 162 gravel and grass parking spaces and 7 paved ADA compliant spaces. They will be implementing the full amount of parking in this phase, with parking areas lit by lights that direct away from North Main Street and will only be on when parking is in use. As there is no requirement for extensive stormwater management controls, they are proposing two swales and a level spreader. Mr. Brown reviewed the proposed well water and septic plans. There will be a new transformer installed and underground conduits in order to avoid power lines on the site. DEEP reviewed the plan and stated it was in conformance with the Coastal Area Management Act.

Julia Leeming, Project Architect, presented the current carriage barn and historical use. The main entrances will be moved to the north and east rather than the south due to the new access road. The goal is to balance all of the elevations. The south elevation will be restored to its more historic look. The carriage house will serve as a market for fruits, vegetables and flowers grown at Stone Acres. They will also have local artisan foods around the periphery of the market. There will be a cheese shop, ice cream counter, and a bakery. The local goods will also be available as prepared foods for consumption on site or to take away. Mr. Lynch posed questions regarding ADA, fire, septic and food permit compliance.

Attorney Sweeney stated that they do not have an issue with the proposed stipulations recommended by staff. The applicant will be working with the northern neighborhood on improvements to the stone wall and a planting plan. Ms. Hoffman questioned whether the applicant would be comfortable with keeping the application open for additional comments from Ledge Light. The applicant requested that the commission take action to not further delay the improvements. Mr. Lynch questioned the removal of the two trees and clarification on the replanting. In response to Ms. Conway's clarification on signage, she was there will only be a small sign stating the name of the farm.

Public Comment in Favor:

Dave Hammond, chair of the Economic Development commission spoke in support of the application and reiterated the community's support and that it is in line with the previously approved master plan.

Juliet Hodge, resident spoke in support of the application and its benefit to the community.

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Public Comment Against/General Comment:

Kevin Blacker, stated that he has concerns with the ownership of the property. He remains concerned that this zone is detrimental to other farms.

Mr. Brynes reviewed the recommended stipulations. Mr. Rathbun recommended a stipulation that the plans be reviewed to the satisfaction of the Town Engineer and Ledge Light Health District.

Mr. Philbrick questioned the swales, Mr. Brown stated that they are rated for the 25-year storm and he believes they are adequate.

Ms. Conway stated that there should be more time given to master plan projects.

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

The commission discussed the stipulations.

Mr. Lynch moved to approve the application with the five stipulations recommended by staff with an additional stipulation that the plans are to the satisfaction of the Town Engineer and Ledge Light Health District, that the plans are consistent with the coastal area management act and the scenic road ordinance, seconded by Mr. Young. The commission discussed the stone wall location. Mr. Lynch amended his motion to add a stipulation to direct the Department of Planning to evaluate stone wall modifications as a part of the scenic road ordinance. The vote was taken all in favor 5-0, the motion was approved.

Stipulations:

1. Final plans shall be recorded prior to the issuance of any Zoning Permits.
2. The applicant shall post an Erosion and Sedimentation Control Bond prior to the issuance of any Zoning Permits per the requirements of Section 8.6.3 of the Zoning Regulations. The bond amount shall be established by the Town Engineer after an estimate of the costs of installing and maintaining appropriate erosion and sedimentation control measures is provided by the applicant and approved by the Town Engineer. Work shall remain bonded for a minimum of one year from the date of completion.
3. Final plans shall include design for northern buffer to be approved by Staff after the applicant's consultation with the adjacent property owner.
4. Final plans shall include relocation of the portion of stone wall along North Main Street that will be removed for the new main entrance and sightlines.
5. Two existing street trees specified on plans north of the proposed main driveway shall be removed and replaced by the applicant in an appropriate location that heightens the scenic qualities of the roadway after consultation with the Stonington Tree Warden.
6. Final plans shall be reviewed to the satisfaction of the Town Engineer and Ledge Light Health District.
7. Department of Planning shall work with the applicant to evaluate alternatives to the proposed stone wall modifications required for the driveway entrance; the Department shall report back to the Commission on which options were evaluated and conclusions reached as part of the Scenic Road Ordinance.

The meeting recessed at 8:20pm at reconvened at 8:26pm.

Public Hearing:

PZ1718RA & ZC Town of Stonington PZC (PV-5) – Zoning Regulation Text Amendment to create a new Zoning District (PV-5), and Zoning Map amendment to rezone downtown Pawcatuck from DB-5 and LS-5 to PV-5. Zone change includes some properties on Jameson Ct., Mechanic Street., Blanchard La., Palmer St., West Broad St., Liberty St., Noyes Ave., Cogswell St., Chase St., Lincoln Ave., Stanton St., Prospect St., and Lester Ave.

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Keith Brynes, Town Planner, presented the application. The purpose of this application is to assist the redevelopment of the Pawcatuck neighborhood. The application will not change any current zoning lines, the currently zoned commercial area LS-5 and DB-5 will become PV-5. This will allow more uses, change bulk requirement, streamlines permitting process, provides parking flexibility, increases density, and provides additional signage. The application proposes to allow A-Frame signs with rules. Mr. Lynch asked Mr. Brynes to review the conservation commissions concerns. Mr. Brynes stated that they recommended additional buffers. They conducted a public workshop and the draft regulation were very favorable to Pawcatuck residents. The commission discussed the proposed height limits.

Blunt White, asked the commission's vision for the Campbell Grain Building.

Mr. Brynes stated that in 2005 the commission looked into plans for the site, and it is eligible for the NDD tool.

Russell Sargent, questioned the density calculations and change of use process.

Ms. Hoffman questioned whether public space came up in the workshop. Mr. Brynes said it came up, but is difficult to mandate in a regulation. Mr. Vincent recommended adding wording to the purpose to show desire for public access to the river. Tax Increment Financing is also an option to incentivize the goals of the town. The commission asked the Department of Planning to research the concept further.

Public Comment in Favor:

Dave Hammond, chair of the economic development commission spoke in support of the application and stated that EDC will make it a goal to focus on public open space. The commission has submitted written testimony as well. Mr. Hammond reiterated points from the letter.

Blunt White, member of the economic development commission spoke in support of the application and the fact that the majority of the properties are not currently compliant and this will assist with bringing the properties into compliance and better redevelopment.

Michael Morales, property owner in the proposed zone, stated that going vertical makes sense for this neighborhood due to the rail line that runs through the area. This will give residences sightlines to the river giving better value to those properties. Mr. Morales stated that mixed use is best for this area and those living above commercial uses look out for the area.

James Stanton, resident of Mystic stated that Pawcatuck has been stagnant for many years and is hopeful that this will inspire change for Pawcatuck.

Jim Lathrop, owner of Best Energy at 4 Mechanic Street stated that he supports the regulation changes and states that the density and population increase is what Pawcatuck needs. Mr. Lathrop stated that he would like the commission to consider the residential side of Lincoln Ave and part of Chase Street. Mr. Lathrop spoke in support of the increase in signage and its benefit to business.

Steven Cappizano, business owner on Cogswell Street, spoke in support of the application and the concept of separating the Mystic and Pawcatuck villages. Mr. Cappizano asked the commission to move forward with the application a tweak it as needed.

Lisa Konicki, president of the Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce, stated that treating this as a different village and different need is the right direction for the town. Ms. Konicki stated that this will be a big step in the right direction for Pawcatuck.

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Sam Cherenzia, business owner at 99 Mechanic Street spoke in support of the application.

Sal Ritacco, resident of Pawcatuck spoke in support of the application and its benefit to the community.

Public Comment Against:

Gail Shea read the testimony of Dora Hill. Ms. Hill stated that new zone is unnecessary to improve the area and is overdone. Ms. Hill recommended amending specific current regulations to allow some additional uses and more density.

Gail Shea, resident of Pawcatuck, stated she previously spoke against giving Department of Planning staff the ability to make decisions, stating the same should occur in this proposed zone, with more power be with the commission.

Carlene Donnarummo, stated that she does not agree with the definition of downtown Pawcatuck as stated in the proposed regulations. Ms. Donnarummo proposed removing the LS-5 section from the proposed map and Mechanic Street. She is also concerned with the buffer of 10 feet to residential zones. She recommended making alterations to the DB-5 zone to accommodate redevelopment. Ms. Donnarummo is also concerned with density and height. Ms. Donnarummo again stated that the commission should be reviewing applications above the staff.

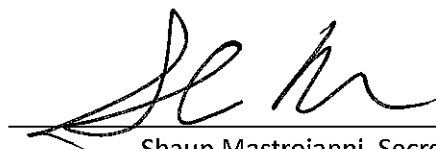
General Comment:

Paul Sartor, resident of Mystic, stated that he hopes that the development will be geared towards residents rather than tourists. He is also concerned with the commission having staff make permit decisions.

Dana Basso, resident of Lester Avenue, decided to retire here for the small-town feel, is concerned with some of the businesses in the area that are not good for the community and is concerned about traffic.

The public hearing will be continued to the September 19, 2017 meeting.

Mr. Lynch moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Hoffman, all in favor 5-0, the meeting adjourned at 10:32pm.



Shaun Mastroianni, Secretary