

Special Meeting

The 1652nd meeting of the Town of Stonington's Planning and Zoning Commission was held Tuesday, February 4, 2020, at the Stonington Board of Education District Office, 40 Field Street, Pawcatuck, CT. The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by Chairman David Rathbun. Also present for the meeting were Commissioners Gardner Young, Lynn Conway, and Ben Philbrick; Alternates Charles Sheehan and Ryan Deasy; and Acting Director of Planning/Town Planner Keith Brynes. Commissioner Fred Deichmann and Alternate Peter Chomowicz were not in attendance.

Seated for the meeting David Rathbun, Gardner Young, Lynn Conway, and Ben Philbrick.

Minutes:

Mr. Young moved to approve the minutes of the January 7, 2020 meeting, seconded by Mr. Philbrick, the vote was taken 3-0-1, motion approved.

Roll Call: Rathbun – abstain, Young – approve, Conway – approve, Philbrick - approve

Seated for the meeting was David Rathbun, Ben Philbrick, Gardner Young, Lynn Conway, and Ryan Deasy.

PZ1931SUP Eckersley, LLC (Precious Memories Place, Inc.) – Special Use Permit (SUP) application for modification of previously approved SUP. Modifications include: the addition of 3 more students for a total of 123, addition of 1 new parking space, enclosure of 60 SF deck for classroom expansion, and enclosure of existing Bilco steps (60 SF). Property located at 168 Greenmanville Ave., Mystic. Assessor's Map 172 Block 2 Lot 4. Zones RA-40 & RM-15. *Continued from 1/21/20.*

At the applicant's request, the Public Hearing will be continued to the February 18, 2020 meeting.

PZ1928ZC & SPA J&H Hospitality (CME Assoc.) - Zone Change Map Amendment and Site Plan applications for a zone change to Neighborhood Development District (NDD), and construction of two new hotels, adding a total of 217 new hotel rooms in two buildings totaling 142,170 SF. Property located at 6 Coogan Blvd. & Village Farm Rd. / Clara Drive., Mystic. Assessor's Map 164 Block 4 Lot 4 & Map 171 Block 2 Lot 1. Zone TC-80. *Continued from 1/7/20.*

Pete Parent, project engineer discussed the narrative submitted regarding use of the NDD and photos for the record. He read the narrative into the record. Mr. Deasy asked if changes had been made to the site plan to address the Nature Center's concerns. Mr. Parent stated they have not made any changes, but have spoken with the Nature Center and would offer to increase the buffer but it would remove a row of parking required for the town's parking calculation. Ms. Conway stated they had asked for renderings of the property. Mr. Parent stated the applicant did not want to undergo that expense until the site plan application and NDD definition concerns are addressed. The applicant has proposed a 20-foot landscaped buffer. Mr. Sheehan asked what the buffer requirements would be in the TC-80 zone. Mr. Brynes clarified what is written in the regulations. If there was one hotel built, they could fit it within the regulations. Mr. Sheehan stated he does not feel their narrative explains why they would justify rezoning and reducing those buffer requirements next to a nature conservancy. Mr. Sheehan asked about the traffic study in relation to Village Farm Road. Mr. Sheehan asked about the stormwater management system proposed and how it can manage a 100-year storm. The underground retention system is designed to store and meter out flows, but the Town Engineer has not yet signed off. The applicant understands the moratorium and knows it may be about a year, but they have an 18-month

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construction process at least after the permitting process. Mr. Sheehan is still concerned with approving a project without WPCA being able to comment for a zone change that intensifies the use.

Public Comment Against:

Davnet Schaffer, Executive Director of the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center stated they have reached out to the agencies involved in the Coogan Farm conservancy. Ms. Schaffer shared the comments about its reasons for their grant and its protection. The protection is for two watersheds and several wildlife species. She stated that they were told they would receive renderings of the view from their property which were never provided. They also had not been contacted about access via a trail to their property which would break up the land and negatively impact the property. They feel the application does not meet the standards of the NDD.

Stephen Dodd, resident of Stonington and Trustee for the Nature Center stated he spoke with the Trust for Public Land which provided comments stating the NDD was inappropriate for the area and provided recommendations which Mr. Dodd submitted to the record. The recommendations were meant to minimize impact to the protected property. Mr. Dodd discussed the proposed trail connection which is not required and the Nature Center is against due to fragmentation of the land. Mr. Dodd spoke about Masonicare's collaboration with them on their project. There is not a view issue from the major points of Coogan Farm currently, and they would like the renderings to better understand the potential view impact.

Carlene Donnarummo, resident, spoke about her concerns with the application. She stated that this application does not fit the definition of the NDD zone. Ms. Donnarummo pointed out the word reclamation from the definition being that it was a vacant lot, and there was nothing to reclaim. It also does not provide housing opportunities as stated in the purpose. The applicant has not submitted renderings that would allow the necessary decisions by reviewing agencies and commissions.

General Comment:

June Strunk, Second Selectwoman for the Town of Stonington, stated that WPCA has two projects to complete in order to divert flows to the Stonington Borough facility and an INI study which could take two years or more. The Town is also currently seeking a new Town Engineer and that may take some time, but this project requires review.

Ben Tamsky read comments regarding zone changes and the serious decision making required. Mr. Tamsky also spoke about the timeline for the application and urged that all five regular members vote on the application.

Rebuttal:

Mr. Parent stated that the trail was a discussion with previous staff at the very beginning which the owner may have misconstrued as a requirement. They are happy to assist with wayfinding to the existing trailhead rather than create another connection. Mr. Philbrick asked about night sky renderings, however the applicant chose not to provide any renderings at this time.

Mr. Brynes reviewed the required decisions for the application and the timeline for the application. Mr. Brynes also reviewed the suggested stipulations from the staff report.

Mr. Sheehan reiterated his concerns with the application prior to the close of the public hearing.

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

Ms. Conway asked whether the commission should wait.

Mr. Philbrick moved to approve the application with the recommended stipulations, seconded by Mr. Young. Mr. Deasy stated he does not feel the applicant conforms with the purpose of the NDD zone and that they have not made enough of an effort to modify the plan to accommodate the commission's concerns. The commission agreed with his comments. The vote was taken all opposed, 0-5, the motion failed.

Mr. Philbrick moved to approve the waivers, seconded by Mr. Deasy, the vote was taken 1-4, the motion failed.

Roll Call: Rathbun – oppose, Philbrick - oppose, Young – approve, Conway – oppose, Deasy - oppose

Mr. Philbrick moved to approve conformance with the POCD, seconded by Mr. Deasy, the vote was taken 0-5, the motion failed.

Mr. Philbrick moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Young, all in favor 5-0, the meeting adjourned at 8:16pm.



Ben Philbrick, Secretary