

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
TOWN OF SOUTHTON
JANUARY 5, 2021

The Planning & Zoning Commission of the Town of Southington held a regular meeting on Tuesday, January 5, 2021 via WebEx teleconference. Robert Hammersley, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

The following participated:

Robert Salka, Jeff Gworek, Susan Locks, Christina Volpe & Peter Santago

Alternates: Theresa Albanese, Joe Coviello * & Caleb Cowles

Staff:

Robert Phillips, Director of Planning & Community Development
James Grappone, Ass't Town Engineer

Absent: Alternate Stuart Savelkoul

(*Joined meeting in progress)

The Chair announced James Macchio had resigned. Therefore, he seated Alternate Theresa Albanese for this evening's meeting. He further seated Alternate Commissioner Cowles for Ms. Locks (she was going in and out). A quorum was determined.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag was recited by everyone participating being led by Kayleigh Phillips.

A Moment of Silence was observed by everyone.

ROBERT HAMMERSLEY, Chair, presiding:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting of December 15, 2020

Mr. Salka made a motion to approve as presented. Mr. Santago seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

BUSINESS MEETING

A. Eleni Real Estate, LLC, site plan modification application for a two-story office/retail building, property located at 1615 West Street, in the WSB zone, parcel size. 2.13 acres (SPR #1802), tabled from December 15

Mr. Bovino asked for a table on this matter. There being no objection from the commission, the Chair said the item would continue to be tabled.

B. Mount Southington, site plan modification application to remove existing ski school building and replace with 2,820 sf two story building, property located at 396 Mount Vernon Road, parcel size 98.91 acres, in a R-80 zone, SPR #1809) tabled from December 15

Mr. Bovino advised we are still waiting for action by the IW Commission which meets this Thursday. Without objection by the commission members, the Chair said the item would continue to be tabled.

C. Town of Southington, site plan application for the demolition of existing pump station building, concrete pad, equipment and appurtenances, and the construction of a new precast pump station, related controls, concrete pads, fencing, stormwater management facilities and landscaping, Plantsville Pump Station, property located at 806 South Main street, in a CB zone (SPR #1810), tabled from December 15

Mr. Grappone advised this item is still waiting for action by the IW Commission which meets this Thursday. Without objection by the commission members, the Chair said the item would continue to be tabled.

D. 8-24 referral for the purchase of 196 Prospect Street for open space in the amount of \$45,000 (MR#559)

Mr. Salka advised this is a small piece of property that abuts the Oshana Elementary School. It cannot be built on. There are some wetlands on it. It is a nice piece of property for wildlife and I think from a town and school standpoint it makes sense to purchase the property. It can be used by the elementary school for little field trips where there is some wildlife, et cetera. I do recommend approval.

Ms. Albanese asked if this was a wooded property with wetlands behind the school. Mr. Salka confirmed it was. It runs from Prospect Street diagonal southeast back to the Oshana Elementary School. Ms. Albanese said a boy scout did a project back there with tree identification. It would be nice to recreate that or revisit it.

The acreage of the property is 3.6 acres.

Ms. Volpe commended this. It is wonderful. It is already a pretty dense area. Water ran through here that helped support our mills. It is a great move and I commend it. It is really wonderful. Thank you.

Mr. Salka added further back, there was a house built on Prospect right near that piece of property and people were up in arms about losing the wooded area. But the house was built. This property is about a hundred yards away. I'm sure the neighbors are pleased with this, as well.

Motion passed 7 to 0 on a roll call vote. (Note: Ms. Locks texted she was in favor, as well.)

E. Release of \$1,350 E & S Bond, CT Insurance Exchange, 1133 Meriden Waterbury Tpke (SPR #1133)

Mr. Grappone advised this is ready for action. This is part of the Connecticut Insurance Exchange. They did a site plan and after it was approved, they wanted to construct a garage which set back from the street. As part of the ZIRO requirement, it took a while for them to install their underground storage drainage. That work is completed and inspected.

Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

- Regulations Review Committee Update and Discussion

Mr. Santiago said the committee met. No decisions were made. We kind of laid out a framework and identified about a dozen or so places of interest that need updating. For example, the word "shed". What does a shed mean?

The definition of family is outdated and needs to be updated.

Bed & Breakfast needs some updating.

We'll start to get into better words. We find some of the regulations, in the hopes of being clearer, by adding words, words sometimes confuse things. We have regulations that try to give examples and use the word "such as". Many times, people interpret that to mean only. Which is not true. We checked with other towns and some of our regs need verbal updates to add clarity.

We'll meet again this month.

I don't think this needs to be a regularly occurring item at every meeting. When we have a decision or something to bring in front of you, we'll let you know.

Mr. Phillips followed up. The last meeting was the day after your last meeting. Everybody scattered for two weeks. Nothing has happened. We were reviewing Sections 2 & 3 as Mr. Santiago referenced. Our next meeting is scheduled for January 19th at 4:30 pm.

To go back to the discussion, we had on the 16th at your last meeting, we talked about if variances are required within vertical expansions within setbacks where buildings are already pre-existing. You came to a consensus. I reacted to that and started to put together a confirmation of policy that we had kind of following. That rankled some feathers with other staff. A concern from economic development.

I retracted that and, on the 17th, I discussed with the subcommittee looking at this and exploring it further and maybe look at a regulation approach with a due process component if we get to that again.

That answer remains ambiguous at this point in time as to whether a variance is required. We'll work on that in tandem.

The Chair advised Jim Macchio resigned last month from the commission. He served as a Rep to the CCROG. We have one slot as a representative. If anybody is interested in serving in that capacity, let me know. I'll get you on. I did it when I first got on and it was a good opportunity to interact with peers across the greater Hartford Region. Let me know if you are interested.

Also, earlier today I attended a forum put on by Desegregate CT. I sent the invite to all of you. I did ask some questions. I'm not sure of their agenda, to be honest.

The meeting is on line, you can pull it up and watch it. Make your own judgment.

The link will be sent to the members of the commission.

Ms. Volpe said she was a proponent of some of the things this group is doing from the standpoint of reframing some of these things. They took about exclusionary zoning practices, how to make our community more diverse through housing practices and zoning laws. It is worth seeing. There are a lot of different perspectives.

I don't think it will robustly happen overnight. It's more of a tool kit. We need to progress and we do live in a town that is predominantly white.

They are just looking to try to make things inclusive.
Discussion.

Statewide zoning regulations were noted.

Data gathering was discussed.

Commissioners were encouraged to watch the meeting on line.

ITEMS TO SCHEDULE FOR PUBLIC HEARING & RECEIPT OF NEW APPLICATIONS

- Zone change approval was granted for the property at the corner of Meriden Avenue and Meriden Waterbury Turnpike for a potential carwash. The application for special permit and site plan was been received. We intend to schedule it for February 2nd^h.

- Another 830g application for Laning Street. It did come before you and withdrew because it was incomplete. It's back with more documentation. I have to verify everything that's there. We would recommend scheduling that for February 2nd.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Salka made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Santago seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 7:31 o'clock, p.m.)