

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
March 11, 2019 Meeting Minutes

These minutes are not official until approved at a subsequent meeting.

Commission Members Present: Alan Gannuscio, Vincent Zimnoch, Jim Szepanski, Alexa Brengi, Cindy Cooper, Doug Wilson (Alternate), and Peggy Sayers (Alternate)

Commission Members Absent: none

Town Staff Present: Jennifer Rodriguez (Town Planner)

I. Call to Order

Chairman Gannuscio called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm.

II. Roll Call

Commission roll call was taken.

III. Approval of Minutes from the January 14, 2019 and February 11, 2019 Regular Meetings

It was **MOVED** (Gannuscio) and **SECONDED** (Szepanski) and **PASSED** (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission approves the minutes of the January 14, 2019 regular meeting.

It was **MOVED** (Sayers) and **SECONDED** (Cooper) and **PASSED** (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission approves the minutes of the February 11, 2019 regular meeting.

It was **MOVED** (Gannuscio) and **SECONDED** (Zimnoch) and **PASSED** (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission moves agenda item VIII-C, Informal Discussions, to this point in the agenda.

VIII. New Business

C. Informal Discussions

i. Montgomery Mill proposed signs

Michael Weissbrod of Crosskey Architects in Hartford and Andrew Clark from Expose Signs in Hopedale, Massachusetts, addressed the commission. Mr. Weissbrod stated that they provided Ms. Rodriguez with a brief narrative of proposed changes and how they don't exactly match up with the regulations as well as double-sided drawings, which were shared among commission members. Mr. Weissbrod briefly summarized the three variances that they are planning on requesting next month. One of those variances is the number of signs on the

building. The Main Street Overlay Zone regulations state that only one sign per business is allowed. They are requesting three, given the large size of the building and the number of fronts it has (Main Street, facing south towards the bridge, and the Connecticut River). The second one they are requesting is the height above the sidewalk. The regulations state it has to be a maximum of 12 feet above the sidewalk. Given the unique building, its sighting in relation to Main Street and the large sight line distances, they felt that signs closer to the roof would better provide visibility to the signs and help way-find to the building. There is also the large historic sign on the top of the roof which does set a precedent as well. The last variance they would be requesting is the maximum height of the sign. The regulations say two feet maximum are allowed. In two of the three signs they are proposing is a vertical arrangement. They would be two feet in width but quite a bit taller. Mr. Weissbrod did note that the Ahlstrom property does have all three of these same conditions they are seeking. There were two signs well above 12 feet above grade and four feet in height, so they feel there is certain precedent there with these mill buildings. They are asking tonight for some informal feedback if this would be something feasible for them to put before the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Chairman Gannuscio asked if they had gone to the ZBA last Monday. Mr. Weissbrod said they had not; it was recommended to them that they come to PZC first for feedback before they submit the formal application to ZBA.

Mr. Wilson confirmed with Mr. Weissbrod that it is one horizontal on the south elevation and a vertical on the east and west with the southern corners. Chairman Gannuscio commented that there is just one street address for the whole complex, but two distinct buildings. Mr. Weissbrod corrected him that it is actually three distinct buildings. Mr. Wilson asked about the historic sign. Mr. Weissbrod replied that this would be restored per the original sign. He went on to say that it may seem like a lot of extra signage they're adding, but in the narrative they submitted, the zoning regulations allow up to one square foot of signage per linear feet of frontage, so given the long length of the building, which is 512 feet, even adding the historic sign on the roof that's there, leaves about 50% of the total allowed value, so they still feel they are within the spirit of the regulations.

Chairman Gannuscio asked Ms. Rodriguez if this is something that needs to go to the ZBA. She responded yes. The overlay zone is so much more restrictive, and she thought it would be a good idea to have a discussion in case there was any feedback the applicant could take before they went to the ZBA. Chairman Gannuscio said to Mr. Weissbrod that the factors he mentioned show the uniqueness of the property—the length of it along the canal front and the river and the way it's confined by them. He feels that it would not accomplish any purpose to not allow the proposed signage. He added that given the uniqueness of this property in the downtown zone, he doesn't see this opening a flood gate of new

requests—it's unique to this property. There's nothing else that size. Mr. Zimnoch stated that having the three different approaches to the building requires this type of signage. Mr. Szepanski said he has no issues with the proposed signage and he supports it.

ii. Multi-Family Special Development regulations

Gary Merrigan from Merrigan and LeFebvre Realty, 560 Halfway House Road, addressed the commission. He thanked the commission for getting them on the agenda with such short notice. He stated that they are here tonight to discuss the MFSD special development zone and the adaptive reuse, the pocket neighborhood concept that is being implemented throughout the country, infill zones, where we are as a town and the regulations we currently have, and the needs of the town today versus 1980 when these regulations were written.

Ms. Rodriguez discussed a case study on pocket neighborhoods that she became familiar with last year. In pocket neighborhoods there isn't a huge difference with some of the neighborhoods we have in Windsor Locks except that the minimum acreage tends to be smaller, so you might have an acre, or a little bit less or a little bit more, sometimes up to a couple of acres. You have a village feeling, you have density with structures close together, and you have the opportunity to have more green space. In this study there are several different neighborhoods. She went on to describe a 24-acre occupied pocket neighborhood and a smaller property, a .85 acre lot. She commented that this would be a good opportunity for the commission to have that conversation about what gets built on these vacant parcels, what kind of density could make sense, and how they can remain attractive and actually increase neighboring property values. Some of the structures that we have for a multi-family in the regulations can work in a lot of instances, but the minimum requirement of 3 acres is what they get feedback on.

Gary Merrigan stated that they are here tonight because they have acquired the Bak property on 64 South Elm Street, which is one of the largest parcels left to develop in Windsor Locks. It is over 3 acres, with over 400 feet of frontage and 300 feet of depth, and bound by the Town of Windsor Locks (the high school) on all three sides. When you look at the regulations, they conform to the multi-family special development zone in every respect. They are looking at different scenarios to develop the property, and they looked at the Adaptive Reuse regulation. They would like to get clarification and direction from the commission on what that really says. The question is the Adaptive Reuse calls out if you're going to rehabilitate a structure and you want to add to the structure; they understand that component of the regulation. But they are unclear if it's a total planned unit development out of all of the property you're going to have to keep the existing dwelling. It kicks in if it's a planned residential development for part or all, and he thinks the key is "all" of the property. So if it's all of the property, then you're not going to have rehab because it becomes part of the

planned development. Historically, the MFSD zone was always 10 units to the acre, and it did not have an open space provision in that. As our school population was filling in the 1980's, the commission at that time felt it was prudent to cut that down to 5 dwelling units per acre and put an open space provision in it to curtail development. We're in a whole different climate now. Our schools are declining in enrollment. The developments that were built under the original MFSD were all built at 10 to the acre, so going to 5 to the acre severely limits what you can do on a 3-acre parcel.

Ms. Sayers clarified what Mr. Merrigan is asking of the commission. She stated that he has a 3-acre parcel of land, and under the Adaptive Reuse regulation, can he remove existing structures and start from scratch. The second question is how many units can he put in this area. For her, it is very important that the development is aesthetically pleasing and it fits in that neighborhood. Mr. Merrigan said the other option that they looked at was restricting this to 7 units to the acre, but it would have to stay as a rental community because that is a provision they self-imposed. However, their preference is not a rental community. They are looking to see if they can get it to 6 or 7 to the acre versus 5 to the acre. Chairman Gannuscio suggested adding in the first section of the text of the Adaptive Reuse regulation "deteriorated or underutilized buildings or properties."

Plans and pictures were distributed to the commission representing one concept of what one development plan would look like. Mr. Merrigan explained that the plan shows a 20-unit configuration with a dwelling that looks like a single family house but is actually two units.

Mr. Merrigan stated that these regulations worked okay in the last 30 years because you had larger parcels of land. We don't have that anymore, and these regulations don't fit what's left in town. For the town to grow and bring in new housing and new residents, we have to change with the times. People are no longer looking for 21,000 square feet of land. He is looking for direction on how to move forward: do they ask for a modification to the MFSD for a little higher density and relief of the open space, or do they go under the Adaptive Reuse. Ms. Sayers commented that it doesn't matter because with either one they would have to make a change. Chairman Gannuscio asked if the open space is waivable in the MFSD. Ms. Rodriguez replied that she doesn't believe so. She added that there are a couple of things on both sides of the fence to consider. With open space you don't have to do something with it. When you just leave it the way it is it still has a lot of benefit, especially in Windsor Locks. The flip side of that is, when you have it, either the town or someone still has to take care of it, and there is still some investment that needs to continue even if you don't have an active open space area. When you do have open space and it's next to another open space, it has greater value. She feels there are a few different things that can happen with that green space. Chairman Gannuscio suggested something along

the lines that within the property there is something dedicated to communal use. Mr. Merrigan commented that they intend to make this self-infiltrating with rain gardens and infiltrators and bottomless catch basins to try to contain all or as much of the storm water on site. He feels this is a great site and that it fits but we just have to figure out how to get there.

Ms. Rodriguez pointed out that the Adaptive Reuse seems to imply that you have a structure that is worth preserving. That regulation is pretty flexible. Setbacks of today don't need to be met. It still seems to say preserving the structure, so to her it seems this regulation was probably written for a limited number of structures in town that were historic and potentially worth restoring. If the recommendation is to move forward with a regulation amendment, for that particular regulation, it might change the intention, and you'll have to think about your new inventory of eligible properties and then clarify that language whether the structure is required to be preserved. If the thought is to make some sort of hybrid or make changes to the multi-family regulation, you have a bit more room there. Chairman Gannuscio commented that maybe the focus should be the MFSD which is sorely in need of revision. Mr. Merrigan stated that the three-acre MFSD zone was for small parcels, and the 10-acre plan residential zone was great in the 70's. In 2019 the three-acre is the large parcel for what is left inventory wise. Chairman Gannuscio commented that he sees the wisdom in steering away from the Adaptive Reuse here. Mr. Zimnoch added that it was never intended for this and the pocket neighborhood is a new concept.

Mr. Merrigan asked how to tweak the MFSD regulations. Ms. Rodriguez asked the commission if this would be something that is looked at community wide and coming from the commission or if the commission wants the applicant to come up with proposed language. Mr. Merrigan replied that they have no problem making the changes. Chairman Gannuscio remarked that it becomes the precedent coming from an applicant who knows what they need to do and would be the better way. It would still go to a public hearing where people with ideas would be heard.

Ms. Rodriguez summarized: The Adaptive Reuse regulation should have some clarifying language. The commission cares about what the end product looks like and that it's aesthetically pleasing. Consideration should be given for in-law apartments. Instead of just a blanket open space requirement percentage perhaps there could be an option. Communal space, a garden area, low impact development and storm water, trails, and sidewalks, are things that could be considered for green space versus an overall percentage. She asked if there was clear guidance on the density. Chairman Gannuscio responded if you're going to do a rewrite, then rewrite the density so it makes it feasible going forward for this type of development. Ms. Sayers added that it's important for her to not have this square brick building, that we move more towards looking like a community.

Ms. Rodriguez asked if it makes sense to have some kind of design guideline. Ms. Sayers answered that she doesn't know if you could because that limits you again. Ms. Rodriguez stated that she is about to wrap up the POCD. When you do a design guideline it can be something that is not regulatory but something that you reference when you have a special use permit application so when a developer comes you can portray what you have in mind. She will try to get some visuals to the commission by or before the next meeting. Mr. Merrigan asked what that would accomplish. She replied that it would be something longer term because the POCD will not be out for this project he is planning to propose. She thought down the road it would be good to have something like that incorporated in the Community/Livability section. There are some visuals in there already, but a guideline would be something that might be easier to work with than an actual regulation that's similar to the MSOZ which is pretty detailed in terms of what's architecturally required. Mr. Merrigan asked if she would send him some ideas on that so he can incorporate it. Chairman Gannuscio commented that this would encourage non-conformity and variety. Mr. Zimnoch added this is important since the dwellings are so close together.

Mr. Merrigan asked how the commission wanted to address open space. Chairman Gannuscio replied, "Open or communal space." Mr. Zimnoch commented that he thought they agreed they didn't want the open space because the open space is really transformed into this communal green space that is useable rather than just set aside in a corner someplace. Mr. Merrigan noted that the Adaptive Reuse addresses that with dimensions, so he could probably pirate some of that from the Adaptive and put it in. Ms. Rodriguez pointed out that there might be situations where you want open space when you're trying to connect a greenway or you might have open space next door. Chairman Gannuscio agreed: "Open space or any alternative." Ms. Sayers added that in a community like this you wouldn't want that space to be public.

- IV. **Public Hearings** (none)
- V. **Reviews** (none)
- VI. **Action on Closed Public Hearing Items** (none)
- VII. **Old Business**
 - A. **Discussion with Commission and Staff** (none)
 - B. **Action Items** (none)
- VIII. **New Business**
 - A. **Public Input** (none)

B. Receive New Applications

i. 8 North Main Street, Special Use Permit to convert home back to two-family home as originally constructed (property owner Virgenett Wiltshire)

It was **MOVED** (Gannuscio) and **SECONDED** (Cooper) and **PASSED** (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission schedules this application for a public hearing for the April 8, 2019 meeting.

ii. 5 Ella Grasso Turnpike, Zone Change from Business-1 to AIOZ (property owner Neel Patel)

Ms. Rodriguez pointed out that this is actually 5 and 11 Ella Grasso Turnpike, and the legal notice should note this.

It was **MOVED** (Gannuscio) and **SECONDED** (Szepanski) and **PASSED** (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission schedules this application for a public hearing for the April 8, 2019 meeting.

iii. 18 Maple Avenue, Special Use Permit with Site Plan Review for a three-family unit/bed and breakfast with cultural retreat center (property owners Dennis and Martha Jarvis)

Chairman Gannuscio asked if they wanted three residential units and a bed and breakfast and a cultural center. Ms. Rodriguez clarified that there are two units now. One has most of the space with all of the multiple bedrooms. They want to be able to rent out two of the rooms and then they would live in the space that is part of what would be the bed and breakfast and also to be rented out for the bed and breakfast goes. Mr. Szepanski asked if the second brick dwelling to the north of the castle is part of that property. Mr. Wilson commented that it didn't look like it was part of the application.

It was **MOVED** (Gannuscio) and **SECONDED** (Cooper) and **PASSED** (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission schedules this application for a public hearing for the April 8, 2019 meeting.

D. Action Items

i. Order new printings of zoning regulations

Ms. Rodriguez said the cost is \$15.68 per book. Chairman Gannuscio asked her how many copies would be good to have. She replied probably not more than 20. Chairman Gannuscio said he would like to vote ahead of time to authorize this expenditure and then when they have an actual figure they will approve the amount of that invoice. Ms. Rodriguez calculated that for about \$350 you would get 22 copies.

It was **MOVED** (Gannuscio) and **SECONDED** (Zimnoch) and **PASSED** (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission authorizes the printing of approximately 25 additional sets of regulations.

ii. TIF Master Plans for East and West Champions Landing

Chairman Gannuscio mentioned that both he and Mr. Wilson are on the TIF Advisory Panel. The next step in the statute governing TIFs is that the planning agency for the town (Planning and Zoning Commission) makes a recommendation in favor or not in favor of this to the Board of Selectmen. He drafted this recommendation which he distributed to commission members. Ms. Rodriguez explained that the multi-use trail and broadband area along the corridor linked the two together at one point, but now we've confirmed that if you have two TIF districts and you want to do improvements between the two, that's okay. The corridor is no longer in the district but it still can be improved through the funds gained through either TIF. She added that we should be sure to have very clear visuals at the town meeting.

Chairman Gannuscio stated that one thing that has come about from this Advisory Panel is that there is a lot of developer paid for infrastructure that needs to be financed somehow (sewers, roads, entrances and exits), and this is one thing this TIF would help soften. We also have either under or undeveloped parcels, and the TIF is the vehicle that allows financing for these different infrastructure items to be constructed. This is the summary of the recommendation he wrote to send to the Board of Selectmen.

Ms. Rodriguez summarized the changes in the Master Plan since they last met: In Table 1 on page 10 of the Champions Landing West, under "Project," "Intersection improvements: Route 75 at 3,5,11 Ella Grasso Turnpike" is going to be taken out. They were going to add the back access road, but Mr. Wilson said that did not make it. The Old County Road improvements on the west were included. There was some discussion about including the hotel on South Center Street in the TIF district.

Chairman Gannuscio asked if there were any comments or objections about the position statement. There were none, and he will send it along to the Board of Selectmen after some minor edits.

IX. Communications and Bills

Ms. Rodriguez stated that she received a phone call from the previous owner of the Montgomery Mill who requested a general discussion with the commission for a distillery and a crematory, neither of which are in the regulations. Ms. Sayers asked if the crematory was for humans or animals. She did not know but will clarify with him.

She also did not know the location yet. Chairman Gannuscio said the earliest time the commission could discuss this would be at the May meeting since there are four public hearings scheduled for the April meeting.

Ms. Rodriguez informed everyone that there will be a Public Information session on Thursday, March 21, 2019 at 6:30 to discuss the Main Street Complete Streets project.

Chairman Gannuscio has some bills that need to be paid.

It was **MOVED** (Gannuscio) and **SECONDED** (Zimnoch) and **PASSED** (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission approves a bill from the Connecticut Federation of Planning and Zoning Agencies for \$110 for yearly dues.

It was **MOVED** (Gannuscio) and **SECONDED** (Zimnoch) and **PASSED** (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission approves an invoice from Attorney Sherwood for \$1,305 for Pool Table Magic for a court appearance and electronic filing for a record.

X. Adjournment

It was **MOVED** (Gannuscio) and **SECONDED** (Cooper) and **PASSED** (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission adjourns the March 11, 2019 meeting at 9:11 pm.

THE MEETING WAS REOPENED AT 9:11 PM BY CHAIRMAN GANNUSCIO IN ORDER TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING MOTION:

It was **MOVED** (Gannuscio) and **SECONDED** (Szepanski) and **PASSED** (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission schedules a special meeting on March 14, 2019 meeting at 11:30 am for the sole purpose of visiting the Montgomery Mill building.

It was **MOVED** (Gannuscio) and **SECONDED** (Zimnoch) and **PASSED** (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission adjourns the March 11, 2019 meeting at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Seymour
Recording Secretary