

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
July 25, 2016 Special Meeting Minutes

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

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

Commission Members Absent: Luis Valdez

Town Staff Present: Jennifer Rodriguez (Town Planner), and Dana Steele (Town Engineer)

I. Call to Order

Chairman Gannuscio called the special meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

II. Roll Call

Commission roll call was taken. Cindy Cooper was seated for Luis Valdez.

III. Discussion/Clarification with commission members and staff regarding the application approved at the June 13, 2016 meeting regarding the property at 321 Ella Grasso Turnpike, 499 North Street, and 501 North Street

Chairman Gannuscio pointed out that staff needs direction on a site plan that was approved at the June 13, 2016 meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission for 321 Ella Grasso Turnpike, 499 North Street, and 501 North Street. Ms. Rodriguez added that often after approval there are minor changes that occur. With this application the use is not changing but some of the items on the approved plan are changing to the point that it was questionable and staff wanted to be sure the commission was comfortable with the changes. One of the requests was a berm instead of the landscaping on the exterior of the property, and two other changes: the drainage area is being relocated, and two buildings are being reduced to one.

Kevin Johnson, Consulting Engineer from Close, Jensen and Miller, addressed the commission. He displayed two plans, the one that was approved on June 13, and the one they are now proposing to do. He went on to point out the changes. Instead of three buildings they are proposing just one building, a little longer and wider, with an overall increase in square footage. It still has two uses, car sales and storage, but with a different configuration. The retention pond has now been moved to the rear and oriented 90 degrees. The biggest change is the fencing along the west boundary which has been replaced with landscape berms. The amount of plant material is the same but a couple of species have been changed. The berm varies in height. The lighting is the same fixture, and the pole height was reduced. The retention pond has stayed the same size but is in a different location. They talked to the WPCA and some of the utility locations have been modified. There are quite a few changes, but Mr. Johnson feels they stayed within the overall design and intent.

Mr. Zimnoch clarified with Mr. Johnson that there will still be a fence along Route 75 and that the berm will be modulating in height, generally five to six feet. Mr. Johnson commented that when they met with staff, the berm was very linear, and they were asked to be a little more creative. Chairman Gannuscio asked Mr. Steele if he saw any problem from a drainage standpoint. Mr. Steele replied that he would have to review the drainage calculations, but from a conceptual standpoint, he did not see any reason this couldn't work.

Mr. Szepanski asked what prompted the move from three buildings to one. Mr. Barberino, 6 West Street, responded. When he talked to the manufacturer and did the math, you can get a little larger building for less money than the two. He also explained that he liked the way the berm looks on the Fed Ex property and the berm would negate the removal of the topsoil. The retention pond he would like to be in the least valuable section of the property.

Chairman Gannuscio stated that with what's been presented tonight, he is comfortable with the final review being made by staff.

It was **MOVED** (Cooper) and **SECONDED** (Szepanski) and **PASSED** (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission leaves the final review and approval to staff of the plans for 321 Ella Grasso Turnpike, 499 North Street, and 501 North Street as they have been presented tonight.

IV. Discussion regarding C.G.S. §8-30g regarding recommendation of a moratorium on affordable housing applications

Chairman Gannuscio commented that this is not a moratorium that the commission would put in place; the Chief Elected Official of the municipality would have to make the application to the Department of Economic and Community Development. If these numbers are going to be necessary to make that work there should be some tradeoff so there are no other developments in another part of town. These numbers put us pretty close, so a moratorium of 3 to 4 years will give us time to get it adopted and passed and get the Montgomery Mill building renovated and on the market.

Chris Kervick, First Selectman of Windsor Locks, addressed the commission. He shared the following calculations for the Montgomery Mill project: Of the 161 units, 60% will be market rate, which is whatever the market will bear. The remainder would have a rental cap on them, and those caps would be tied to the Area Median Gross Income (AMGI). Based on the AMGI that is currently in place, there would be 23 units, and their rents would be capped between \$1,005 for a one-bedroom and \$1,393 for a two-bedroom. Those would be offered to individuals or families earning 60% or less of AMGI. 26 units would be capped at rents between \$838 for a one-bedroom, and \$1,005 for a two-bedroom, and would be offered to individuals or families earning 50% or less of AMGI. 16 units would be capped at \$419 for a one-bedroom, and \$502 for a two-bedroom, and would be offered to potential tenants earning 25% or less of AMGI. This category he

hopes would include seniors and veterans. This is not a project where it is anticipated that any Section 8 housing would be offered. He is getting clarification of what they're anticipating the market rate would be. The number of \$1,700 monthly has been put out there, but he is not sure if that would be for a one-bedroom or two-bedroom unit.

In order to come up with the \$62 million or so the developer is going to need to develop this project, they are putting together a financial package that is going to be derived from several different sources, the biggest of which is their own money or what they are willing to borrow, but there are also historic tax credits that will come into play and there are mixed income housing tax credits which will produce money. The framework of the 1650 25% breakdown of the 40% of the total units will produce for them tax credits that have a cash value of about \$15 million, which is a large chunk of the \$62 million.

Mr. Kervick stated that he sees this as a win situation. We get the Montgomery building developed, and based on these numbers, this should also bring us over the §8-30g 10% affordable housing threshold. We're at 9.4% or 9.6% now. Ms. Rodriguez commented that some of the most recent profile information shows that number going down and property values going up in some areas of town; however, that number is a moving target. Mr. Kervick remarked that we have plenty of affordable housing in town, but it's *designated* affordable housing that is the trick. You can get a one-bedroom apartment on the market for \$600 that might be considered affordable, but it doesn't count as affordable as far as the state is concerned, because it has to be a designated affordable unit. This project and these numbers should take us over the 10% threshold, and if it does so, then it takes us out of the purview of §8-30g. Mr. Kervick said he would be happy to work with the commission to push this moratorium forward because it addresses a legitimate concern of taxpayers that there is a proliferation of affordable housing in town. He assured the commission that he will study this and consult with the commission and then move it forward. He added that he also likes that this is an opportunity to serve our growing senior population and veterans. He noted that on August 18 Beacon Communities will do a presentation specifically to seniors on this project.

Mr. Szepanski asked Mr. Kervick what the AMGI number is. He replied that in this section of the state it is \$85,000 for a family (whoever is earning in that family). The CHFA website has the latest figures. Ms. Rodriguez also suggested the Partnership for Strong Communities website. Chairman Gannuscio gave Mr. Kervick a copy of the regulations that go with §8-30g. Chairman Gannuscio stated that he would like the commission to recommend to Mr. Kervick, the Chief Elected Official of the municipality, that he consider pursuing this with the Department of Economic and Community Development to see about putting in place a moratorium for as long as possible. Mr. Zimnoch mentioned that Farmington got the moratorium implemented and approved at 7.96%, with a four-year moratorium. Gary Merrigan commented that he believes Farmington has existing affordable regulations in place, and Windsor Locks does not. Mr. Kervick asked Ms. Rodriguez if that would meet the housing study that was done. Ms. Rodriguez replied that she wasn't sure. She will look into whether Farmington has regulations and then look at the statute. As far as she understood, you either had to have the 10% or you had to have the regulations, so she's not sure of their particular situation.

Mr. Kervick suggested running the numbers again. Mr. Merrigan remarked that affordable would probably work downtown, but he doesn't think we will get a proliferation of affordable units because you need the tax credits. Rather than having the affordable as an alternative, we should look inward for some in-fill zoning. We're not going to have any more subdivisions of any size in the A, AA or B zones. We're built out. He went on to say that if the town is going to move forward we're going to have to have in-fill--rebuilding, re-utilization. A lot of that can come into play through Main Street but maybe throughout different sections because there will be buildings coming up in the future that are going to be re-purposed. We need to look at everything if we're going to try to bring new, diverse housing opportunities back in, but the regulations are pretty extinct, because we've built it out.

Chairman Gannuscio stated that his thinking is, "Let's be prepared." Mr. Kervick added that the Montgomery Mill project is in some ways like an insurance policy. The mixed income housing of our design or our approval that we feel comfortable with becomes an insurance policy against some other type of product that we may not be comfortable with. He understands the thinking of the commission and he will definitely pursue it. Commission members agreed that they are all on board with this.

V. Adjournment

It was **MOVED** (Gannuscio) and **SECONDED** (Zimnoch) and **PASSED** (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission adjourns the July 25, 2016 special meeting at 7:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Debbie Seymour
Recording Secretary*