

Minutes of the Character Committee
December 13, 2012
Litchfield Community Center

1. Chairman, Ralph White, called the meeting to order (6:40)
 - a. Present, additionally, was Erin Kennedy. Absent were David Pavlick and Peter Losee
 - b. Also present was town planner, Tom McGowan
 - c. Mr. White volunteered to take the minutes of the meeting.
 - d. The minutes of November 27, 2012 were approved, with Ms. Kennedy abstaining.

2. Working session with Mr. McGowan regarding adding character amendments to the Planning and Zoning Regulations (6:41)
 - a. Mr. McGowan's efforts to identify other towns with effective restrictions on medium scale commercial development were unavailing. He found some towns with special zones for large scale buildings; he found restrictions on large scale development (30 thousand square feet and above); he found towns preserving relatively small historic districts. He found no precedents for towns imposing restrictions on buildings in the 7 thousand and 11 thousand square foot ranges suggested in Mr. White's memo of December 6, 2012.
 - b. Mr. McGowan's "first major conclusion": Litchfield could impose site design standards requiring, for instance, "no fewer than six of the following..." with a dozen so-called "animating features" to choose among. [Animating features discussed include façade projections and recesses, awnings, varied roof lines, doorways, windows, chimneys, dormers, and other features which break up the monolithic appearance of large scale commercial buildings.]
 - c. Pursuant to this first major conclusion, Mr. McGowan proposed a new regulation, Article V, Section 32, draft attached hereto, which would establish trigger thresholds for mandating such animating features.
 - i. Threshold is 30k square feet (cumulative, all floors, all buildings, one property), **or (not and)**
 - ii. Any façade exceeding 100 linear feet
 - d. Mr. McGowan's "second major conclusion": Litchfield can mandate Design Review, perhaps tweaking the animating features, e.g., "no fewer than six of the following..." Thus Design Review would be mandatory, though the adoption of its recommendations would remain at the discretion of the owner.
 - e. Mr. McGowan noted that although Litchfield's design review regulations have proven to be effective, they are out of date in the sense that they are imprecise. Modern design review regulations provide more utilitarian guidance for developers of commercial properties.
 - f. As for which animating features Litchfield might apply to commercial development, as well as other enhanced restrictions, such as setbacks and water quality, Mr. McGowan considers this beyond his experience and expertise, which has typically focused on villages and small towns. A professional landscape architecture firm such as C3 in Simsbury might better suggest specific design features.
 - g. Mr. McGowan wants the Commission to keep in mind what Litchfield already has in place, e.g.:
 - i. The Design Review Advisory Committee, chaired by Jeff Savage. Design Review has been extremely successful in getting applicants to

voluntarily modify plans which conform to its building design criteria (though, again, those criteria could benefit from enhanced detail).

- ii. We also have Design and Site Plan Standards and requirements for non-residential Development in Residential zones, see Article VI, Section 7, attached hereto.
- iii. We also have Site Plan Requirements, (Article IX, Section 1) which could be modified to make the provisions proposed in 2, c, i, and ii, above, mandatory.

3. Adjournment (8:00)

- a. Motion by Mr. White, affirmative vote unanimous.

Summary of Documents Provided by Mr. McGowan and Attached Herewith for Incorporation Into the Above Minutes by Reference

1. Draft Amendment, for discussion only – Amend Article V, add a new section 32 – DESIGN STANDARDS FOR LARGE RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS OR DEVELOPMENTS IN 2-202 ZONES...
2. Article VI – Section 11, Design Review Advisory Committee
3. LITCHFIELD ZONING REGULATIONS – DESIGN AND SITE PLAN STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR NON RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN RESIDENTIAL ZONES, Article VI – Section 7, Non-Residential Development in Residential Zones
4. Draft amendment – for discussion only – to Art. IX, Section 1, Site Plan Requirements

Respectfully Submitted

Ralph White

December 13, 2012