

Special Meeting

The 1385th meeting of the Stonington Planning and Zoning Commission was held on Wednesday, November 5, 2008 at Mystic Middle School, 204 Mistuxet Avenue. Present for the meeting: Paul Altman, John Swenarton, Lynn Young, Lynda Trebisacci, and alternate Leon Jacobs. Town Planner, Keith Brynes and Director of Planning, William Haase were also present. Absent were Paul Holland and alternate Rob Marseglia.

Chairman Young called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Seated for the meeting: Paul Altman, John Swenarton, Lynn Young, Lynda Trebisacci, and alternate Leon Jacobs.

Minutes:

Ms. Trebisacci made the motion to table approval of the minutes, Mr. Swenarton seconded. The tabling of the minutes was unanimously approved.

Reports:

ZBA #08-18 Laurice Richards – Seeking a variance to reduce the rear yard setback from 100' to 72', increase the F.A.R. from .04 to .12, and ZR 3.1.4.2 to reduce the non-infringement area from 100' to 76'. Property located at 92 Hewitt Rd. Assessor's Map 152 Block 2 Lot 16. Zone RC-120.

Mr. Brynes presented the request for an A-2 survey waiver variance. Mr. Altman asked about the potential for vague boundary lines. Mr. Brynes reassured him that that was not an issue.

Mr. Altman made the motion to approve. Mr. Swenarton seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

New Business:

A. Discussion of Consent Agendas and Agenda Format.

Mr. Haase discussed the phrase consent agenda in regulation 8.3.1.2. which might allow for deviation from the agenda. Historically consent agenda has not been used as defined; bundling applications for approvals. He recommended a new agenda format in which New Business replaces consent agenda items that do not require a Public Hearing. Mr. Altman raised concerns about the transparency in the process and fairness to the applicants. Mr. Brynes distributed a past agenda reformatted in the new proposed agenda format. Haase discussed the items assigned to Future Agendas which appears after the Adjournment can be confusing. Ms. Young reviewed the new agenda with New Business replacing Consent Agenda and raised the question about correspondence. Mr. Haase consulted Attorney Londregan who confirmed that letters submitted after the close of public hearing were not evidentiary but ex parte. Ms. Young discussed the difficulty in reading all the letters in the packet prior to and during the application process. Mr. Haase said all letters referencing a Public Hearing must be considered for the application. Mr. Altman felt that letters should be read into the record.

B. Proposed Amendment to Section 8.3 – Site Plan Submission – Approvals.

Mr. Haase proposed changes which would help expedite and streamline the application process. In the proposed language the ZEO will be allowed to administer the review of single family dwelling units and their accessory uses in commercial and industrial zones. The goal of the new text is to provide a "recipe" to applicants to lead them through the regulations. Ms. Young stated her frustration with incomplete applications and the lack of ability to communicate with the applicant other than denial at the end of the process. Staff said that once the application is stamped "received", the clock starts.

Mr. Haase confirmed Mr. Altman and Ms. Young's question of whether the additional three pages amendments would be helpful to their jobs. Mr. Altman believes the extra five pages were redundant. The goal of higher quality applications was discussed, Ms. Trebisacci thought the previous text was vague and the new text was clearer.

Mr. Haase read a letter from absent member Mr. Holland regarding the importance of buffers which he thought should not be a minor amendment.

Ms. Trebisacci made the motion to move the amendments to a public hearing. Mr. Swenarton seconded. The motion was approved 4-1.

Roll Call: Altman – Deny, Swenarton - Approve, Young – Approve, Trebisacci – Approve, Jacobs – Approve

Public Comment:

Gail Shea suggested that all applications are sent to public hearing in the order they are stamped and thus penalize those that are incomplete.

The Commission discussed incomplete applications and abuses of the application process.

Carlene Donnarummo asked about questions posed by the public during the Public Hearings which go unanswered. Ms. Young confirmed question and rebuttal protocol.

Dora Hill also commented on incomplete applications and the many stipulations which address information that should be included in the original site plans.

Sheila Lyons commented on a Public Hearing in which some people were not able to be heard. Mr. Altman stated that there was a five-minute speaking limit which was subsequently repealed.

C. Plan of Conservation and Development Implementation Committee Progress Status Letter – Discussion.

Kate Robinson presented the Committee's letter which narrowed their focus down to 6 issues:

1. Water supply is not adequately protected for the future and urges a Master Plan be adapted soon.
2. Technical Standards Manual could perhaps be approved in sections to expedite its use.
3. Buildable land regulations.
4. Encourage reuse of the mills and further economic growth.
5. Wetlands and tidal areas are still in danger by developers and uniform standards of 75' setback should be maintained with only minor incursions when necessary.
6. Affordable housing needs more attention.

Ms. Young questioned what the Committee was asking the Planning and Zoning Commission to specifically regulate around the aquifer. The Board of Selectmen would have to fund an outside expert to assist in creating new regulation in this specialized area. Mr. Haase stated that the Town Standards Manual implementation was limited by staffing and workloads. Ms. Young commented on the issues proposed and the Commission's progress and limitations. Mr. Haase mentioned that the Thread Mill is still active and that Ken Olsen will soon come before the Commission with modifications to his plans. Owners of the Connecticut Casting Mill and First Selectman Ed Haberek are in discussions for possible medical office usage. Sheila Lyons raised issues of affordable housing and water quality. Mr. Haase reminded her that many of these issues were beyond the purview of the Commission.

Adjournment:

Mr. Altman made the motion to adjourn. Mr. Jacobs seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

John Swenarton, Acting Secretary