

**CITY OF TORRINGTON
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES
October 27, 2010**

Present: Richard Calkins, Chairman
Paul Summers, Member
Greg Perosino, Member
Doris Murphy, Member and Wetlands Liaison
Christine Mele, Alternate
Donna Greco, Alternate
Jim Bobinski, Alternate

Also Present: Kimberly Barbieri, Zoning and Wetlands Enforcement Officer

Excused: Greg Mele, Vice Chairman
Martin Connor, AICP, City Planner

1. **Call to Order:** Chairman Richard Calkins called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m., Torrington City Hall Council Chambers, Room 218, 140 Main Street, Torrington, CT

2. **Attendance/Announcement by Chairman:**

Chairman Calkins announced present and serving this evening will be Commissioners Paul Summers, Greg Perosino, Doris Murphy, Christine Mele, Donna Greco, Jim Bobinski and Richard Calkins. Also present is Zoning and Wetlands Enforcement Officer Kimberly Barbieri.

3. **Minutes for Approval:**

a. 10/13/10

MOTION by Mr. Summers to approve the 10/13/10 minutes, seconded by Ms. Murphy, motion unanimously carried with Mr. Perosino abstaining from voting.

4. **Old Business:**

a. Site Plan 987
Applicant: Sam Mazzarelli
Location: 412 Oak Avenue
Proposal: Refuse container storage (empty containers only)

Mr. Sam Mazzarelli was not present. Chairman Calkins read City Planner Martin Connor's memo dated October 25, 2010. Brief discussion followed. Approved changes will be added to the mylar.

MOTION by Mr. Summers to APPROVE Site Plan 987
Applicant: Sam Mazzarelli
Location: 412 Oak Avenue
Proposal: Refuse container storage (empty containers only)

with the following conditions:

1. The refuse containers stored at 412 Oak Avenue and 65 Grant Street shall be empty at all times and stored only in the designated areas as shown on the approved site plan completely outside of the City of Torrington Sewer Easement Area. Vehicles dropping off and picking up the storage containers will be allowed to drive on the sewer easement area.
2. 6 inches of processed gravel will be added to the sewer easement area where vehicles will be traveling to drop off and pick up the storage containers.
3. 3 white pines shall be planted in accordance with the approved Site Plan.

Motion seconded by Ms. Murphy, unanimously carried.

5. New Business:

- a. Special Exception 10-251 and Site Plan 989
Applicant: Torrington Motor Lodge
Location: 391 Winsted Road
Proposal: Convert storage area into four efficiency living units for employees, reduction in required parking spaces (set public hearing date)

MOTION by Mr. Summers to set a public hearing date of November 10, 2010, seconded by Mr. Perosino, unanimously carried.

- b. Nick Iannacitto, University of Connecticut Intern
Update on Signage project, business owner survey discussion

Nick Iannacitto appeared before the Commission. He is an Urban Studies Major with UCONN, with an interest in carrying through to urban planning in graduate school. He was given an opportunity last semester to intern in the P&Z office to learn about city government and he liked it, the staff is great. He was given the opportunity to do another internship for six college credits, which would take the place of two courses. Nick was given a project to work with regarding signage. He has spoken with Mr. Calkins already. Nick has prepared a survey for local business owners, a copy has been provided to Commission members. Nick is speaking with local merchant owners regarding ideas to improve local signage, what is good about signage, etc. It is an anonymous survey and some have been returned already. The major issue seems to be temporary, sandwich board signs. Business owners feel these type of signs boosts their profits immensely, as it is right there for everyone to see. Discussion followed. Mr. Calkins stated he can see the sandwich board signs in the downtown area, where traffic is slowed and people can read the signs. On other streets such as East Main, the traffic moves by too fast to read the sandwich board signs, making them a safety issue. Mr. Calkins noted various findings from the United States Sign Council.

Nick noted that Avon, CT has left the sandwich board signs up to the Chamber of Commerce to deal with, in issuing and monitoring the A frame signs. Ms. Barbieri stated the Chamber there has a certain number of signs, and it is a rotating policy that if you need to use it, you get it for a certain number of days. You have to be a member of the Chamber. All the signs look the same. Ms. Barbieri stated signage is difficult to deal with normally, and now the office is down to Marty and Kim handling signage. Ms. Barbieri could do non-stop sign work and do nothing else. As in Avon, this takes signage monitoring away from a zoning activity, as it is a business activity. Because the Chamber is pro-business, there is not going to be that conflict. Nick stated he is getting much negative feedback regarding the sign regulations. He suggested portions of the regs be eliminated, and gave an example of balloons being a conflict within the regulations.. Nick noted many business owners

expressed thoughts that now is not the time to be so hard with the regs, the obvious reason being the current economy.

Mr. Calkins relayed his past experience designing signs for Mobil Oil Corp., and how when sign regulations are liberated, the result is “clutter” by the driver going down the road. It creates confusion and a certain degree of distraction for drivers. Perhaps Robert Shopey, Traffic Officer, has information to add to this matter. There needs to be some balance. Commissioner Summer noted businesses on East Main Street have sandwich board signs which are a distraction, and traffic is backing up already when driver attention is needed. Mr. Perosino stated this is not an arbitrary thing, more research and back up is needed before a change is made.

Commission members thanked Nick and stated job well done.

Murals were discussed, and Ms. Barbieri stated murals are not considered signage unless there is something in the mural that references to the business. There is a fine line between artwork and commercial signage. Ms. Barbieri relayed recent experience with light banding/ signage vs. outdoor lighting. Signage has a wide implication.

- c. Jason Vincent, Planimetrics and Kimberly Barbieri, Zoning and Wetlands Enforcement Officer; Low Impact Development Grant Committee Recommendations

Jason Vincent, Planimetrics appeared before the Commission with Kimberly Barbieri. The City of Torrington was fortunate enough to receive a grant to start looking at additional ways we can incorporate low impact development into the Zoning Regulations. A steering committee of stakeholders from various groups was in the Town Hall and agencies, and we went through and outlined various things we were concerned about from a low impact standpoint. Low impact development is applying different techniques to minimize the impacts of development, and trying ways to be more environmentally friendly when we develop a site a try to keep a site as close to it’s nature state as possible. What can we do to mitigate some of the adverse impacts of paving during development? Mr. Vincent provided three booklets of what the Committee has accomplished and what their recommendations are.

The first task was to require the conservation subdivision technique for all new subdivisions that are proposed. Right now conservation subdivisions are allowed, but they are an alternative to the conventional subdivision. The conservation technique is a better one and one that we should require applicants to come forward with, and by making this mandatory, we can always allow the conventional approach as a backup. So if someone comes in with a smaller development and they can’t do a conservation development, we still have some options to allow the conventional route.

Mr. Vincent reviewed the booklets with the Commission. Mr. Calkins inquired if there is a review by the Wetlands Commission, and that they agree with what is being proposed to be point into the regulations. It is unfair to have the Wetlands Commission approve one thing, and then have the PZC require something else. Mr. Vincent stated that is an excellent point. Mr. Calkins noted stormwater management, rain gardens, etc., are already approved and in place even before they get to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Mr. Vincent explained how the low impact development uses could be bonded to ensure maintenance. Stormwater has become the number one identifiable source of water pollution within this country, and we are now making people who will eventually impact our water quality be responsible for that. Agreement will be filed on the land records, and that is the best place to file agreements, and the town can enforce its rights through liens or enforcement actions.

Motion by Mr. Summers to add by 2/3rds vote an agenda item to set a public hearing date for the Low Impact Development Regulations, regulation for conservation subdivisions, LID management and also discuss General Business district zone change to the Downtown District, seconded by Mr. Perosino, unanimously carried.

MOTION by Mr. Summers to set a public date of December 8, 2010, seconded by Mr. Perosino, unanimously carried.

6. Public Hearing scheduled for 7:30 p.m., November 10, 2010, Council Chambers, Room 218, City Hall, 140 Main Street, Torrington, CT

- a. Proposed Changes to City of Torrington Zoning Regulations
Applicant: City of Torrington Planning and Zoning Commission
Proposal: Zoning Regulation Amendment, Section 6.6.1, Junkyards and Definitions, Section 2.2, Junk and Junkyards

Passed until November 10, 2010.

7. Adjournment:

MOTION by Mr. Perosino to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Summers, motion unanimously carried at 7:51 p.m.

Lona Kirk, Land Use Office
Planning and Zoning Commission