

**CITY OF TORRINGTON  
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
MINUTES  
January 14, 2015**

Present: Richard Calkins, Chairman  
Greg Mele, Vice Chair  
Paul Summers, Member  
Jon Sheaffer, Jr., Alternate  
Greg Perosino, Member (arrived at 7:15 p.m.)

Also Present: Martin Connor, AICP, City Planner

Not Present: Donna Greco, Alternate  
Jim Bobinski, Alternate

**1. Call to Order:**

Chairman Richard Calkins called the order the Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting at 7:10 p.m., in the Torrington City Hall Council Chambers, Room 218, 140 Main Street, Torrington, CT

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

Chairman Calkins announced present and serving on the Commission this evening will be Greg Mele, Paul Summers, Doris Murphy, and Richard Calkins. Also in attendance is City Planner Martin Connor.

Mr. Connor spoke about the "Torrington Walks" one day design workshop, City Officials, staff, and Greenway Advocates and residents will identify necessary action steps to connect sidewalks with the Naugatuck River Greenway and surrounding woodland trails. We are lucky to have John Monroe from the National Parks River and Trails Program, he will moderate the program and we have quite a list of people who have signed up to participate. The workshop will begin in the morning, lunch will be provided. There will be discussion on management and maintenance of the walkways and how we can connect trails, and what we can do to improve pedestrian trails downtown, connecting downtown events. Downtown revitalization will be discussed, some of the public works projects that the City will be doing in the future will be reviewed. This will be a full day. Landscape architects will be present to do some drawing, as well as the City's GIS staff to do some mapping. It will be a great day. Mr. Connor is hoping Commission members can be present for at least part of the day, and if everyone can be present for the wrap up at 4:00 p.m. to summarize the charette. This is exciting, and the information collected will be used for future updates to the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Mr. Connor reviewed the training the Connecticut Bar Association will be offering on March 21, 2015 at Wesleyan University. This is Connecticut Land Use Law for Boards

**CITY OF TORRINGTON  
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

**January 14, 2015**

and Commissions. Mr. Mele has attended and found it very useful. Mr. Sheaffer expressed interest in attending.

**3. Minutes for Approval:**

a. 12/10/14

MOTION by Mr. Summers to approve the minutes of 12/10/14 with Mr. Mele seconding the motion, motion carried with Ms. Murphy abstaining from voting.

**4. Old Business:**

a. Enforcement Update

Mr. Summers noted a meeting was held with the Mayor and Mr. Perosino regarding enforcement, and the Mayor is committed to working on blight issues. Obviously we need to enforce our Zoning Regulations. It was a good meeting. No updates on specific property sites at this time.

Chairman Calkins noted our Corporation Counsel Ray Rigat has done a great job of moving these matters forward and showing that we are serious about these issues.

\*\*\*\* Commissioner Perosino arrived at this time. (7:15 p.m.) \*\*\*\*

Mr. Perosino noted the Mayor has a keen interest in resolving these zoning issues, and Mr. Connor said it is important that the Mayor know the thoughts of the Commissioners on these zoning matters.

Mr. Calkins hoped that we can get to the point where we can address the foreclosed and vacant houses/buildings that are a continuous problem.

Mr. Connor noted the Mayor instructed Tim Waldron, the Mayor's assistant to contact CCM and obtain more information about these issues. The City of Waterbury has a task force overseen by the Police Department.

a. Zoning Regulations, amendments discussion

Mr. Connor would like the Commission to take another look at the "Come Home to Downtown" recommendations. Currently new multi-family developments would need to follow the same zoning requirements as those in the R6 zone. With the Commission's permission, Mr. Connor would like to review what other towns are doing with regard to residential new buildings in a downtown. Right now it would be impossible to recreate a residential situation downtown with appropriate Downtown building setbacks.

**CITY OF TORRINGTON  
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

**January 14, 2015**

Mr. Calkins would like to lean towards regulations that do not promote the destruction of the downtown, and efforts made towards preserving the downtown buildings. People objected to the first downtown plan which encouraged destruction of downtown buildings.

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At 7:25 p.m. the Commission took a five minutes recess.

**5. New Business:**

**6. Public Hearing scheduled for 7:30 p.m., Wednesday, January 14, 2015, City Hall Council Chambers, 140 Main Street, Torrington, CT**

- a. Proposed Amendments to Torrington Zoning Regulations  
Applicant: City of Torrington Planning and Zoning Commission  
Proposal: Section 2.0 Definitions, Subsection 2.2 – Specific Terms “Artist”; Amend Section 3.0 Uses, Subsection 3.1 Table of Uses, add new subsection 1.60 Artist Live/Work

At 7:30 p.m. Chairman Calkins opened the public hearing and stated serving on the Commission this evening will be Greg Mele, Doris Murphy, Greg Perosino, Jon Sheaffer, Paul Summers and Richard Calkins. Also present is City Planner Martin Connor.

Mr. Mele read the legal notice which was published in the Republican American.

Mr. Connor read his memo to the Commission dated December 11, 2014. Mr. Connor noted the City’s Plan of Conservation and Development is in favor of such a regulation, and in the business development strategies, we were encouraged to work with the Torrington Art Commission to support existing art and culture organization, and the thought is that this will help promote tourism.

Questions were posed by Commission members which were answered by Mr. Connor.

Mr. Calkins opened the hearing to the public.

Mr. Ed Jaffee spoke in favor of the proposal and explained his previous experiences with art, working in a home, etc. An artist requires much more space than the ordinary business such as a home office. Mr. Jaffee spoke of other towns that use this concept, often in old mill buildings, and how it substantially increases tourism which supports local businesses.

**CITY OF TORRINGTON  
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

**January 14, 2015**

Mr. Connor noted he visited Pawtucket, Rhode Island and their strong art presence. They have an economic development person working full time on the arts development.

Members of the public spoke in favor of the proposal.

Mike Clark appeared with comments and questions, which were answered by Commission members and Mr. Connor. Mr. Clark stated he is in favor of the proposal. He would like to see what the costs to the City will be.

Mr. Calkins expressed his concern that the Commission would be singling out one particular group of individuals and allowing them special privileges that we don't allow for other types of home based businesses.

Mr. Perosino noted this ties in with the economic development plan, and he would not necessarily refer to it as privileged, it has a broader scope. There are certainly issues with this, which will present themselves with the special exception process. Safeguards can be taken to protect the neighborhood.

Mr. Calkins said art is in the eye of the beholder. Mr. Perosino responded they can look at each individual artist, is the work done with chainsaw, or a welder who may create much noise. These will be site specific special exceptions.

Mr. Connor said this is very exciting, as Torrington is becoming a town known for its arts, and he believes that's what will bring the downtown back and vibrant. This goes hand in hand with what we are trying to do economically downtown to revitalize Torrington with the arts.

Mr. Summers noted making this process a Special Exception makes it very fair.

Discussion followed amongst Commission members and Mr. Connor.

Mr. Steven Roth and Torrington Downtown Partners fully support this proposal.

Mr. Ed Jaffe spoke in favor of the proposal, Torrington will never be a factory town again, and this is an alternative for this community to create an environment that will be good for everyone. Torrington has the potential to become the arts center of Connecticut.

Mr. Connor noted to change the proposal to "no retail sales on premises", per the comments of Commissioner Mele.

At 8:27 p.m., Chairman Calkins declared the public hearing closed.

MOTION by Mr. Mele to APPROVE Amendments to Torrington Zoning Regulations

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of Uses, add new subsection 1.60 Artist Live/Work

**CITY OF TORRINGTON  
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
MINUTES  
January 14, 2015**

The Commission finds the proposal to be consistent with the City of Torrington's Plan of Conservation and Development. The effective date of the regulation change shall be the day after publication of the legal notice of decision in the local newspaper. Motion seconded by Mr. Perosino, unanimously carried.

**7. Adjournment:**

At 8:29 p.m., motion by Mr. Perosino to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Mele, unanimously carried.

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Land Use Office  
City of Torrington