

From: Lois Laczko June 1, 2009 12:04:38 PM
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To: SimsburyCT_PlanMin
Cc:

ADOPTED

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
April 28, 2009
REGULAR MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman John Loomis called the regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 7:05 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. The following members were present: Susan Bednarczyk, Gerry Post, Carol Cole, and Ferguson Jansen. Julie Meyer arrived at 7:45 p.m. Also in attendance were Hiram Peck, Director of Planning, as well as other interested parties.

II. SEATING OF ALTERNATES

Chairman Loomis appointed Commissioner Cole to serve in the absence of Commissioner Houlihan.

III. POSSIBLE APPROVAL OF MINUTES from April 14, 2009 regular meeting

Several edits were made to the minutes.

Commissioner Post made a motion to approve the April 14, 2009 minutes as amended. Commissioner Cole seconded the motion, which was approved. Commissioners Bednarczyk and Post abstained.

IV. STATUS OF THE PROPOSED PLANNED AREA DEVELOPMENT (PAD) ZONE

Chairman Loomis stated that Commissioners Meyer and Houlihan will be part of a Subcommittee that has been set up to review and work on the PAD regulation.

Mr. Peck stated that all comments have been forwarded to the Town Attorney, who will be integrating them into the next draft. This next draft should be done by next week. He would like to set up a meeting with the Subcommittee after that. Mr. Peck stated that Scott Barnett will be Chairing the Subcommittee. He is hoping that they will have one meeting per week for three weeks. There will then be a public meeting at the end

of May and a public hearing at the end of June. Mr. Peck stated that the members of the Subcommittee will include Bruce Elliott, Julie Meyer, Chip Houlihan, John McCann, Emil Dahlquist, Mark Deming and Lou George. He stated that all meetings are open to the public. He is hopeful that the Town Attorney will be in attendance at the Subcommittee meetings. Mr. Peck stated that he is also looking into getting additional legal help regarding this regulation.

V. STATUS OF CONSULTANTS' PROPOSALS FOR A TOWN CENTER CHARRETTE

Mr. Peck stated that the Town has received a response back from Code Studios regarding questions that the Town had. He stated that the Town should be receiving a contract from the consultant by next week. When this is received, it will be reviewed by the Town Attorney.

Mr. Peck stated that the PAD, the Charrette documents, the work on the Zoning Regulations and the IHZ will all come together with the various grants that the Town has received. The Town has a total of \$102,000 allocated for the Charrette process. He stated that they will need additional expertise regarding historic preservation and low impact development.

Mr. Peck stated that the Charrette process is moving along. He is hopeful that the pre-Charrette work can be done prior to the Charrette starting in September. The Town will need to get all of the information needed for the consultant, which will take a great deal of time, prior to September.

Mr. Peck stated that the Town is getting a discount because of the current economic times.

Mr. Peck stated that he still needs to decide what space will be used during the Charrette. They may use a Municipal building or possibly the Riverview. The problem with using the Library is that the ceilings are too low and views may be obstructed because of the columns. He stated that they will need a space that is expandable.

Commissioner Jansen suggested using Eno Memorial Hall. Commissioner Post suggested using St. Catherine's Church in West Simsbury. He stated that they have a big space that is separate from the Church hall.

Mr. Peck stated that the consultant's team will be touring different parts of Simsbury when they arrive. He stated that different people will be focusing on different aspects of the Charrette. He still needs to decide how best to get these different groups around Town. The Town is also trying to save money where ever possible. He is hopeful that he can send the consultant information they need electronically and communicate with

them through teleconferencing. He does not want the consultants to travel to Simsbury if they do not have to in order to save additional money.

Chairman Loomis stated that the result of the Charrette will be a Zoning Regulation. The Planning Commission will see this as a referral. Mr. Peck stated that the Planning Commission will be involved in the whole process.

Mr. Peck stated that the Charrette process will include meetings that will be open to the public during the day and into the night. The night meetings may be a recap of the daytime meetings. He would also like to have these meetings televised on SCTV.

VI. STATUS OF THE INCENTIVE HOUSING ZONE STUDY

Mr. Peck stated that the draft report from the first cut has put the properties into three levels. The first level is for properties that meet the requirements. The second level is for properties that have some issues and level three is for properties that probably are not compatible.

Commissioner Jansen stated that he would be surprised if the Charrette did not endorse higher density housing. Chairman Loomis stated that cluster housing is already, in effect, endorsed.

VII. STAFF REPORT(s)

Mr. Peck stated that the Town is trying to get applicants to submit as much as possible electronically. This will allow Town staff more time to review this information. They would also like to start e-mailing this information to the Boards and Commissions in order to save money on postage and to get this information out quicker. Town staff will now be sending out minutes, agendas and pertinent information by e-mail.

Mr. Peck stated that both the Wetlands Commission and Design Review Board suggested posting attachments on the website. Commissioner Post suggested that the Boards and Commissions go to the Town website with a password in order to view information. Mr. Peck stated that he would discuss this option with the Computer Department.

Regarding Meadowood, Chairman Loomis stated that, at a recent meeting, the Board of Selectmen heard comments regarding the RFP from Board members and farmers. The Board of Selectmen were going in the direction of signing a lease with Gresczyk Farms and they also discussed related issues.

Mr. Peck stated that Mr. Sawitzke prepared the RFP and the Board of Selectmen voted to pursue an agreement for one year with the high bidder.

Chairman Loomis stated that two of the farmers that responded to the RFP were from Simsbury; the other farmers were outside of Simsbury. He stated that the Open Space Committee had recommended to the Board of Selectmen that they choose a farmer that is local and organic. Chairman Loomis stated that several residents, including Commissioner Meyer became alarmed because they felt there was not sufficient awareness regarding the proposed pesticide use by the Gresczyk Farms. Although the proposed pesticides were cleared by the DEP, there were still some concerns.

Commissioner Meyer stated that Gresczyk Farms listed the pesticides that they would be using as Round Up and Etc. She stated that she was uncertain what the etc. included. She did a great deal of research with the Connecticut Agricultural Station. She feels that the Town has chosen a farmer who had a higher number of pesticides compared to the other farmers. Commissioner Meyer stated that she did speak to Mary Glassman regarding this issue. She also informed the residents in Simsbury that this was an issue that they needed to be aware of.

Commissioner Meyer stated her concerns that the Planning Commission was not told that Gresczyk Farms was being pursued prior to the Board of Selectmen making their decision on March 23rd. Chairman Loomis stated that the Open Space Committee did discuss several farmers, although their information was not complete regarding pesticides. He feels that the Board of Selectmen were trying to make possible some agricultural activity this spring, realizing how late in the season it already was. He believes that the BOS, although they did not have all of the necessary information, made a decision to go forward. Commissioner Meyer stated that Mr. Sawitzke had the pesticide information when the RFP was submitted by the applicant.

Commissioner Jansen asked if the Town has gone back to the farmer to state that they cannot use certain pesticides. Commissioner Meyer stated that Gresczyk Farms stated that they would take three chemicals off of their list, although there is still some concern.

Commissioner Bednarczyk stated that the Open Space Committee was created years ago. She stated that whatever the Open Space Committee worked on was supposed to come back to the Planning Commission. She feels that the Open Space Committee works in a vacuum.

Commissioner Post feels that if the Town only uses an organic farmer, this will solve the problem. He stated that the Town needs to meet the intent of what the Planning Commission wanted the property to be used for.

Commissioner Meyer stated that the Board of Selectmen's decision was to table this issue and discuss it next year. They will be planting the field with Rye for now.

Commissioner Meyer questioned who would be the watchdog for this property. She feels that Town staff does not have the correct farming background to do this. Mr. Peck stated that whoever purchases pesticides needs a license. Towns do not regulate pesticide applications; this is regulated by the State. He stated that it will be a local decision regarding if the Town will only allow an organic or local farmer to farm this land. He stated that the person who applies the pesticides is the one at risk.

Commissioner Cole stated that this is a very complicated issue. She agrees with Commissioner Post to have only a farmer who is organic. If the Town does not have the ability to make sure that the farmer is doing the right thing, they should only allow an organic farmer, or at least a local farmer.

Commissioner Meyer stated that the taxpayers have purchased this land and because the Town wants to get involved in farming this land, then the Town needs to understand farming.

In response to Commissioner Bednarczyk's previous comments, Chairman Loomis stated that the Open Space Committee meets every first Wednesday of the month at which they do allow public comment. He stated that everyone is welcome to attend these meetings. He stated that he will send the meeting minutes to the Planning Commission members for their review.

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

There were none.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Jansen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 p.m. Commissioner Post seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Gerry Post, Secretary