

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
TOLLAND, CONNECTICUT
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 14, 2011

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Cardin, Chair
Marilee Beebe, Vice Chair
Sue Errickson, Secretary
Dave Barrow, Regular

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jack Scavone, Regular
John Hughes, Alternate
Benjamin Stanford, Alternate

OTHERS PRESENT: Linda Farmer, AICP, Director of Planning & Community Development
Ross Person, Tolland Agricultural Center
Dawn Toth, resident

1. **Call to Order:** Michael Cardin, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:33p.m. in Council Chambers.
2. **Public Comment:** Dawn Toth asked that an item be added to the agenda to discuss her proposal for an artists' collaborative at her Tolland home. Sue Errickson/Dave Barrow motion to add a discussion under Item 5.1.5. Motion was unanimously approved.
3. **Public Hearing(s):** None.
4. **Action on Public Hearing(s):** None
5. **Other Agenda Items**

- 5.1 **Discussion with Representative of the Tolland Agricultural Center** – regarding possible expansion. Ross Person of the Tolland Agricultural Center provided a handout on the history of the non-profit Tolland Agricultural Center located at 24 Hyde Avenue (Route 30) in Vernon. The handout also indicated the TAC Board of Trustees intent to purchase the Gunther property located adjacent to their current parcel of land, which falls in both Vernon and Tolland and which would allow them to expand some of their current programs while maintaining open space in both Tolland and Vernon.

Ms. Farmer said she and Vernon's Town Planner Len Tundermann, members of Connecticut Farmland Trust, and several other interested parties participated in a presentation at the TAC building about the Gunther property. She said she and Mr. Tundermann have walked the property previously, and that access to the property is from the Vernon side. The TAC Board of Trustees would like to get an environmental review team (ERT) to do an assessment of the property. Both the Inland Wetlands Commission in Tolland and Vernon have given a nod to it. Ms. Farmer said she feels this would be an appropriate use of the ERT.

A map of the property was displayed on the screen for the PZC to review. Mr. Person said the Gunther property would add a lot of property to the TAC's present property. He added that with this in mind the State Farm Bureau has approached his office about putting an office building on the property. Presently they are leasing property in Windsor. There are three houses on the Gunther

parcel, and Mr. Person said if they put a State Farm Bureau office on the property, they could either convert one of the houses to an office or take the three houses down and put up something new.

Reviewing the property, Ms. Farmer said that 72 percent of the Gunther property is prime agricultural soils. It is about 23.5 acres in total, and the Tolland portion is in the Commercial Industrial Zone. The property is in a 100 year flood zone, with Gages Brook in back, so not much of it is developable. Ms. Farmer said the Vernon land in front could be used for commercial, mixed use, or retail goods and services. Mr. Person said the biggest piece of tillable land on the Tolland portion would remain as is.

There was consensus from the PZC that acquisition of the land would be in line with the goals of the Plan of Conservation and Development and they encouraged staff to work with the property owners and Farm Bureau. Ms. Beebe said it would be good to reiterate that agriculture is a commercial activity that creates jobs and sells products. Ms. Farmer said she will also share this information with the Economic Development Commission. Mr. Barrow said this is an excellent opportunity from an educational perspective as well. Mr. Person said this could also fill a need in the State for creating a commercial kitchen for farmers.

5.1.5 **Dawn Salladino-Toth Artists' Collaborative:** Ms. Toth said she and her husband own two homes, one in Coventry and the other at 79 Tolland Stage Road. She said she is a textile artist and would like to use a room downstairs in their Tolland home for a private studio and for a sort of “friendship club” for artists, where they could learn, share, and get feedback from each other. It would be a word-of-mouth type of group where various art groups could hold meetings and display their artwork. She gave as examples the Embroiderers’s Guild and the Vernon Artists Guild. She would like to be able to also participate in the open studio weekends in town with occasional exhibits. She said her home is set back from the road, near the intersection with Sand Hill Road.

Ms. Farmer said this is somewhat of a fine line between being a home occupation and a non-residential use and she felt the Commission should weigh in on it. Her concern is about advertising classes and frequent exhibits that are open to the public.

Ms. Toth said there is plenty of parking on her property and she is not opposed to someday turning this into a commercial pursuit, but not at this time. Mr. Cardin asked Ms. Toth how often she holds classes in her house. Ms. Toth said probably two days a week. Beyond the classes, she said she would expect the group meetings to be no more than once a month. She would not charge any fees. Ms. Beebe said she felt this is not really any different than a group of friends getting together on a casual basis at someone’s home once a month, and didn’t feel it is necessary for the PZC to become involved. Ms. Toth said her only concern was that if she had a special exhibit, there might be the potential for more cars.

Mr. Cardin suggested after she holds her first event to touch base with Linda Farmer in the Planning Office to share how it went. Ms. Toth said she would do that, adding that she doesn’t expect anything to happen overnight, but that her goal is to start doing this by September. Ms. Farmer asked Ms. Toth to come in to her office and just fill out a home occupation permit.

5.2 **Tolland Village Area**

- Approval of proposed POCD amendment to send to Town Council. The PZC reviewed the proposed amendment. Mr. Barrow had some concerns about semantics, particularly on Page 56, where he felt in some cases the word “would” might need to be changed to “should.” He said the choice of words suggests the PZC is making a demand rather than expressing their preference, and that might be difficult in light of the fact that development could be years down the road. He expressed similar concerns with “will” and “should” under the bullet points on Page 58.

Sue Errickson/Marilee Beebe motion to amend the POCD to replace Pages 56, 57, and 58 with the proposed Pages 56 through 61, subject to reviewed wording revisions by staff and to send the amendment on to the Town Council. Motion was unanimously approved.

- Discuss draft Design Guidelines. Ms. Farmer said she will be meeting with the Design Advisory Board this Thursday night to review these. She said she spoke to Heidi Samokar of Planimetrics and they agreed there is a need to add hotel guidelines as well. Ms. Farmer said she expects they will be working on these draft guidelines for the next 1-1/2 months, adding that some quantifying items may need to be moved to the Zoning Regulations from the Design Guidelines.

Ms. Farmer added that she feels Low Impact Development guidelines should be a part of the Design Guidelines and in the Design Manual. She said she will be working with Steve Trinkhaus on this. She said she would also like to add some graphics or drawings such as a cross section of the road which would show the scale of pedestrians relative to signs and streetlights.

Mr. Cardin said he would be interested in hearing Design Advisory Board members comments on the note on Page 6 that says window glazing should be of a clear vision glass. He also asked if there was a big support for awnings in the Visual Preference Survey. Ms. Farmer said there was support expressed. She added that awnings do tend to soften the façade of buildings. Mr. Cardin also noted that the drawings appear to show the walkways as wider than 10 feet.

Mr. Barrow asked if the second bullet on Page 10 should take into consideration parking. Ms. Farmer said, for that matter, it should also consider multi-modal paths. Ms. Farmer noted under the 6th bullet that it should read: Sidewalks should be located, designed, and detailed to comply with the American Disabilities Act *where possible*. The Commission also discussed wording under Fences and Walls on Page 14. Ms. Farmer added that they need to clarify on Page 14 that there will be no structured parking garages and that the parking they are referring to is for underground parking.

There was consensus to add a section for bicycle or multi-modal paths and in overall design goals to add a section for gathering spots.

It was noted that on Page 9, the second bullet on awnings shows a picture that contradicts with the wording. Ms. Farmer also questioned the wording in the last bullet on Page 17, which says “Two family units should resemble single family houses.” She asked how they would propose to accomplish this. Ms. Beebe said she understood this to mean that there should be an effort to make the two family units more architecturally appealing.

Ms. Farmer said comments will come out of the Design Advisory Board meeting about this, and she will also be continuing to work on the guidelines. This will then come back to the PZC on February 28. Mr. Cardin asked that they also send the guidelines to Economic Development Chair George Mantak for their comments. Ms. Errickson asked that the PZC receive written comments from the two Boards so they can have a paper trail.

- Approve funding modification for Tolland Village Area. Ms. Farmer said the Town Manager did not have additional funding available for the VHB report. Mr. Cardin said they will need to appropriate the \$1,150 from elsewhere to satisfy the contract with VHB. Ms. Farmer said they have \$3,903 left in the HomeCT Grant that is not contracted to anyone, and they could use this to pay VHB. Then there would still be an additional \$246 that is needed, which could come out of the Professional Services budget.

Sue Errickson/Dave Barrow motion to use the additional \$1,000 of the non-specified funds remaining in the HomeCT Grant to pay for the VHB report from Steve O'Neill, with the remaining \$246 owed VHB to be paid out of the Professional Services operating budget. (\$2,903 was approved to be used for VHB at the January 24, 2011 meeting.) Motion was unanimously approved.

- Discuss modifications to schedule. Ms. Farmer reviewed the current schedule. She said they will need a motion to set a Public Hearing date in May. The Commission discussed moving the date for approving zoning regulations from April 11 to April 25, and setting the Public Hearing for the POCD amendment for May 23 instead of May 9. Mr. Cardin noted that since they will have meetings on March 7, 14, and 21, they might want to consider canceling the March 28 meeting. They will discuss this when the date gets closer.

Sue Errickson/Dave Barrow motion to set the Public Hearing for the POCD amendment for May 23, 2011. Motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Farmer noted that they now have a new draft zoning map with proposed changes to the boundary of the Tolland Village Area.

- 5.3 Discuss input received on drive-thru service regulations. Ms. Farmer said she put a question out to the Planners listserve saying that Tolland currently prohibits drive-thrus, except for banks. She said several Planners responded providing their regulations for drive-thrus. However, when she asked if anyone addresses the impacts off site with regard to walkability, and appearance, she did not get any feedback. She said she spoke to Heidi Samokar and Glen Chalder about this. Heidi Samokar is on a Massachusetts listserve and found that Framingham is working on something similar. They will be sending Ms. Farmer information.

Ms. Errickson said she is not sure if she would want to venture into considering fast food restaurants in the Tolland Village Area as she finds them aesthetically unappealing and are often followed by an accumulation of trash. She said it also runs against their desire to promote small, homegrown businesses. The Commission discussed issues regarding the safety of walking a carload of young children through a parking lot and into a restaurant as well as health impacts from idling cars. Mr. Cardin said his take from the February 7 meeting was that whatever they decide, it is important to keep any drive-thrus off the Main Street area and screen them well. He said the burden would be on engineers and designers how something like that would work. He added that they should keep in mind how they might make design guidelines that encourage sit down restaurants.

Mr. Cardin asked if there might be a way to tap into someone like Robert Orr on whether he has ever seen drive-thrus worked into a village node type of development. Ms. Farmer said she could check with him.

6. **Approval of Minutes** – Approve minutes of January 24, 2011 Regular Meeting and February 7, 2011 Special Meeting. Sue Errickson/Marilee Beebe motion to approve the minutes of the January 24, 2011 meeting. Motion was unanimously approved.

Sue Errickson/Marilee Beebe motion to approve the minutes of the February 7, 2011 Special Meeting. Ms. Errickson, Ms. Beebe, and Mr. Cardin voted to approve. Mr. Barrow abstained. Motion passed.

7. **Activities & Updates:** None.
8. **Town Staff Comments:** None.

9. Announcements – Upcoming Meetings

- February 17, 2011 – Design Advisory Board meeting, 7:00pm, 2nd Level Conference Room B.
- February 28, 2011 – Joint PZC/EDC meeting, 7:30pm, Council Chambers. Ms. Farmer said they will plan to talk about the goals and implementation of the POCD. She said the Town Council has noted that some responsibilities should belong to the EDC. Also, the EDC is discussing doing a five-year plan and will want the PZC's input. The PZC is also working on signs as well and we will want the EDC's input. There is also an action list of items from the 2002 Stakeholders Report to discuss..
- March 7, 2011 – Tolland Village Area – Public Workshop, 7:30pm, Crandall Lodge.

10. **Reading of Correspondence:** None.

11. **Communications and Petitions from Commission Members:** Mr. Barrow asked for the status on the Page property. Ms. Farmer said that Richard Page recently had rotator cuff surgery. She said Steve Lowrey is still monitoring the progress of the cleanup. They are also following up on the ReMax signs.

The Commission also discussed damage to area homes and businesses as a result of collapsed roofs from the weight of snow.

12. **Public Participation:** None.

13. **Adjournment:** Sue Errickson/Dave Barrow motion to adjourn the meeting and pay the clerk at 9:15pm. Motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Annie Gentile
Clerk