

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
TOLLAND, CONNECTICUT
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 25, 2010

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Cardin, Chair
Sue Errickson, Secretary
Jack Scavone, Regular
David Barrow, Regular
John Hughes, Alternate
Benjamin Stanford, Alternate

MEMBERS ABSENT: Marilee Beebe-Kostrun, Vice Chair

OTHERS PRESENT: Linda Farmer, Director of Planning & Community Development
David Sousa, Clough & Harbour Associates
Melissa Pierce, CCSU intern

1. **Call to Order.** Michael Cardin, Chair called the meeting to order at 7:30p.m. in Council Chambers. He seated John Hughes for Marilee Beebe-Kostrun.

2. **Public Comment.** None.

3. **Public Hearing(s):** None

4. **Action on Public Hearing(s):** None.

5. **Other Agenda Items:** (Items 5.1 and 5.2 were taken in reverse order).

5.2 **P&Z App. #698 – Glen & Heidi Norton Boggini** – Resubdivision request to create one new building lot and revise two existing lots. Location: easterly side of Grant Hill Road, 350' north of Coventry Town line. Commission to set Public Hearing date.

Ms. Errickson asked for a brief overview before setting a Public Hearing date. Ms. Farmer said this is an application to subdivide the property from two lots into three. There is currently a rear lot, a frontage lot and then some remaining land. This would involve a minor revision to the front lot. Errickson/Barrow motion to set the Public Hearing date for P&Z App. #698 for February 8, 2010. Motion was unanimously approved.

5.1 **HOME CT** – Incentive Housing Grant – Discussion with Dave Sousa, CHA. Mr. Cardin said they are now at the juncture where they must determine how to move this forward. He said one of the biggest challenges is that they have an area that crosses multiple property boundaries and some potentially challenging topography. Mr. Sousa said some of the questions posed to his firm about economics and taxation relate to areas in which they do not have the expertise, and that this vision would require cooperation and coordination among property owners.

Mr. Sousa explained that Smart Code guides a property owner and has the intent to create mixed use development with flexibility. He said investors find this Smart Code beneficial to them. Ms. Farmer said Smart Code defines street design, building design and amenities, and not uses as much. Mr. Sousa said Smart Code also provides a great deal of visuals so people can get a good handle on what can be done. Ms. Errickson asked if they can analyze the Smart Code to see what elements of it might work in Tolland. Ms. Farmer said they could.

Mr. Cardin said it would be beneficial if they could have some 3-D type models that could be used as something of a travelling road show for the property owners. He said people need to be able to see what we have now and how potential new development would look like. Mr. Sousa said Smart Code develops in three to four transects that become less and less intensive as you move away from the core.

Mr. Barrow asked if there are any examples they could point to of old style villages that have been recently built. He said he is having a tough time envisioning this concept without a 3-D model. Jack Scavone said the closest thing he can think of is a small development on a hill up behind Jonathan Pasco's Restaurant on Route 5 in East Windsor. He said this is a colonial type of village. Ms. Errickson said Mashpee is another example of this type of village that has been built from scratch. Ms. Farmer agreed that Mashpee presents a good example of the form and is close structurally, although they do not allow on-street parking there. Ms. Farmer noted that Mashpee Village has become a huge tax plus for the town and helped enable them to build a beautiful library. Mr. Sousa said he could come up with some projects that they could look at for reference. He said the most well-known example in the area is probably Blue Back Square in West Hartford, as it incorporates both commercial and residential elements. Ms. Farmer noted that Blue Back Square is a bit denser than what they are looking for in Tolland. She said that in reality there are not a lot of large scale models of this having been done in the area.

Mr. Sousa said there are three approaches they can take with regard to regulations. He said the first option is to have no public input and simply create the code and let developers come in and make proposals. A second option would be for the town to seek out a master developer for the plan, and a third option would be for some form of public-private partnership. He said Storrs is doing the public-private partnership approach for a development. He said the public sector created a municipal development plan and a developer is working with the town to develop Smart Code for certain properties. The benefit to this approach, he said, is that the developer has a good handle on what can be built and what will sell.

Mr. Cardin said he would not support a process that does not include the property owners. He said he feels they have been selling the process all along that they would be included so they should not stray from that approach. Ms. Errickson suggested they go through the Smart Code and pick out what they feel would work for Tolland, then show pictures or a 3-D model to property owners to get their support. Mr. Scavone suggested they have a workshop with property owners only. Ms. Farmer said this could be done. They would need to have the workshop open to the public to observe, but they could limit input to be from property owners only. Ms. Farmer said she really feels they need something to go to property owners with where they could visualize themselves in a particular space.

Mr. Scavone said he feels they have not yet done a good job involving the stakeholders and they haven't driven home the understanding that their properties will be worth more with this type of development. He said the stakeholders are the ones who can make or break this development, so they need to understand how this can benefit them. Mr. Barrow said if 3-D models are not possible, a computer model might be a good alternative.

Ms. Farmer introduced Melissa Pierce, an intern from CCSU who is working with the Planning Office. She said they could brainstorm to see if students do any of this type of model work.

Mr. Sousa said his firm first came up with a plan that was a bit too dense for Tolland and after listening to the public, they pulled back on some of the density. He said if the town chooses not to name a preferred/master developer, then the density they are now showing in the plan is likely going to be too intense to expect it to happen on its own. He said this is because it would require too much cooperation between property owners. Ms. Farmer agreed that if property owners were to develop their land individually, it would look significantly different than the vision before them. She said to get to the T-4 area, they would require multiple connections, which would require a lot of cooperation. Mr. Sousa further explained that a master developer brings a great deal of expertise and necessary capital. Ms. Farmer said the work on Route 195 and the street network would be the biggest barriers to individual property owners going it alone.

In summarizing the discussion, Mr. Scavone said they would need to get some renderings and then move to getting stakeholder buy-in. Ms. Farmer said this would be followed by getting some sample code. She said she would need to do a story lesson on the genesis of the idea and on the steps they took as they moved through the process and disseminate this information amongst the stakeholders.

Mr. Sousa said he feels this vision is a major undertaking and they should do more public outreach. He suggested the option of using study circles as has been done in Eastford. He said it is a way to engage people by having them break up into groups that each study an element of the bigger issue and report back to the whole. Workshop study circles on the economics, environmental issues, sustainability and other aspects of the plan would give people an opportunity to participate and feel they have some control in the outcome of the plan. Mr. Cardin said that when he served on the Town Council some years ago, they used study circles but found the end product was not that valuable. He said one shortcoming is that it's very fragmented because not everyone stays involved, so there ends up being a lot of disconnections. He said he would prefer to see some type of model that could be moved around, envisioning the 3-D model at Dunkin' Donuts where people could come into the shop and see before them what the density might look like. He would ideally like something where you could pick up a building and move it around to see how it might work in different locations. Mr. Sousa said another mechanism might be to publish a series showing each component in a separate chapter. He said it might be possible to engage a local newspaper to publish a different chapter each week.

Ms. Farmer said she has been involved in a block grant program that looks at sustainable initiatives and they could use this to show how they might implement such initiatives in Tolland. Mr. Cardin asked if Mr. Sousa had any master developers in mind who might guide them in the process. Mr. Sousa has some names and will provide them. Mr. Sousa said a big challenge is the topography, and that grading issues require cross property coordination, so that without a master developer to facilitate, they would need to go with less aggressive grading.

Mr. Barrow asked if a pharmacy with a drive-through could work in this plan. Ms. Farmer said she could not see it in the downtown setting, but possibly on the periphery, such as near the Subway. Mr. Sousa explained that one-story buildings would defeat the objective and that drive-throughs of any kind are difficult with pedestrians. Mr. Sousa will take what they discussed this evening and come back to the Commission with some sample code.

A brief recess was taken at 8:55p.m. and the meeting was resumed at 8:58p.m.

5.3 **Route 195 Corridor Study** – Recommendation of Advisory Committee – Discuss and issue report to the Town Council. Ms. Farmer said the Town Council will be holding a Public Hearing on this on February 9, 2010. Ms. Errickson said there has been some concern expressed about cross-hatching and bright painting. Ms. Farmer said Tom Maziarz said there will not be a need for a lot of this. However, she noted that this is a design standard before them and not a plan standard. Ms. Errickson said that in general she finds the plan acceptable as it moves people through the Green safely and slower. Her only concern was that some of their concerns might be lost with the positive recommendation. Errickson/Scavone motion to make a positive recommendation to the Town Council on the Route 195 Corridor Study. Motion was unanimously approved.

5.4 Discuss future meeting with Economic Development Commission. Mr. Cardin said one of the items that came out of the public workshop earlier this month was an informal suggestion about continuing the discussion with the Economic Development Commission and the Town Manager. He referred to the Economic Development Action Plan in the packets which he said provides some good history and insight into where proposals from such things as the Technology Park came from. He suggested it would be a good idea to talk with the EDC and review the plan to see what things are still shared goals. He said this does not have to be on a Monday night. Mr. Barrow said it would be good to engage the Town Council, the PZC, and the EDC in a discussion about what they all can do to bring economic development to Tolland.

Mr. Cardin said a missing variable is that the community wants economic development for Tolland, but that requires an investment. This might mean an Economic Development Coordinator or possibly a Project Manager for the Village Area. Ms. Farmer said she met with Steve Werbner, and they thought it might be beneficial to have a facilitator at this meeting. Ms. Errickson agreed that having a neutral party would be good and that they should hold it in a venue where they are all on equal footing. Ms. Farmer said she could look into potential facilitators and the cost for doing so. She said Brian Miller, a consulting planner from Cheshire, might be a good choice. He facilitated the stakeholder's process. Mr. Cardin said they will need to find a schedule that would be inclusive of the Town Council.

5.5 **CRCOG** – Appointment of representative to the Capital Region Council of Governments. Cardin/Scavone motion to reappoint Sue Errickson as the PZC representative to this 29-town Council of Governments. Ms. Errickson suggested someone might wish to be elected as an alternate. She said they meet every other month on a Thursday evening from 7:00 p.m. to about 8:30 p.m. where they discuss issues of regional importance, such as smart growth and sustainability. She said they also inform abutting towns of neighboring developments. Ms. Farmer said they are very lucky to belong to CRCOG as it supplements their planning ability with our small staff. She added that they are lucky to have Ms. Errickson involved. Mr. Cardin thanked Ms. Errickson for her commitment on behalf of the Commission. It was agreed that if someone wishes to serve as an alternate to inform Ms. Errickson.

6. **Approval of Minutes** – Approve minutes of December 28, 2009 and January 11, 2010 Meeting Minutes. Errickson/Hughes motion to approve the minutes of the December 28, 2009 meeting. Ms. Errickson, Mr. Hughes, Mr. Cardin, and Mr. Barrow voted to approve. Mr. Scavone abstained. Motion passed.

Errickson/Scavone motion to approve the minutes of the January 11, 2010 Special Meeting. Mr. Cardin asked on Page 2 in the paragraph that begins with “Derek Pacheco” that the minutes should reflect that Mr. Cardin had asked Ms. Farmer, Ms. Beebe-Kostrun, and Ms. Errickson to provide some history on the drive-through issue due to their prior involvement. A vote was taken to approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Cardin, Ms. Errickson, Mr. Scavone, and Mr. Hughes voted to approve. Mr. Barrow abstained. Motion passed.

7. **Activities and Updates**

7.1 Tolland Village Area – This was discussed earlier in the meeting.

7.2 EPA Smart Growth Grant – Ms. Farmer said they can go to the website where they can get the whole final report, a blueprint for sustainable development communities. The link is as follows: www.crcog.org/community_dev/sustainable-dev.html Ms. Farmer will post a link to this on the town website.

7.3 OPM Energy & Conservation Block Grant – As noted in the Planning update of 1-21-10, the grant proposal has been submitted by CRCOG and several member towns including Tolland, which would include review of participating towns’ Zoning and Subdivision Regulations for barriers to energy efficient, sustainable development techniques.

7.4 Budget Statistical Page for the PZC – It was noted there is a typo on the last bullet on the back page. Mr. Cardin suggested they should boldly note how many people are doing all of this work.

7.5 Potential “restaurant” type use at 206 Merrow Road. Ms. Farmer explained that they have a definition of restaurants in their regulations that allows for a gray area. She said convenience stores like 7-11 are slowly edging to becoming restaurants. She said they have a convenience store in town that wants to expand its menu and have standing counters and she needs some guidance from the PZC as to whether they would need to have the owner of this establishment come in with a sketch. There was consensus to have the owner come in and to add this item to the February 8 agenda. Ms. Farmer noted that Mr. Lowrey will be attending this meeting in her place.

8. **Town Staff Comments & Announcements**

8.1 Town Council – Route 195 Corridor Study – Public Hearing will be held on Tuesday February 9, 2010 at 7:30p.m.

8.2 Town Council/EDC/Fire Department meeting at 7:00p.m. on February 11, 2010 at the Fire Training Center.

8.3 CRCOG sponsored meetings:

- Tuesday, January 26, 2010 (snow date: Thursday, February 11) meeting will be held from 1:00 to 2:30p.m. at the Lyceum, Hartford, CT – topic concerning – From Grey to Green: Sustainable Practices for Redeveloping a Vacant Shopping Center.
- Wednesday, February 3, 2010 – Registration starting at 12:30, program will start at 1:00 and run to 4:30p.m. at the Lyceum, 227 Lawrence Street, Hartford, CT – topic concerning Reinventing Commercial Strips: Redevelopment Design Strategies to Create Mixed-Use Centers with Randall Arendt.

- Planning & Zoning Commission Workshop – Monday, February 22, 2010 at 7:30p.m. concerning the POCD Implementation Chapter.

9. **Reading of Correspondence** – Ms. Errickson read a letter from the DEP to Steve Lowrey regarding its approval of Tolland’s Aquifer Protection Regulations.

10. **Communications and Petitions from Commission Members**

Sue Errickson – CRCOG Report – Ms. Errickson said she does not have a CRCOG report; however, she did have some handouts from the Freedom of Information (FOI) meeting. She said they should not use the internet or phone to discuss PZC business. Also, should the press want to videotape a meeting, they should establish ahead of time where they will allow cameras and how much lighting. Ms. Farmer asked if they provided any handy regulations they could follow. Ms. Errickson said they did not. Ms. Farmer said she will find a sample. She said they should also be careful not to abuse the Executive Session.

Mr. Cardin said he would like to work with Ms. Farmer on the issue of virtual meetings. He said he would also like to talk at the February 22 meeting about if there is a way to rethink a zone regulation change near the Industrial Park that might capitalize on the growth of traffic from the Star Hill Athletic Center. Ms. Farmer said they are allowed to do retail goods and services in the Business Park. She said the question is how to pull people up into the center of Town.

Mr. Barrow said he was able to talk to a number of participants from the business community who attended the workshop and he found the PZC got a lot of great comments back, particularly that people were glad to see the PZC and Planning Office becoming more business friendly.

Mr. Stanford asked that they have a future meeting to address all signage regulations, not just sandwich boards. Mr. Cardin said that will be the focus of the March workshop with a goal of having a PZC discussion to follow in April and then if they come to a consensus to go to Public Hearing.

Ms. Errickson reminded everyone about the upcoming Antique Show, asking that people come out and support the Tolland Historical Society.

Ms. Farmer said she met with the homeowners on Gehring Road that the Danforth’s had brought up at the last meeting. She said they are working on a phased cleanup and they are starting at 431 Gehring Road where they have one month, until February 7 to clean up the property. She said they are moving along and provided a picture.

11. **Public Participation**. None.

12. **Adjournment**. Scavone/Barrow motion to adjourn the meeting and pay the clerk at 9:45p.m. Motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Annie Gentile
Clerk