

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Cardin, Chair
Marilee Beebe, Vice Chair
Sue Errickson, Secretary
Jack Scavone, Regular
Dave Barrow, Regular
John Hughes, Alternate

MEMBERS ABSENT: Benjamin Stanford, Alternate

OTHERS PRESENT: Linda Farmer, AICP, Director of Planning & Community Development

1. **Call to Order:** Michael Cardin, Chair called the meeting to order at 7:30p.m. in Council Chambers.
2. **Public Comment:** None.
3. **Public Hearing(s):** None.
4. **Action on Public Hearing(s):** None.

5. **Other Agenda Items**

- 5.1 **P&Z App. #804 – Mediterranean** – Proposed Zoning Regulation revisions to add a definition of Hookah Lounge to Section 170-5 and to add Hookah Lounge to Section 170-58 as Special Permit Use in the Gateway Design District. Commission to set Public Hearing Date.

Ms. Farmer provided some background. She said there was some uncertainty as to how to categorize a Hookah Lounge. It cannot be classified as a restaurant, because selling food or drink is not the primary use. According to the Health Department, smoking is not allowed in any establishment where food or drink is purchased. This even includes vending machines. The original thought was to categorize it as a retail service. Patrons at hookah lounges smoke flavored molasses and tobacco products. Ms. Farmer said she still needs to get a total ruling from the Health Department on how to classify hookah lounges, but if they are approved as a special use in the Gateway Design District, then the applicant would need to come back to the PZC for a Special Use permit.

Ms. Errickson said Dan McCarthy from the State Trooper's office has expressed an interest in attending the public hearing to see what the PZC decides. Sue Errickson/Jack Scavone motion to set the public hearing date for December 13, 2010. Motion was unanimously approved.

- 5.2 **P&Z App. #805 – Town of Tolland** – Staff suggested Zoning Regulation revisions. Commission to consider setting a Public Hearing date. The Commission reviewed the suggested revisions. With regard to “non-conforming structures,” Ms. Farmer said that she got a legal opinion on the matter. She said there have been instances where an applicant asks for a variance to reduce a setback to put in a certain size addition or outbuilding and they get the variance, only to put in a much larger building. She said she will be bringing this to the Zoning Board of Appeals at their meeting this Thursday.

- 5.3 **P&Z App. #802 – Luba K. Williams** – Request for an additional 90 day extension for filing of mylars. Location: northerly side of Kozley Road, 200' from intersection with Midland Drive. Jack

Scavone/Marilee Beebe motion to grant the request for an additional 90 days for filing of mylars. Motion was unanimously approved.

- 5.4 Discussion concerning Sign Regulations. Mr. Cardin noted that about a year ago this Commission had reached a consensus to review their signage regulations and have in the meantime directed the Planning Department to not make signage enforcement their top priority. He said he would like to include some visuals or schematics for signage that might provide business owners with some guidance, and to build in some flexibility into the regulations.

John Hughes said he feels their earlier discussions about creating some flexibility for the types of signage allowed needing to be based on the various zones or districts in town is the right track to take. Mr. Scavone agreed that a one-size-fits-all set of regulations would not be appropriate.

Ms. Farmer said the town's regulations on signage are not that long compared to other towns. She said she has found there are two things that should not be changed excessively in a town and they are the size of signs and the size of residential lots. She said the town went from allowing freestanding signs to be 125 sq. ft maximum down to 32 sq. ft maximum. She said inconsistency in what is allowed for signage can do a disservice to businesses as they spend a lot of money on signs and need to have a clear picture of what they are allowed to do.

The Commission discussed the proposed Tolland Village Area and the fact that in this vision, not all businesses will be visible from the road. They also noted that directory signs are not always readable in a drive-by situation, and they began a preliminary discussion on sandwich board signs. Mr. Cardin asked if any towns in the area allow temporary signage. Ms. Farmer said there are many other communities that are grappling with the issue.

Mr. Barrow said Fridays and Saturdays, and in some cases Sundays, are generally the biggest sales days for retail businesses. He suggested modeling a sandwich board sign regulation around allowing sandwich board signs to be out on the weekends, but where they need to be taken in at night. Ms. Beebe said that even when they relaxed enforcement on signage, she has not seen a huge proliferation of signage around town.

The Commission discussed various signs they have seen around town, noting examples of what are desirable types of signs and those that they would like to discourage. Ms. Errickson said it is difficult to regulate taste or to require a business to invest in a more expensive sign if they are already struggling. Mr. Scavone said he feels farm stand signs should also be regulated to meet some kind of minimum standards.

Ms. Farmer said some towns utilize two types of flexibility in their regulations—freestanding sign size that is based on the number of businesses they are advertising, and sign size based on the distance the building is located from the street. Ms. Beebe noted that the Tolland Village Area vision calls for businesses to be located right at the street where it will be much easier for pedestrians and vehicular traffic to see in the windows and know what kind of stores there are. This will decrease the need for large signage. She noted that in their previous regulation changes, they probably went too far with their restrictions on colors and logos and it might be time to loosen up the regulations. She said the size of the sign for Radio Shack appears to be just fine when you allow them to use their color and logo. Ms. Farmer said non-franchise businesses that do not have an easily recognized logo will likely need a little more flexibility for signage for them to convey what they do or sell.

The Commission also discussed various plazas in town and in destination vacation areas. Ms. Beebe said that on Martha's Vineyard they allow small signs on posts with a lot of flexibility with colors and sign shapes. She passed around a picture she had on her cell phone that showed a good example. She said they also make use of very targeted lighting on signs at night. There was a general understanding that small businesses in plazas need to market their business as being located in whatever plaza they are in, such as Fieldstone Commons.

The Commission also discussed directory signs and where they would best be located. Ms. Farmer noted that the directory sign in Colonial Square has been effective. There was a discussion that the Fieldstone Commons sign should be at the road, but that the directory sign would be more effective if it were further inside the plaza. Ms. Beebe noted that when this issue was originally brought up with Greg Nanni of Capital Ventures, he agreed, but his tenants had certain demands for advertising that were made part of their lease agreements.

Mr. Scavone said they need to develop visual preferences for the different types of developments they have in town. Mr. Cardin asked how the signs at the entryway to residential subdivision developments are regulated. Ms. Farmer said for subdivisions with ten or more homes, signs are allowed to be a maximum of 32 square feet and to stay up for up to 12 months, but most stay up for longer.

Ms. Beebe asked if they have any model signs for technology zones. Ms. Farmer said the models are generally low, monument signs such as the sign at NERAC. She said there are some guidelines for them in the Simsbury regulations. Both she and Dave Barrow said they felt NERAC's sign is a good example of a tasteful and effective sign for a technology area.

Ms. Beebe suggested they start their sign regulation review by looking at existing regulations and determining areas they can be more flexible in such as color and logos. Ms. Farmer recommended taking pictures around town and in other towns of both desirable and undesirable examples. She said she can charge the Design Advisory Board to review this as well, and said she can pull out the samples she had previously from Lawren Rosen.

Mr. Scavone noted that if the Tolland Village Area develops over time, there is going to be a need for more than small wooden signs. He said if they do get a major hotel as an anchor, there would be a need to see that from the highway.

Ms. Farmer asked if the Commission would like to also address the issue where there are too many signs in one spot. When this happens, it is of no help to anyone. Ms. Errickson said she does not like the idea of limiting sandwich board signs to only a couple times a year as she feels it is too restrictive. Ms. Farmer said this came from the Simsbury model. Mr. Barrow agreed that they need to be able to allow sandwich board signs, but has found that most businesses in town have been reasonable with the amount of use they have given them.

6. **Approval of Minutes** – Approve minutes of September 27, 2010 Regular Meeting and October 18, 2010 Special Meeting. Sue Errickson/Jack Scavone motion to approve the September 27, 2010 meeting minutes. Motion was unanimously approved. Sue Errickson/Marilee Beebe motion to approve the October 18, 2010 meeting minutes. Motion was unanimously approved.
7. **Activities and Updates**: None.
8. **Town Staff Comments** – Ms. Farmer said she provided copies to the Commission of the Town Council minutes. She said last Tuesday the Town council went over the implementation schedule item by item for the Plan of Conservation and Development. She suggested after the first of the year that the PZC and Town Council might have a joint meeting to review them again.

Ms. Farmer said there was no appeal on the Belvedere Ridge application and they are now working on the conditions of the approval.

Ms. Farmer said the town has hired a new Building Official. He has started working with Beverly Bellody on a geothermal plan for the Town Office. Ms. Farmer also said she will be away on November 22, and suggested that because they have three extra meetings scheduled already in November that they

might want to consider canceling this meeting. There was consensus that this meeting should be cancelled.

9. Announcements – Upcoming Meetings

9.1 Tolland Village Area Presentation – Meeting with Wetlands, DAB, Recreation Board and WPCA – Thursday, November 4, 2010 at 7:00p.m. at the Lodge at Crandall Park, 124 Cider Mill Road.

9.2 Tolland Village Area Presentation – Meeting with Town Council, Board of Education, and Tolland Economic & Community Development Corporation – Monday, November 15, 2010 at 7:30p.m. at the Lodge at Crandall Park, 124 Cider Mill Road.

9.3 Public Presentation of the Tolland Village Area with Planimetrics – Tuesday, November 30, 2010 at 7:30p.m. at the Lodge at Crandall Park, 124 Cider Mill Road.

Ms. Beebe said the meetings, particularly with the public, have to emphasize what we have now, reviewing the chronology and what we need to remind people—namely that this property will be developed, and that our regulations as they are currently written still encourage sprawl. Ms. Farmer agreed saying that the land available is prime location and their concern is that what is presently in the regulations could result in development that is not desirable for Tolland. She also recommended that they not lose sight of sustainable development and to be sure to note that the need for a diverse housing stock came out loud and clear in previous public outreach and resulted in being made part of the Plan of Conservation and Development. Ms. Beebe said there should be discussion about the nodal element of villages.

Ms. Farmer said there is a flyer for the public workshop on November 30. She also asked Commissioners to take a look at the town website: www.tolland.org/pzc and that Cindy Murdock has done a lot of good work on this.

10. Reading of Correspondence: None.

11. Communications and Petitions from Commission Members: Ms. Errickson gave a report on CRCOG. She said she heard a talk on implementing Low Impact Development given by Mary-Ann Nusom Haverstock, an engineer with the Department of Environmental Protection.

There are also plans to change the regional Plan of Conservation and Development to incorporate Smart Growth guidelines. Additionally, a \$4.2 million HUD Sustainable Communities grant has been awarded for the Hartford/Springfield knowledge corridor. There are also some green plans in the works for the Capitol building, including a green roof, rain garden, and impervious surfaces around the building.

Mr. Barrow said he had an informal chat with property owner Mike Taylor. He said Mr. Taylor expressed his vision for his property to include 90 to 110 units in order to get payback on his property and he plans to bring in a national developer to do the work. Ms. Farmer said there have been multiple discussions about the number of units that could work on the property, but ultimately it will be determined by what the site can sustain.

12. Public Participation: None

13. Adjournment: Jack Scavone/Marilee Beebe motion to adjourn the meeting and pay the clerk at 9:05p.m. Motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Annie Gentile
Clerk