



ESSEX PLANNING COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, October 8, 2020
7:30 p.m.

Meeting Held Via Zoom Video Conference

Meeting Recording:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/4wXymcos8Yyr8lQ1-NXL0AFBO7hBkW3VqL-DO0tVas1Xte004VDI38tGmfL0cHIL.5fVjLLQO1QHe6P0>

Access Passcode: s0f2#q?q

DRAFT MINUTES

1. Call to Order and Seating of Members

Chairman Alan Kerr called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. In attendance, via videoconference, for the meeting was Member George Sexton. Seated for Gary Riggio was Alternate Hope Proctor, and seated for Ralph Monaco was Alternate Jane Siris. Also in attendance were Planner John Guskowski and ZEO Joe Budrow, as well as representatives of New Business items.

2. Approval of Minutes – September 10, 2020 Regular Meeting

Motion to approve minutes of September 10, 2020 by George Sexton, seconded by Hope Proctor. Motion carried unanimously.

3. New Business

a. Zoning Amendment Referral: Add Self-Storage to Section 90, Limited Industrial

Chairman Kerr recognized Attorney Rob Avena and applicant CJ Bardy, who proposed an amendment to the Zoning Regulations concerning self-storage facilities. Attorney Avena stated that they wished to allow self-storage within existing buildings with limited exterior changes and only one loading dock. The Commission discussed the landscaping

and buffering requirements for businesses in the Limited Industrial District vs. using an existing building without needing to add new fencing. Mr. Bardy suggested that the intent was to leave the exterior of the building and the site as-is with no significant visual changes.

Motion to issue a favorable comment on the proposed amendment, noting that it is harmonious with the Plan of Conservation & Development, by Hope Proctor, seconded by Jane Siris. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Old Business

- a. **Zoning Amendment Referrals:** Chairman Kerr welcomed Zoning Enforcement Officer Joe Budrow to the meeting to discuss the proposed changes. Joe Budrow reviewed the proposed amendments, which had been initially presented at the September Planning meeting.

- i.) **Application No. 20-6 – Essex Zoning Commission - A Petition for a Text Amendment to Section 20 (Definitions) of the Zoning Regulations to add a number of definitions.** The Commission reviewed the proposed amendments, which per Joe Budrow, incorporated mostly Gateway and FEMA definitions into the Regulations. The Commission discussed the proposed “Maximum Lot Coverage” definition, which included regulatory language in the original text.

Motion to issue a favorable comment on the proposed amendment, noting that it is harmonious with the Plan of Conservation & Development but with the recommendation that the regulatory language be removed from the definition of “Maximum Lot Coverage”, by Hope Proctor, seconded by George Sexton. Motion carried unanimously.

- ii) **Application No. 20-7 – Essex Zoning Commission - A Petition for a Text Amendment to Section 121 (Zoning Permits) of the Zoning Regulations.** Joe Budrow stated that the items covered by zoning permit review did not clearly include pools, decks, and other accessory structures in a consistent way and also did not properly regulate expiration of zoning permits granted but un-acted upon. The Commission, by consensus, agreed with the approach on expiration of zoning permits, but had concerns with the inclusion of signage and fences in the blanket regulated uses. John Guskowski suggested adding the modifier “regulated” in front of signs and fencing to reflect that not all such accessory items are subject to permitting. The Commission discussed alternatives and agreed that fence and sign regulation should be clearly spelled out elsewhere in the Regulations in a way that reinforced this section.

Motion to issue an unfavorable comment on the proposed amendment, recommending that additional editing be done to clarify the regulatory or permitting requirements for signs and fences, by Jane Siris, seconded by Hope Proctor. Motion carried unanimously.

iii) Application No. 20-8 – Essex Zoning Commission - A Petition for a Text Amendment to Section 140 (Zoning Board of Appeals) of the Zoning Regulations. Joe Budrow noted that for certain activities in the Gateway area, variances had been repeatedly granted in ways that might affect wetlands-proximate areas, and stated that this amendment was intended to ensure that variance applications for Section 101E would be referred to the Wetlands Commission for comment.

Motion to issue a favorable comment on the proposed amendment, noting that it is harmonious with the Plan of Conservation & Development, by Jane Siris, seconded by Hope Proctor. Motion carried unanimously.

iv) Application No. 20-9 – Essex Zoning Commission - A Petition for a Text Amendment to Sections 40L, 45 and 70 of the Essex Zoning Regulations to discuss properties in different districts. Joe Budrow explained some of the challenge of developing properties that were split into two zones and properly regulating issues such as setbacks and coverage. Both Town Attorney Royston and applicant's Attorney Chris Smith had suggested corrections that created a balancing of regulations from the two controlling zones. The Commission agreed that the Town's version was clearer, but the language about "average of the sum" was mathematically inaccurate.

Motion to issue a favorable comment on the proposed amendment to Section 70D, noting that it is harmonious with the Plan of Conservation & Development and with the recommendation that the language of "average of the sum" be changed just to "average", by Jane Siris, seconded by Hope Proctor. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Essex Village – National Register of Historic Places Discussion

John Guszowski reported that a joint letter of request, signed by Planning, EDC, Historical Society, and Sustainable Essex was submitted to the Selectmen. The Selectmen approved the request and forwarded it to the Board of Finance for an allocation of \$8000, which will be heard later in October. If approved, he will proceed with submitting a grant application to the State Historic Preservation Office.

c. Plan of Conservation & Development – Implementation Priorities

Chairman Kerr polled the Commissioner on any new priority actions, and noted that this agenda item would remain for future meetings.

6. **Report of Committees and Officers**

a. **Report from RiverCOG Representative**

Chairman Kerr reviewed the emailed report from Sandra Childress, which included a summary of a long session concerning affordable and attainable housing in the region.

b. **Report from Economic Development Commission Representative**

George Sexton reported that the EDC had not met in the past month.

c. **Planner's Report**

John Guskowski reported on the pending notification on the STEAP grant for Spencer's Corner improvements, the completion of a Community Connectivity grant application to install sidewalks on River Road, which had over 100 letters of support from the community, and the recent Town Meeting vote, which approved the merger of the Planning and Zoning Commissions. He suggested that the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the current Commissions should convene to discuss proposed bylaws for when the new joint P&Z met in December.

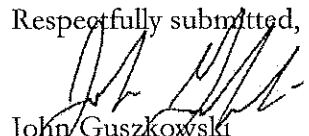
7. **Correspondence & Invoices**

There were no items of correspondence.

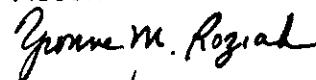
8. **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn by Hope Proctor, **seconded** by Jane Siris. **Motion carried unanimously**. Meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


John Guskowski
Consulting Town Planner

Received For Record



10/13, 2020 @ 8:35
Assist. Town Clerk, Essex, CT A.M.