

PLANNING and ZONING COMMISSION
Monroe, Connecticut
MEETING MINUTES
November 5, 2020

REMOTE ELECTRONIC PUBLIC MEETING VIA GO TO MEETING

Via computer, tablet or smartphone at this link: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/728914621>
Via phone at: United States: +1 (872) 240-3212 – Access Code: 728-914-621

Meeting: Planning and Zoning Commission
Regular Meeting
7 Fan Hill Road, Monroe, Connecticut

Meeting was Video and Audio Recorded

Present: Michael O'Reilly, *Chairman*
Bruno Maini, *Vice Chairman*
Ryan Condon, *Secretary*
Leon Ambrose, *Commissioner*
Robert Westlund, *Commissioner*
Ronald Schneider, *Alternate*
Domenic Paniccia, *Alternate*

Absent: *Vacant Alternate Seat*

Also Present: Rick Schultz, *Town Planner*
William Agresta, *Planning and Zoning Administrator*
Georgia Contois, *Meeting Moderator*
Sarah Stroud, *Recording Secretary*

OPENING of MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman O'Reilly called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and reviewed the procedures and directions for the virtual meeting.

2. ROLL CALL & SEATING OF ALTERNATES (if required)

Commissioners were seated on roll call.

3. GENERAL APPOINTMENT

- 127 Main Street (Pond View property) – Proposed Mixed Use Development

Greg Kamedulski presented on behalf of the potential applicant. Mr. Kamedulski reviewed his research and history of the area of the 127 Main Street site for the Commission. He estimated their multifamily luxury apartment project would cost around 40 million dollars and would generate around \$900,000 in tax revenue for the Town per year. Kevin Solli of Solli Engineering also presented on behalf of the potential applicant. Mr. Solli reviewed the location and prior approvals on this site. He advised this involve new text amendments to support the property to be proposed, building on the current mixed use amendments being considered by the Commission presently. Mr. Solli gave an overview of the design concept for the potential buildings. He noted these would be luxury style apartments for multiple demographics in the community. Howard Rappaport of Continental Properties was present on behalf of the potential applicant. He reviewed the purpose and qualifications of his company.

Mr. Rappaport reviewed the amenities that are often included in their projects. He noted these sometimes compare more to hotel style amenities, and these amenities are what attract people to living in their communities.

Stanley Gniazdowski presented on behalf of the potential applicant an analysis that accounted for the economic impact of his project. He reviewed the property tax revenue the Town would most likely see from this project. Mr. Gniazdowski advised a project of this size typically would add about 15 school age children to the Town. He noted this does not always mean new children who are not already enrolled in the school system. He advised the income median of the Town could push this number to the lower end of this estimate. Mr. Gniazdowski reviewed the demographics would most benefit from this type of development in the Community. He noted this could allow some longtime community members to stay within the community when downsizing or changing over to a rental for various reasons. Mr. Solli reviewed the price points of the proposed units. He noted he believes this is a specialized project that would not directly fall in line with the mixed use text amendment being proposed, but thinks it could be handled on a case by case basis.

Commissioner Westlund asked the status of the current site work that would make this site usable. Mr. Solli advised there is still about 18 to 24 months worth of work to complete the current site work. Chairman O'Reilly stated he believes this sounds like an excellent project for this particular site. Planner Agresta asked if any of the interior or exterior amenities would be leased to outside parties. Mr. Rappaport stated these would only be leased out to members of the community for private gatherings. Rick Schultz asked about the occupancy rate of the luxury communities that have already been built. Mr. Rappaport stated the occupancy rate is about 97% to 98% at all their current communities. Commissioner Maini asked what company is currently completing the site work on the property. Mr. Solli advised Rockhead 25 is completing the current site work. Mr. Solli asked for feedback regarding the project from the Commission.

Chairman O'Reilly suggested meeting with land use staff to prepare a presentation for the subcommittee for a text amendment to allow this type of development. Commissioner Condon advised he would like to see the buildings to be more connected when it comes to the mixed use aspect of the application.

4. GENERAL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

Peter Metropolis spoke about a safety concern in the area of Timothy Hill Road. He has been told by his property manager there have been dirt bikes in the area. He is concerned about them falling into the large excavated area on neighboring property. He said fencing should be placed around the area, and stated he believes one was required in a permit on the property but was never constructed. Mr. Metropolis was asked if called the police in regard to the potential trespassing, he said he did not. The Commission and Staff noted that trespassing is a police matter. Commissioner Ambrosey asked if previous permits for the neighboring property required a fence. Planner Agresta advised he would have to review the permit files.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Chairman O'Reilly reviewed the instructions for public hearings.

5. SEP-2020-02, File #1622A – 556 Pepper Street – I-2 District

Special Exception Permit / Site Development Plan Application for conversion of a portion of an existing non-conforming single-family home use to a permitted Landscaper business, including related office, driveway, parking, fencing and dumpster improvements. Cesar Rios (owner/applicant).

Adjourned 09/03/20 – Postponed to 11/19/20 per Applicant

6. SDP-2020-01, File #139 – 64 Cambridge Drive & 4 Independence Drive – I-2 District

Site Development Plan Application proposing three phases over a period of ten (10) years of site related activity, including: construction of a one-story office building measuring 2,360 square feet with associated grading, parking and site utilities; stormwater management improvements for current and future not yet proposed site development; and extensive land filling of approximately 1.3 million cubic yards of material involving approximately 75,575 truck trips (based on 24 tons per truck) to restore an unauthorized quarry. Astro Land Holdings LLC and Spacely Land Holdings LLC (owner/applicant).

Adjourned 09/03/20 – Postponed to 11/19/20 per Applicant

7. SEP-2020-01, File #1621A – 390 Monroe Turnpike – B-2 District

Special Exception Permit / Site Development Plan Application for improvements to existing McDonald's Restaurant consisting of a complete façade demolition with new façade design replacement and alteration of drive-through to provide two (2) separate drive-through access lanes each with menu boards, as well as related site and parking modifications. McDonald's Real Estate Company (owner/applicant).

Postponed to 11/19/20 per Applicant

8. RAA-2020-04, File #1011E – Proposed Stevenson Lumber SB2 District

Petition by Stevenson Properties LLC (by Kimball Family Investments LLC its sole member) proposing Zoning Text Amendments to existing §1.9.11, existing §2.2.1, new §5.2.1 - §5.2.9, existing §8.2.3, existing §10.1 and existing §10.2, establishing locational and regulatory land use standards for a potential new Stevenson Business District 2 (SB2) to eventually be applied over the lands of the former Stevenson Lumber Company at 1585 Monroe Turnpike (Assessor Map 150, Lot 1) presently zoned Business District 2 (B-2) following a separate application for rezoning to said new SB2 District.

Chairman O'Reilly reviewed the application for the Commission. Secretary Condon read the public hearing notice. Planner Agresta listed the file exhibits.

John and Jill Kimball were present on behalf of the applicant. Mr. Kimball indicated he would like time to notice all the neighbors within 500 feet of the projecting regarding the public hearing so he thought it best to adjourn this evening's meeting and reconvened 12/03/20 when their related Zone Boundary Change application is heard. He stated he would like to hear comments from the Commission and Staff this evening, so he may prepare a written response to the comments and present a more formal presentation at the 12/03/20 meeting.

Commissioner Ambrose asked Mr. Kimball to review the outdoor parking use being proposed. Mr. Kimball reviewed the details of the site for the Commission. He explained the commercial parking concept was to present a place for people to park their RVs, boats, dump trucks, tractor trailers, etc. because of the proximity to Route 34, Route 111, I84, and Lake Zoar. He explained this parking area would be stripped, locked, and monitored. He noted this would add to the tax list for the Town because any vehicle or trailer that is parked somewhere for 6 months plus must be registered in that town. He clarified this area would be fenced and enclosed, and there would be no maintenance allowed on the property for these vehicles.

Mr. Kimball reviewed the companies that have approached him seeking a site to run their hydroponics farming. He noted this type of farming allows for a year-round growing season and uses less pesticides and other harmful chemicals. He highlighted this is not to be confused with an attempt to enter the marijuana growing business.

Mr. Kimball responded to concerns about the site being used as a transfer station and other municipal uses for the site by saying they are happy to strike these uses from their application.

Mr. Kimball reviewed the benefits to the environment by developing this site over the past site use. Commissioner Ambrose asked how far the commercial parking will be setback from the Half Way River. Mr. Kimball explained the commercial parking would be 475 feet from the river. This includes the required 75 feet setback from the property line and the 400 feet that sits between the river and the property line. He advised that in order to get to the river from the property you must go up a hill to the railroad tracks and then go down the hill offsite to the river.

Commissioner Westlund asked if the commercial parking would be manned 24 hours a day. Mr. Kimball explained there would be security cameras and remote access, but that there would only be an employee during the daytime for the lot.

Public Comments

- Joe Hovious, 3 Leopard Drive, Vice President of Pootatuck Watershed Association – He advised they would like information regarding the runoff treatment and temperature of the runoff in regards to the commercial parking development. He noted the importance of buffering the river and addressing water quality issues.
- Karen Burnaska, Chairman of the Monroe Conservation Commission, expressed concern about a major zone change like this being completed before the POCD is completed. Chairman O'Reilly explained that there would not be much change to this area in the POCD. He advised it is their preference to see former commercial properties be recycled and revitalized. He noted this area is not an open space the Town is looking to acquire.
- John Liggio, 2 Whispering Pine Road expressed concern about the area of the property that abuts his property. Mr. Kimball reviewed the storage and warehousing plans for this area of the property. Mr. Liggio asked what would be stored in the area. Mr. Kimball explained they don't have those details yet and reviewed the historic use of that area of the property.
- Ron Bunovsky Sr, 76 Holly Place expressed concern about the amount of traffic that would be created with this project. He expressed further concern about pollutants and runoff to the surrounding water supplies.
- Kevin Solli, 16 Crown View Drive said there is currently no vegetation or storm water quality on this site, which is more harmful than the proposed development that would include storm water quality and other protective measures.
- Nicole Lupo, 11 Holly Lane asked if any of this proposed development addresses the piece of property across the street. Mr. Kimball noted he does not own that property, but has spoken with the owner and that the owner plans to invest and develop that property when this property is in development.

Mr. Kimball thanked the Commission and requested an adjournment to 12/03/20.

Upon polling the Commission and hearing no objections, the hearing was adjourned to the 12/03/20 meeting.

9. RAA-2020-05, File #1012E – Mixed Use Development

Planning and Zoning Commission proposed Zoning Text Amendments to allow residential apartments for rent above commercial uses, thereby providing for a mixed-use development, affecting certain B-1 and B-2 District parcels having direct street frontage and access via Main Street (Route 25) within a B-1 District or B-2 District between the southerly Town Boundary shared with the Town of Trumbull and south of Knollwood Street

Secretary Condon read the notice of public hearing and Planner Agresta listed the file exhibits.

Planner Agresta presented on behalf of the Commission. He summarized each of the Commission proposed zoning text amendments related to mixed use. Planner Schultz remarked on some of the reasons for why mixed use is beneficial and consistent with the POCD.

The Commissioners had no comments or questions.

Public Comments

- Kevin Solli, PE, Solli Engineering commented on the currently proposed 50/50 split between commercial and residential uses noting with amenities and lobby spaces, etc. this may not be effective. He suggested a 40% commercial and 60% residential split. Mr. Solli suggested allowing 3 floors instead of 2 ½ stories to allow for loft spaces in the apartments to maximize the apartment space. Mr. Solli suggested allowing a mansard-type roof in place of the full pitched roof requirement.

Mr. Solli spoke about his earlier general appointment that shared data regarding the number of additional school aged children with the 2 bedroom units. He stated he believes the 10% cap on the two bedroom units would discourage developers from pursuing this type of development.

Chairman O'Reilly agreed that maybe some of the proposed amendments are too restrictive to be really beneficial to the purpose of this proposal. Commissioner Westlund advised that he feels the proposed amendments are a good starting point to begin to allow this type of use within Town.

- Hans Shuurmans stated that within the affordable housing units he believes the utilities should not be included in the rent. He advised the goal should be to appeal to a younger demographic, which means amenities are a necessity on the first floor. He noted these amenities would take away from some of the commercial space, which is why he suggests a 60% residential and 40% commercial split.

Commissioner Ambrosey asked for the minimum square footage in Trumbull and Newtown for their units. Mr. Schultz advised that Trumbull is a maximum of 1,200 square feet for a 2 bedroom and 1,500 square feet for a 2 bedroom in Newtown which is high. Planner Agresta noted that Newtown allows a 100% residential apartment units so is not comparable. Commissioner Ambrosey asked to poll the Commission regarding the square footage of the units. Commissioner Schneider stated that the lower square footage was thought to help keep out "riff raff" who would place multiple people in one bedroom if the bedrooms were too large. Commissioner Paniccia stated he believes the restrictions are too strict for this use to allow the Town to be competitive with other towns. Commissioner Ambrosey stated he doesn't believe 200 square feet is going to create any real problems when it comes to the size and use of the bedrooms. Commissioner Condon stated he is okay with 1,200 square feet, but would like to hold off on the multiple floors and anything outside of the 50/50 split. He advised he would be ok with a waiver provision that allows for adjustments as they move along with developments in this use. Commissioner Maini advised he is still okay with the 1,000 square feet and 50/50 split. A consensus could not be reached on the square footage of the size of the apartments. The Commission asked Staff to outline some options for review at its next meeting.

Upon polling the Commission and hearing no objections, the hearing was adjourned to the 12/03/20 meeting.

PERMIT AMENDMENT MODIFICATIONS

10. SDP-2020-03, File #143 – 630 Main Street, Unit 2 – B-1 District

Site Development Plan Permit Amendment Modification Application proposing Change of Use to Liquor Store (new). L&S Glenro Spirit Shoppe LLC, Larry Cass (applicant), Worldwide Properties, LLC, Joseph Voll (property owner).

Planner Agresta listed the file exhibits.

Larry Cass, applicant, presented. He explained the applicant's intention is to open a new liquor store in a previous retail space located in the existing commercial retail center that would be an expansion of his brand. Mr. Cass explained his vision for this store to help revitalize the area. Commissioner Maini asked if Mr. Cass only plans to open in the salon storefront. Mr. Cass said yes and noted he is currently only putting in free standing racks and noted he does not plan to build a walk-in cooler at this time. Commissioner Maini asked for clarification on why this is a SDP rather than an SEP. Planner Agresta explained this is a SDP since it is just a retail store and liquor location approval. Commissioner Maini asked for a timeline for opening. Mr. Cass advised the chairs have already been removed, he has extra coolers, and the floor plan is set up for these coolers. He stated, "For all intents and purposes he could be open tomorrow." Planner Agresta noted that there were no places such as schools, churches or other places frequented by minors nearby. Commissioner Ambrosey asked if the liquor license for this store had been obtained yet. Mr. Cass replied the first step in getting the liquor license is to gain town approval for the location and obtaining a signed application from the Zoning Enforcement Officer and Town Clerk. Commissioner Westlund asked how many square feet does Mr. Cass' other Monroe store occupy. Mr. Cass replied 5,000 square feet.

Public Comment

- None

Upon polling the Commission and hearing no objections, this portion of the review was closed.

DELIBERATIONS and DETERMINATIONS

11. PENDING MEETING MINUTES

Minutes – October 22, 2020

MOTION: WESTLUND – To approve the meeting minutes of October 22, 2020, as drafted.

SECOND: MAINI

VOTE: 5-0 – Approved – Motion Passed

Ayes O’Reilly, Maini, Condon, Ambrosey, Westlund

Nays None

12. DELIBERATIONS ON PENDING ITEMS

SEP-2020-03, File #1623A – 588 Pepper Street – I-2 District

MOTION: MAINI – To approve Special Exception Permit / Site Development Plan Application SEP-2020-03 for proposed parking lot expansion, expansion of internal site driveway, establishment of accessory outdoor storage area and associated site, drainage and landscaping improvements, subject to conditions and revised final plans endorsement, as set forth in the draft Approval Resolution dated November 5, 2020, as drafted. Applicant/Property Owner: 588 Pepper Street LLC.

SECOND: CONDON

VOTE: 4-1 – Approved – Motion Passed

Ayes O’Reilly, Maini, Condon, Westlund

Nays Ambrosey

SDP-2020-03, File #143 – 630 Main Street Unit 2 – B-1 District

Planner Agresta noted that a motion should include a statement that consideration in relation to proximity of churches, schools, and areas frequented by minors and requirement as a condition of the obtaining of a State liquor permit. Commissioner Maini confirmed these considerations in his motion.

MOTION: MAINI – To approve Permit Approval Amendment Modification (Special Exception Permit / Site Development Plan) Application SDP-2020-03, File #143 for “Change of Use” and “Locational Approval” per Zoning §6.7 for the establishment and operation of a new Retail Liquor Store, subject to conditions and final plans endorsement. Applicant: Larry Cass, L&S Glenro Spirit Shoppe, LLC. Property Owner: Worldwide Properties LLC, Joseph G. Voll, Manager Member.

SECOND: WESTLUND

VOTE: 5-0 – Approved – Motion Passed

Ayes O’Reilly, Maini, Condon, Ambrosey, Westlund

Nays None

OTHER BUSINESS

13. REGULATIONS REVIEW/AMENDMENT WORK SESSION

None

14. CORRESPONDENCE / OTHER RECEIVED

None

15. COMMISSION REPORTS

- Chairman's Report – None
- Commissioner's Reports – None
- Land Use Staff Reports – Planner Schultz noted that the Commission will need to set aside meeting time or hold additional meetings to complete the POCD Update, noting that an extension of 90-days has been granted under the Governor's Executive Orders relating to the ongoing pandemic.

16. MEETING ADJORNMENT

Upon polling the Commission and hearing no objections, Chairman O'Reilly adjourned the meeting at 10:30 pm.

PENDING