

ASHFORD PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
ASHFORD, CT / REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
VIRTUAL MEETING via Zoom
Monday, August 14, 2023

Present: Jeffrey Silver-Smith (Chair), Janet Bellamy (Vice Chair, Alex Hastillo (Clerk), Catherine Sampson, Mark Schnubel, Nord Yakovleff, Luther Brauch (Alt), Gerald Dufresne

Guests: Tyche (host), C. Acebo, J. Hendrick & M. Glavin, M. Roy, P. Varga, I. Krieger. D. Donahue

1. Call to Order / Seating of Alternates: Chairman Jeffrey Silver-Smith called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Mr. Brauch was seated for Mr. Schillinger.

2. Approval of Minutes: July 10, 2023

MS. SCHNUBEL MOVED AND MR. HASTILLO SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR PZC MEETING JULY 10, 2023 MOTION PASSED WITH ONE ABSTENTION FROM MR. BRAUCH

3. Public Comments:

Ms. Acebo asked that public input about rewriting of the regulations regarding the IID zone be made available on the town website for all residents to be able to see. Also, she asked about having a town blight ordinance as other nearby towns have; she felt that it is needed for Ashford. The Chair noted that blight issues fall to the selectman's office at present.

Ms. Roy expressed concern about how the PZC communicates or does not adequately communicate with residents. She noted that she was not notified about land being changed from residential/agricultural to industrial (although the change did not affect her property in the end). She acknowledged that this is a different PZC. However, she noted the regulations regarding a change in the zoning map do not require any specific notification to affected property owners, although an eventual public hearing is held. She understands that notifications about public hearings are via the *Willimantic Chronicle* but that few residents get that paper. Couldn't the announcements be made also in the *Ashford Citizen*, going automatically to all residents? A zoning map or regulation wording change can affect property values. She recommended official notification to affected property owners be made by certified mail. Her two questions were:

Do the current regulations require notification via certified letter to affected land owners? If not can this be done?

Can the PZC alter their procedures and also list all public hearings in the *Ashford Citizen*?

Mr. Silver-Smith said that there would be a formal response to her.

4. Bills: Chronicle \$437.20, paid 8/8/23, only bill.

5. Correspondence:

A. B. Griffiths, re 154 Westford Hill Rd. Mr. Silver-Smith read both emails from Mr. Griffiths, Aug. 3 and 7, 2023. They can be seen in the materials list for this meeting on the town web site. Further discussion is on this agenda.

B. Center for Housing Equity and Opportunity Survey Report. Mr. Silver-Smith reviewed the survey request document on the screen. All PZC commission members in the state of Connecticut are being asked to fill out the survey. The Chairman has already filled out his. This survey is also online in the materials for this meeting.

C. V. Jenne, re Future Use of Cadlerock Property. Mr. Silver-Smith reviewed the proposal document(s) on the screen - also available online in the materials for the meeting. The proposal is for a possible use for the Cadlerock property, bike trail to be set up by the Quiet Corner New England Mountain Bike Association (NEBMA). The Jenne family is actively involved with mountain biking and provided information also on the NEBMA's Pomfret, Conn. project, "Pomfret Forest Case Study, March 2021." There was no reported cost to Pomfret for the trail, and it has increased visitors to Pomfret. The only con noted was that there were not enough places to spend money in the town.

The promotional materials reviewed such a project from beginning to completion. Ms. Jenne was thanked for her idea by the Chair; it has been shared with the BOS, so is in their hands now. It is a potential idea and encouraging input. Ms. Bellamy thought that if commercial development happened along the road there could still be trails inland.

6. Public Hearing - none

7. Unfinished Business

A. Affordable Housing Plan Draft (dated 1. 4. 2023)

This draft review has been delayed because of the recent IID zone request controversy. The draft (23pp.) prepared by Tyche Planning & Policy Group was put on the screen. The Chair reviewed the draft plan that contained much basic demographic information about Ashford. The survey results taken by the PZC are included. Ms. Bellamy noted that current Perry Hill apartment rates of \$1400 to \$1600 are not reflected. The draft data was collected earlier so it cannot be absolutely up to the minute. Mr. Silver-Smith pointed out that several questions show a large percentage of residents do not understand the housing situation as they responded "unsure." Educating the public will be needed in the process of completing the plan. He also stated that the draft reflected the goals of the POCD.

Mr. Baruch stated that we should move away from minimum lot size and rather determine lot size by the land itself, using science rather than an artificial measurement. This would focus development in certain areas leaving land for agriculture, recreation, open space, etc. He thought the draft well written and thoughtful.

The drop in numbers of Ashford school students is concerning, so the town does need housing affordable for young families. A lack of school age population does have its implications. The Chair also noted that we need a plan that works for our town.

All PZC members were asked to read the draft and send written comments to Mike D'Amato to be discussed and potentially finalized for the September meeting.

B. 154 Westford Hill Rd, Status/Update

The two emails mentioned earlier in the meeting will be answered by Mr. D'Amato. The deadline for trucking out the gravel is Oct. 1, 2023. After that date if the owner wants to truck anything out he needs to apply for a special permit. The letter, 7/11/2023, from the PZC to Mr. Jeffrey Love, owner of the land in question, was shared with the commission and is available in the meeting materials online. Two photos show the land and land where pile of gravel remains. Marketing options for the gravel were noted as less desirable due to clay content per Mr. Brauch. It could possibly be given away. Mr. Brauch suggested that it would take about 75 truck loads to remove as there are 16 yds. to a load. Mr. Hastillo asked that the PZC stick to the Oct. 1 deadline for activity and suggested that the owner be reminded in mid September about the deadline.

8. New Business

A. PZ-23-8 Special Permit Application: Article 300-17C(14) to Establish a Veterinary Office at 46 Floeting Rd., Owner/Applicant: Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary. (*No Discussion-For Receipt Only*)

MS. BELLAMY MOVED AND MR. HASTILLO SECONDED A MOTION TO ACCEPT APPLICATION FOR SPECIAL PERMIT, PZ-23-8, ARTICLE 300-17C(14) TO ESTABLISH A VETERINARY OFFICE AT 46 FLOETING RD., OWNER APPLICANT, OUR COMPANIONS DOMESTIC ANIMAL SANCTURAY. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

B. Discussion: Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) General Revision Planning

The revision planning document worked on by both the Chairman and Mr. D'Amato was put on the screen (again available in the materials for the meeting online). The plan must be finished by July 1, 2025. People already interested in helping are notifying the Commission. All input must be submitted in writing to the PZC, Zoning Officer Mr. D'Amato, or to the specific town board or commission related to the comment(s) or input. The PZC needs to create a basic work plan and all PZC members' input is welcome. All meetings' minutes need to be reported and available to all.

Mr. Brauch asked that a calendar of the procedures, etc. to put together so that the process is noted. Any survey should be done in both a print version and electronic for young people per Mr. Brauch. It should also be in the *Ashford Citizen*. All board and commission members in town should be asked to encourage citizens to get

involved and complete the survey. A banner, to alert the public, should be on the web site where there should be one place for all POCD information. The Chairman indicated he will alert all town boards/commissions to begin to update their own objectives re the POCD.

9. Zoning Officer's Report

Work on the Lake Woods Lane PZ-23-8, subdivision. Work on regulation updates to be entered into codification to be available online.

10. Adjourn

**MS. BELLAMY MOVED AND MR. SCHNUBEL SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN.
MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY AT 8:25 P.M.**

*Respectfully submitted by,
Valerie B. Oliver, Recording Secretary
8/14/2023*