

**ASHFORD PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
ASHFORD, CT / REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
VIRTUAL MEETING via Zoom
Monday September 11, 2023**

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

Guests: Mike D'Amato, Facilitator and Zoning Enforcement Officer, Susan Linker, Nora Galvin, Kerry Mansberg, Marie Joyner, Irwin Krieger, Mike Sanders, Kerri Manford, Jennifer Coffi, Joe Handrick,

1. Call to Order / Seating of Alternates: Chairman Jeffrey Silver-Smith called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m. Mr. Jenne was seated for Mr. Schillinger.

2. Approval of Minutes: August 14, 2023

**MS. BELAMY MOVED AND MR. JENNE SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR PZC MEETING AUGUST 14, 2023 MOTION PASSED WITH
TWO ABSTENTIONS FROM MR. WILLIAMS AND MR. JENNE.**

3. Public Comments: Ms. N. Galvin noted the moratorium set at the July 10th PZC meeting and asked: what method was to be used to strengthen the regulations, what schedule is to be set for discussion and completion and what is the process for the PZC meeting in October? The Chairman thanked her and noted this topic will be discussed later in the meeting.

4. Bills: none.

5. Correspondence: none

6. Public Hearing:

A. PZ-23-9: Special Permit Application: Article 300-17C(14) to establish a veterinary office at 46 Floeting Rd. Owner Applicant, Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary.

The Chair opened the public hearing at 7:15 p.m. and explained the process. Ms. Susan Linker, CEO of the Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary stated the reasons for the application. They wish to use part of an existing building, Twilight House, to set up a veterinarian's office. The office space would be leased to Vet. Mark Sanders who is licensed in the state of Connecticut and has special training in dealing with special needs domestic animals. Prior to this situation pets in need of physical therapy and related veterinary services had to be driven an hour away to receive treatment. The Vet. will also be able to treat animals outside the Sanctuary who need these specialized services. All animals at the Sanctuary are victims of car or other accidents and/or cruel treatment.

Questions by Commission members were concerned with the need for this vet. with other veterinary practices in town, parking availability, timeline for start of these services, issue of parking, profit and non-profit together, licensing issues, communication with Town Clerk and Assessor. All these concerns were addressed.

Ms. Kerry Mansberg, a member of the Sanctuary's Board of Directors, who lives in Ashford, noted that prior to having this new service she had to take her animal(s) on quite a long drive to get treatment..

Ms. Linker concluded her remarks by saying that Our Companions had been in Ashford for 20 years providing a very caring space for these special needs animals. Many local volunteers help; the animals have all been victims of us - the humans. She thanked the PZC for their consideration.

The Public Hearing was closed at 7:35 p.m.

7. Unfinished Business:

A. Affordable Housing Plan -- Review of Draft - Commission input on Draft - Goal to move draft forward for hearing and publication.

Mr. D'Amato opened the discussions by stating Ashford needs to be compliant, as we do not currently have 10% of our housing termed affordable. The plan is just that, a plan. It holds Ashford to no specific development or other project. The plan as drafted lists the components or the options open to Ashford.

Mr. Williams noted his email to the Zoning Officer had not been included in the materials available to members prior to the meeting. He therefore reviewed his concerns. He feels that Ashford's land realities need to be added to the plan, such as: land not available for building (various camps, Yale Forest, etc.), wetlands, ledge, steep areas, farm land, etc.

Mr. Silver-Smith noted that all Connecticut towns would have similar areas not suitable for building. However, in future, protected lands now could have a different status and could be built on. We do not need a large building with many units of apartments to be compliant. We have about 64 units already and need 190-200. The 3-4 room small apartment dwelling idea is a good option. Having a plan that requires a certain number of that type of housing would serve to protect Ashford. Septic systems are used now to support the apartment buildings we have. Our basic need is for more affordable senior housing.

Mr. Brauch agreed that current protected land might not always be that way and that Mr. D'Amato's plan was well framed. Cluster housing developed or redeveloped is preferred. He thought nos. 2 and 3 spot on. *Mr. Williams* expressed his wishes again saying only 5-6% of land here is available for development. His data should be added to the plan. *Ms. Bellamy* thought Mr. D'Amato's plan well done and was not sure that we needed to add Mr. Williams' information to the recommendations. *The Chairman* thought that the plan already noted the land realities.

Mr. Schnubel reminded members that the state is requiring a plan. But because we do not already have 10% affordable housing, a developer could build here regardless of a plan or no plan. If the IID zone had a commuter parking lot the state would supply a bus route, so that area could be a place for affordable housing. We should have a plan but to not kid ourselves about outcomes. *Mr. Williams* noted he was against the current plan and again provided his ideas for additions to the plan in order for him to support it.

Mr. Schnubel stated that Ashford is not unique as a rural Connecticut town. The D'Amato plan is good and viable for future developers. If we gain 10% then we have more control.

In the end it comes down to is a project marketable, per *Mr. D'Amato*. In Old Saybrook there is a plan on 10 acres, with septic system, to have 186 units of which 38 are affordable. This shows that a project does not need to take a large amount of land to be in compliance. He also noted that in Willington, if they wish to be serious about development, they are considering sweeteners, since there is no public transit, sewer system or public water supply. Land is not the limiting factor. One option he mentioned would be to buy down deed restrictions (i.e. at town apartments) then they would apply toward affordable housing. If renovated or rebuilt they would be more attractive to renters. Affordable housing is not government housing; rents could be \$1500 to \$1600/month (as noted by *Mr. Schnubel* in Putnam).

Mr. Silver-Smith stated he had found on p.16, under Policy & Regulations Review of the plan that constraints were noted in Ashford (land restrictions). Perhaps this section could be fleshed out a bit more. *Mr. Williams* reviewed his wishes. *Mr. Brauch* agreed that 10 acres could be found; a brief statement can be put together.

Ms. Bellamy asked if we accept the plan do we need to change our regulations? The answer was that we would have 5 years to consider things before any revisions would be needed (e.g. no. 2).

MS. BELLAMY MOVED AND MR. SCHNUBEL SECONDED A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN AS DRAFTED,

Further discussion:

Mr. Williams stated he wanted his data about land restrictions to be included. *Ms. Bellamy* was asked if she wanted her motion changed? There were more statements made about what *Mr. Williams* wanted, until *Ms. Bellamy* stated she would accept an amendment. But the motion was not restated with the amendment. Therefore - the amendment:

WITH THE AMMENDMENT THAT INFORMATION FROM THE POCD REGARDING CONSIDERATIONS/RESTRICTIONS FOR OUR TOWN BE INCLUDED BY MR. D'AMATO. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

7. B. Next Steps for 154 Westford Hill Closure of Activity.

The end for actions at the property is October 1, 2023. A site visit will be arranged with *Mr. Love* for the last week of September. Some closure activity has been observed (removal of equipment). If he is noncompliant then legal action would be needed per *Mr. D'Amato*.

8. New Business:

B. PZ-23-9: Special Permit Application: Article 300-17C(14) to establish a veterinary office at 46 Floeting Rd. Owner/Applicant: Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary (*decision possible but not required*)

MR. WILLIAMS MOVED AND MS. BELLAMY SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL PERMIT APPLICATION, ARTICLE .300-17C(14) TO ESTABLISH A VETERINARY OFFICE AT 46 FLOETING RD., OWNER/APPLICANT, OUR COMPANIONS DOMESTIC ANIMAL SANCTUARY. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**C. Request for 90-Day Extension to File Mylar:
a. 285 Turnpike Rd. Subdivision. M. Bond.**

MR. HASTILLO MOVED AND MR. WILLIAMS SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE A 90-DAY EXTENSION FOR 285 TURNPIKE RD. SUBDIVISION (M. BOND). MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

b. Lake Woods Lane Subdivision. RCN Ashford.

MR. HASTILLO MOVED AND MS. BELLAMY SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE A 90-DAY EXTENSION FOR LAKE WOODS LANE SUBDIVISION (RCN ASHFORD). MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

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

The Conservation Commission has had some discussion, and Ms. Bellamy will check on status. As Ms. Galvin noted in her initial remarks there is a deadline for the IID; the town needs to know what is happening. The matter of the IID zone needs to be settled first as it then, as part of the POCD, helps to move that work along. The next PZC meeting will focus on the reworking of the IID zone language and deciding what type of businesses would Ashford approve there. Ms. Bellamy also noted the citizens need to be informed as to how we are proceeding.

Mr. Williams reviewed his work in 2015 on the POCD and noted that a leader and time line are needed to be successful (especially important to involve the Economic Development Commission members). Although he noted also few town groups were actively involved in 2015, Ms. Bellamy thought more residents today are very aware of what is happening; the town web site should be used to communicate. We need volunteers for this work and should begin to notify town groups. Our Sub-Commission and the full Commission are responsible for the resulting documents.

Mr. D'Amato also stressed working on the IID text amendments first and then on the POCD, a more extensive document.

9. Zoning Officer Report:

Most time on the Lake Woods Lane & other items on this agenda.

10. Adjourn:

MR. DUFRESNE MOVED AND MS. BELLAMY SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY AT 8:47 P.M.

*Respectfully submitted by,
Valerie B. Oliver, Recording Secretary
9/12/2023*

