

**ASHFORD PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES, REGULAR MEETING via ZOOM
Ashford, Connecticut / Tuesday October 11, 2022**

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

Guests: Mr. Mike D'Amato, Ashford Zoning Officer / Jessica Miller, Exec. Dir. Ashford Housing Authority

1. Call to Order: The Oct. 11, 2022 regular meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission was called to order by Chairman Jeffrey Silver-Smith at 7:05 p.m.

Seating of Alternates: no alternates present; quorum with 7 members present

2. Approval of Minutes, Sept. 12, 2022

MS. BELLAMY MOVED AND MR. WILLIAMS SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE PZC HELD SEPTEMBER 12, 2022. MOTION PASSED WITH 6 YES AND ONE ABSTENTION FROM MR. DUFRESNE.

3. Public Comments (*for items not listed on the agenda*): none

4. Bills: none

5. Correspondence: The Chairman reported on two communications:

1. A letter was received on Sept. 9th, 2022, via the Town Clerk, inquiring about the regulations and related concerns about establishing short-term rentals in Ashford. The letter was read that included seven very specific questions and a request for zoning map. Mr. D'Amato has sent the woman the zoning regulations, special permitting data and generally responded to her concerns.

2. An email was received on Oct. 6th, 2022 from Brian Griffiths, again reporting noise and activity, a zoning violation, occurring at 7:30 a.m. on Oct. 6th; this activity was supposed to end on 9/30/22. Mr. Silver-Smith read Mr. Griffith's email and his response to him. A further exchange via email occurred.

According to the stipulated judgement all excavation was to stop by 9/30/22, but there would be a six-month period in which already processed material could be removed. The Chair also told members that he has been inspecting on a regular basis and provided those dates. Mr. Hastillo also has inspected. Inspections can not be made directly on the property unless 24 hr. notice is officially provided via the Zoning Officer. Mr. Williams asked if the processing equipment has been removed? The Chair replied, "No."

6. Public Hearing

PZ-22-4: Special Permit per Section 300-17D for Short-Term Rental, 34 Amidon Dr.
Owner/Applicant: R. Corriveau (*no discussion, postponed to Nov. 14, 2022*)

It was felt that full discussion of this special permit be conducted at the newly rescheduled public hearing. Mr. Williams had noted that the property in question is up for sale.

7. Unfinished Business

A. 154 Westford Hill Road Update

As a result of the Executive Session held at the last meeting Atty. Slater did the filing requested. The stipulated judgement ordered all excavation to cease by 9/30/2022 and there would be up to six-

months for removal of already processed material. The facts noted as examples of non-compliance were: no plans submitted as required and no update on the amount of materials removed.

Mr. Falletti has asked for a meeting with Atty. Slater. The Zoning Officer has had no discussion he can discuss at this time regarding the issues. Both the Chair and Mr. Hastillo visited the site on 9/22/2022 and reminded the plaintiff and his lawyer of these issues.

Compliance is definitely difficult, but inspections / drive bys by PZC members can help to learn what is going on; further contempt notice can be given and \$100/day fines required. Although Mr. Hastillo reported no activity, he did notice that the pile of materials has increased, so more removal is needed. He wondered why the stock pile was so large? Our final recourse is with the courts. Ms. Sampson drives by the entrance daily and will report what she notices.

B. Cannabis Text Amendment Update

Our amended text has been reported to the state; nothing is left to be done. CROG has no issues with our work; no comment from NECCOG. Mr. Williams was assured that our text includes that retail is permitted within our commercial zones and that there are to be no restrictions on growing of cannabis. He asked Mr. D'Amato to send out the final regulation text for Cannabis establishments to members.

C. Affordable Housing Plan Survey Results and Ashford Housing Authority Discussion

The Chair hoped that all members had read the writing by the Zoning Officer. He asked if there were any questions? Mr. Williams asked if the results of the survey would impact the initial thoughts for the plan? The results of the survey were what one would expect. Some respondents felt a plan was important others would rather not see a plan. But Mr. D'Amato felt there was no big opposition to the plan. However, there are many who would be fine with doing nothing. More education is needed the more negative the opinions. The next steps for him are to put together the options/recommendations, a sort of menu of ideas of how to accomplish a percentage of affordable housing in Ashford.

Ms. Jessica Miller, Exec. Dir. Ashford Housing Authority, Input

Jessica Miller, Housing Authority Exec. Dir. for Ashford provided her input from her work and discussion with residents. She felt that many do not understand what affordable housing is and the topic is not something they are really thinking about. More education is necessary and would be helpful. Section 8 is not affordable housing, and this needs to be understood. In addition to knowing what it is residents need to know what its benefits are.

Ms. Miller recommended articles in the *Ashford Citizen* to include graphics not just text, and she also suggested a possible housing forum. She wanted to know who is actually working on the plan and if it is the PZC, where are you in the process? She was told the PZC is responsible and has begun to get ideas/recommendations together after conducting the survey. Ms. Miller is willing to help in any way.

As stated before the next step is for the Zoning Officer to list the plan recommendations so that the PZC members can then prioritize and finalize this list. Ms. Miller's input on this process will be important as she knows what might best work in Ashford.

Mr. Williams stated that the current regs that might need changing due to the "plan" should be noted. Ms. Miller noted that the major need for affordable housing is the resident elderly and disabled citizens. Young families' needs would require a developer.

Current Rent Situation in Ashford

The topic of rental units in Ashford being owned by one company is an important concern. Apparently, the properties are to be renovated (after many current tenants are forced out) so that rents can be raised. Ms. Miller stated that this is very bad for Ashford. Many rents here are now from \$1,100 to \$1,400, higher than what is recommended as affordable. She fears that all apartments here will eventually be unaffordable.

Mr. Williams added that in Storrs the centrally located apartments costing about \$2,500 are all rented individually to several students who then share the cost.

Other Ashford Groups Interested in Housing Issues

Jessica Miller was thanked for her presence and important input for this meeting. She noted other town groups that might have valuable ideas: Economic Development Comm, Comm. on Aging, Conservation Comm, and Melissa McDonough, Social & Youth Services Liaison.

Mr. Silver-Smith noted:

***Ashford's Our Town Our Future's Leadership Roundtable Discussion
November 16, 2022 / 7-9 p.m.
Knowlton Hall***

All PZC members are encouraged to participate.
Please let Alex or Jeff know if you are planning to attend.

The Chair also stated that the "Plan for Conservation & Development" needs revision but could be used as a framework in constructing the affordable housing plan.

A decision was made that an article for the November 2022 *Ashford Citizen* will be written to provide an introductory statement about the affordable housing planning work; this initial piece will be followed by other communications about affordable housing hoping to further educate the citizens.

8. New Business: Applications for Receipt

All applicants have paid fees and supplied required documents.

1. PZ-22-5: Subdivision Application, 383 & 393 Pumpkin Hill Rd, Owner T. Bunte. Applicant D. Famiglietti (*Receipt only, application for Nov. 14 meeting*)

This applicant is awaiting IWWC review.

MR. HASTILLO MOVED AND MS. BELLAMY SECONDED A MOTION TO RECEIVE THE PZ-22-5 SUBDIVISION APPLICATION, 383 & 393 PUMPKIN HILL RD. OWNER: T. BUNTE. APPLICANT: D. FAMIGLIETTI. (Application set for Nov. 14 meeting). MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

2. PZ-22-6: Special Permit per Section 300-17D for Short-Term Rental, 73 Lake View Dr. Owner/Applicant: J. Hall (*Receipt only, application set for Nov. 14 meeting*)

MR. WILLIAMS MOVED AND MR. SCHNUBEL SECONDED A MOTION TO RECEIVE THE PZ-22-6: SPECIAL PERMIT PER SECTION 300-17D FOR SHORT-TERM RENTAL, 73 LAKE VIEW DR. OWNER/APPLICANT: J. HALL. (Application set for Nov. 14 meeting). MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. PZ-22-7: Special Permit per Section 300-20-1 for increased lot coverage. 10 Oakview Dr. Owner/Applicant: D. Lester (*Receipt only, application set for Dec. 12 meeting*)

MR. WILLIAMS MOVED AND MR. HASTILLO SECONDED A MOTION TO RECEIVE THE PZ-22-7 SPECIAL PERMIT PER SECTION 300-20-1 FOR INCREASED LOT COVERAGE. 10 OAKVIEW DR. OWNER/APPLICANT: D. LESTER. (Application set for Dec. 12 meeting) MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Williams noted that this (no.2) application for special permit might be a trend. Compliance with our regulations is needed.

9. Zoning Officer's Report

Mr. D'Amato noted he is working with the new Assessor, Lynn Byberg who has worked for Ashford previously. They are coordinating enforcement issues especially those connected with the new owner of the "Monestary" property on Seckar Rd. Complicating this is that the acreage has two dwellings, a partially constructed chapel with an attached dwelling making subdivision into lots difficult. The property consists of 34 acres.

Announcement

Tomorrow, Oct. 12th there will be a NECCOG Community Economic Development Strategy Meeting at the Ashford Town Hall. PZC members are encouraged to attend.

Adjourn:

**MR. WILLIAMS MOVED AND MS. BELLAMY SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN.
MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY AT 8:13 P.M.**

*Respectfully submitted by
Valerie B. Oliver, Recording Secretary
10/12/2022*