

**TOWN OF HADDAM
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
PUBLIC MEETING
TOWN HALL
21 FIELD PARK DRIVE, HADDAM, CT
THURSDAY, 3 JANUARY 2019
UNAPPROVED MINUTES
*Subject to Approval by the Commission***

ATTENDANCE

X	Gina Block
X	Steven Bull, Vice Chairman
X	Michael Farina
A	Frank (Chip) Frey
X	Jamin Laurenza, Chairman
X	Wayne LePard
X	Edward Wallor, Secretary
X	Robert Braren, Alternate - Seated
A	Diane Waddle Stock, Alternate
X	Sam Todzia, Alternate (7:03 p.m.)
X	Bill Warner, Town Planner (7:02 p.m.)
X	Liz West Glidden, Town Planner (7:02 p.m.)
X	Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk

1. Call to Order

Mr. Laurenza, chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge was recited.

3. Attendance/Seating of the Alternates

All regular members as well as Mr. Braren, alternate member, were seated.

4. Additions/Corrections to the Agenda

Mr. LePard asked Mr. Laurenza if there was any place on the agenda for planning this year. Mr. Laurenza stated not on tonight's agenda as he had thought he would be introducing a new town planner, but it would appear it may be happening at the 17 January 2019 meeting. Mr. LePard asked if it would be better to address the matter at that time with Mr. Laurenza responding yes.

Mr. Wallor asked that Item #6 be removed from the advertised agenda.

MOTION: Ed Wallor moved to amend the 3 January 2019 agenda by removing Item #6 – Public Hearing/Public Meeting: A Modification to an Existing Half Story One Bedroom with Bathroom, of an Additional Kitchenette Located at 15 Hidden Lake Road, Haddam, CT and Shown on Tax Map 55 Lot 009 Location 4. Jamin Laurenza second. Motion carried unanimously.

Introduction of New Town Planner - Mrs. Glidden briefly introduced Bill Warner, Haddam's new town planner.

Ms. Block asked that rezoning of the Haddam Elementary School (HES) – front portion of the parcel to be included within the Higganum Village District and explore the option of placing the back acreage in conservation - be added to the agenda.

MOTION: Jamin Laurenza moved to amend the 3 January 2018 agenda by adding Item #10a – Discuss Rezoning of Haddam Elementary School (HES). Gina Block second. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Comments

Peter Baird, Saybrook Road, Higganum, noted that he's a former P&Z member and has had two children go through the school system. In regard to HES, Mr. Baird stated that the Board of Education (BOE) decision to close the school which will have a potentially profound impact on Higganum Center. There is some indication that the BOE is willing to talk about this closure and when contemplating the closure, the BOE focused on the educational process, but didn't consider the economic impacts on the region and town. Mr. Baird stated that every business owner that he's spoken to believes this to be a bad to potentially disastrous move for them. There is no clear idea what will happen to building/property and it could remain vacant for a number of years. Mr. Baird noted that there is already a lot of empty commercial land in town that is not selling and someone coming in to put in an economic driver in HES or on the property is unlikely. Mr. Baird stated HES staff, parents, and teenagers not only patronize the businesses, but teenagers use the basketball court, hikers who use Swan Hill (which is also up for sale), young parents use the playground year round, and that the school is an anchor for the community. Mr. Baird stated it's unclear what will happen. Mr. Baird suggested P&Z, EDC, and the BOS sit with the BOE to discuss the potential economic impacts this proposal will cause. Mr. Baird stated should the land be sold it would be good for the Commission to think about the zoning.

Liz Bazazi, Lake Avenue, Higganum, reiterated some of Mr. Baird's comments and noted that while a member of the Higganum Vision Group (HVG) there was a lot of outreach as to what residents would like to see in the Center which was live/work/play – affordable housing (work force housing) for young people, empty nesters, and seniors, and walkability. Ms. Bazazi stated store fronts that will engage people will be beneficial to the Center. One of the number one employers in town is the school district and HES teachers, staff, and parents support the businesses in the Center. Saving HES could be deemed an emotional thing, but history and cultural continuity are very important things as well. Ms. Bazazi noted that there was a village in the Center until the bank torn the old structures down and this ruined the prospect of having store fronts; therefore, it's important to preserve HES. Ms. Bazazi stated she had spoken to circuit writers at Connecticut Trust and at the State SHPO in regard to creating an historic district. Ms. Bazazi also stated that the recreational opportunities are immense (Swan Hill) and hiking loop (Reservoir, Swan Hill, and Higganum Cove). Ms. Bazazi stated there's a need to have a balance of housing and businesses and that having a school close by is important for the two. In terms of the POCD, Ms. Bazazi stated that HES was mentioned a number of times as being a critical part of the town – economically, socially, and recreationally.

Tom Worthley, Candlewood Hill Road, Higganum, noted that he had two children go through the school system and that he's a current commissioner with both the Wetlands and Conservation Commissions. Mr. Worthley stated that from a planning standpoint, there is a lot to talk about in regard to the whole property being for sale if things go as the BOE has planned. Mr. Worthley talked about looking at areas within the community that have already been disturbed and developed that are not being used and having them be redeveloped in a more intelligent way (noting there are a couple of areas within the Center that should be looked at). Mr. Worthley talked about the water shed that comes from the 86 acres (former land swap parcel) that provides water to Higganum Center, Bible Brook that runs through HES, and that their being a potentially highly valuable source of clean water for future residential development. Mr. Worthley stated that from a planning standpoint and in terms of environmental impacts in Higganum

Center, to create a development that would put that water at risk would be digging the hole deeper. Mr. Worthley stated that as a discussion topic moving forward, the water is just one environmental service the HES acreage provides, but there are a number of things - recreational, aesthetics, habitat, bio-diversity - that this parcel is unique for. Mr. Worthley noted that there are threatened and endangered species on the site (documented in the Natural Diversity data base). Mr. Worthley stated there are a host of other things P&Z should be aware of and it should be a part of the discussion moving forward, especially if someone comes forward to purchase the property. Mr. Worthley concluded by stating that all the ideas and data need to be taken into consideration if P&Z decides to rezone the area.

6. Public Hearing/Public Meeting: A Modification to an Existing Half Story One Bedroom with Bathroom, of an Additional Kitchenette Located at 15 Hidden Lake Road, Haddam, CT and Shown on Tax Map 55 Lot 009 Location 4.

Agenda item removed by motion under Additions/Correction to the Agenda.

HEARING/MEETING: Thursday, 17 January 2019.

7. Approve/Correction of the Minutes

MOTION: Ed Wallor moved to approve the 15 November 2018 minutes as submitted. Jamin Laurenza second. Motion carried with Mr. LePard, Mr. Bull, and Mr. Farina abstaining.

8. Chairman's Report

A brief discussion followed in regard to the amendment to the agenda pertaining to Item #6; the Legal Notice indicating the hearing was scheduled for 17 January 2019; and the applicant having been notified that the hearing would not be heard tonight.

Mr. Laurenza introduced Bill Warner, Haddam's new town planner. Mrs. Glidden reported that Mr. Warner is highly qualified and currently working for the Town of Farmington. Mr. Warner reported that he worked for the City of Middletown for 25 years as the Director of Planning, retiring from Middletown, and then went to the Town of Farmington for five years. Mr. Warner also reported that he worked part-time for Andover, while in Middletown, for five years.

Mr. Bull asked Mr. Warner if he would be full time for the Town of Haddam and not working for any other town. Mr. Warner stated yes, he would be full time; and no, he would not be working for any other town. Mr. Bull asked Mr. Warner where he lives with Mr. Warner responding Middlefield.

Mrs. Glidden stated Mr. Warner was one of the first people to welcome her to the Town of Haddam when she took the job ten years ago and knows that Haddam will be in good hands. Mrs. Glidden also stated Mr. Warner is one that she would go to for advice or peer review. Mrs. Glidden wished everyone the best.

Mr. Warner stated that he's read a lot on the town's website, that Mrs. Glidden has been very helpful, and that he's looking forward to working for the town and with the commissions.

Mrs. Glidden reported that Mr. Warner will official begin on Tuesday, 15 January 2019.

9. Scheduling of Hearings

A Modification to an Existing Half Story One Bedroom with Bathroom, of an Additional Kitchenette Located at 15 Hidden Lake Road, Haddam, CT and Shown on Tax Map 55 Lot 009 Location 4 – Thursday, 17 January 2019.

10. Town Planner's Report

Scovil Mill (former DOT Garage) - Mrs. Glidden reported that the town did not received the DECD grant for Scovil Mill (former DOT garage). Mrs. Glidden stated this will be a project that will continue to move forward. A brief discussion followed in regard to the Brownfields Area Revitalization (BAR) grant that is ready to go should something open up during the new year.

POCD Implementation Committee (PIC) - Mrs. Glidden reported that a meeting of the PIC is scheduled for Wednesday, 23 January 2019, Fire Station #1, Community Room, 439 Saybrook Road, 6:30 p.m.

GCI, Route 81 – Ice Issue on Road – Mr. Bull reported there is a severe water/ice problem in this area; and asked who's responsible for enforcement. Mrs. Glidden reported that it's a development issue and a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) has not been issued yet. Mr. Laurenza asked if it's GCI's problem or the adjacent property noting that on Wednesday morning, 2 January 2019, the State Police, DOT, and Haddam Public Works were involved in the matter. Mrs. Glidden stated the town engineer needs to review the plans to see that the site was constructed in conformance with what was approved and that the town engineer would be able to identify which property is creating the drainage issue. Mrs. Batzner reported that DOT, Haddam Public Works, and the property owner were on site today and the matter is being looked at. Mr. Braren asked if anyone is aware of what the source of the matter is yet. Mr. Laurenza stated that appears to be what they are looking at and that perhaps there will be an update by the next meeting.

10A. Discuss Rezoning of Haddam Elementary School (HES)

Ms. Block stated she would like the Commission to potentially consider this matter on three fronts: 1) adding a portion of the parcel to the Higganum Village District; 2) adding the back portion of the parcel to the Conservation Zone (zone still to be established); and 3) that the BOE has explicitly stated they are now looking to town leadership and governing bodies for their input and professional recommendations on this matter. Ms. Block stated she does not know if it's within the Commission's prevue to make an informal recommendation or to get a roundtable discussion going between the BOE, Board of Selectmen (BOS), and possibly the EDC. Mrs. Glidden stated she felt the best way to handle the matter is to talk to Lizz Milardo, First Selectman, about a collaborative meeting between P&Z, EDC, and the BOE.

Mr. Farina asked if there is a concrete deadline for closing the school. Ms. Block stated the BOE is still proceeding on the assumption that the school is closing; however, they have publicly stated they would welcome input from the public and town leaders. Discussion followed in regard to things not being set in stone; however, the ball is still moving. Mr. Farina asked if any of the other issues – recreation, hiking trail, economic impact, etc., have been brought to the attention of the BOE. Mr. Farina stated he believes HES would be a prefect site for senior housing. Ms. Block disagreed stating that the Rossi site would be more appropriate for that type of housing as well as for young families within walking proximity to an elementary school which would be a magnet for a developer who wants to put apartments in there. Mr. Farina stated there hasn't been any research by town boards looking for alternatives other than selling to a developer. Mr. Farina also stated Mrs. Milardo has stated she didn't feel the town could afford the property. Ms. Block stated the BOE has been wishy washy about it, that the town has been approached in regard to the building, and that the BOS does not want to take on the burden of having to find a tenant. All three selectmen are in agreement that they do not want to see another empty building in town and they would prefer not to see HES close. The BOE is looking for a concrete statement from the BOS and other town bodies in that regard.

Mr. Wallor asked Mrs. Glidden if the Commission had staff to reach out to the BOE, EDC, and BOS, and to put this matter on the 7 February 2019 agenda to discuss further and to get a feeling as to what should be done with the property. Mrs. Glidden suggested the creation of a steering committee for the RFP that the BOE has out and sending a delegate. Ms. Block asked how that would work. Mrs. Glidden stated

there is a lot at play and a number of issues – some don't want the building closed as a school and others want to make sure if it's redeveloped it's done so in a proper way; therefore, how do you address those two separate issues. Mrs. Glidden stated the property is zoned R-2 (residential) and if the property remains as a school it will more than likely need to be rezoned. Mrs. Glidden also stated the back portion of the property is either wet or bedrock and developing it is unlikely. These are all items that need to be discussed.

Mr. LePard stated there are at least three former schools in Middletown that have been converted to housing – Middletown High, St. Sebastian, and Woodrow Wilson. Mr. LePard stated HES is designed to handle 450 people daily, therefore, an existing septic system is already available to handle a large volume of people and believes this would be desirable for a developer who may want to create senior or affordable housing. Mr. LePard also stated with the town looking for sewer to help make the Center attractive to developers perhaps the matter could be addressed through the school's septic system. Mr. LePard agreed that there needs to be coordination of all the different inputs so everyone is working towards the same goal and doesn't understand why someone hasn't done it (perhaps P&Z should take the lead).

As a former BOE member, Mr. LePard stated a regional BOE operates completely devoid of everyone; and if they want to close down HES, no one can stop them. Ms. Block stated this closure has a potential domino effect that will affect the entire downtown. Mr. LePard agreed. Ms. Block again stated they asked for input from the town. Mr. LePard stated in his opinion, the BOE did it just to be nice noting they have an enormous responsibility to educate the kids.

Mr. Farina asked if it would be detrimental to change the zoning now. Mrs. Glidden stated she believes anyone who may develop the site would need a zone change.

Mrs. Glidden recommended Mr. Laurenza contact Kate Anderson, EDC chairman, and Mrs. Milardo to set something up for the 7 February meeting. Mr. Laurenza asked who owns/maintains the trail at HES. Ms. Bazazi stated HES and the kids go out once or twice a year to rake it. Ms. Bazazi asked if the Commission was aware of the history of the school. Mr. Baird stated a nature's classroom is conducted for the fourth graders and then they rake the trail. Mr. Laurenza talked about RFP and how there needs to be a lot of discussion within town agencies before any development can take place.

Mrs. Glidden stated based on the discussion tonight, everyone agrees that the Center needs to be populated with people – building needs to remain as a school, or become a residential or business development. A brief discussion followed in regard to when the RFPs will be opened (sometime in February), the length of time the old Morgan School was closed before being purchased, and tax abatements.

Mrs. Glidden asked the Commission if there are uses they did not feel would be compatible in a Village District. Mr. Laurenza talked about people being on site all year. Mr. Wallor stated he feels the current Village regulations should be sufficient.

Mr. Worthley asked if rezoning has to be all or nothing – could a portion of the property be Village District and the hill top be conservation zone. Mrs. Glidden stated a rezoning at this time will be a full house and there will be a lot of comments about closing the building or what it should be. Discussion followed. Mrs. Glidden recommended if the Commission should decide to rezone the HES parcel, they should also include Scovil Mill and the Green in the Village District; that the property owners that would be affected by the proposed change need to be notified; and perhaps further discuss of the matter be pushed further into March (to allow time for Mr. Warner to settle in). Mr. Wallor stated he saw no harm in discussing the matter as they would not be making any decisions. Mrs. Glidden suggested continued discussion be listed on the 17 January 2019 agenda as New Business.

MOTION: Gina Block moved to add to the 17 January 2019 agenda – New Business: Continued Discussion of Expanding the Village District. Ed Wallor second. Motion carried unanimously.

POCD Review of Action Items – Mr. LePard asked if review of the P&Z's POCD action items will be a part of the 17 January 2019 agenda. Mr. Laurenza stated it will be on the 7 February 2019 agenda as the next agenda will be full. Mr. Wallor asked that the PIC be allowed to have their meeting before P&Z discusses anything further.

Outdoor Wood Burning Furnaces – Mr. LePard stated the Commission banned outdoor wood burning furnaces some time ago for very good reasons; however, technology has changed/improved and believes the Commission should consider readdressing the matter. Mr. LePard talked about the cloud of smoke enveloping the Center every morning and that there are no controls over indoor burners, but there are on outdoor burners. Item to be added to the 21 February agenda.

11. Adjournment

MOTION: Jamin Laurenza moved to adjourn. Ed Wallor second. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bunny Hall Batzner

Bunny Hall Batzner
Recording Clerk

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 17 January 2019.