

TOWN OF HADDAM
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
TOWN HALL
21 FIELD PARK DRIVE, HADDAM, CT 06438
THURSDAY, 21 DECEMBER 2023
UNAPPROVED MINUTES
Subject to Approval by the Commission

ATTENDANCE

X	Gina Block
X	Scott Brookes, Chairman
X	Michael Farina, Secretary
X	Mike Karam
A	Wayne LePard
A	Tim Teran
A	Edward Wallor, Vice Chairman
A	Alan Chadwick, Alternate
X	Dorothy Gillespie, Alternate - Seated
A	Larry Maggi, Alternate
X	Bill Warner, AICP, Town Planner
X	Leon Mularski, Zoning Enforcement Officer
X	Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk

1. Chairman Calls Meeting to Order

Mr. Brookes, 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

Attendance was taken and all regular members as well as alternate member, Mrs. Gillespie, were seated.

4. Additions/Corrections to the Agenda

MOTION: Gina Block motioned to amend the agenda by adding under New Business – Architectural Review Committee (ARC) - Discussion. Mike Karam second. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Comments

There were no comments for those in attendance.

6. Public Hearing / Public Meeting

There were no public hearings scheduled.

7. Approval/Correction of the Minutes

The Commission agreed to table the approval of the 7 December 2023 minutes.

8. New Business

a) Architectural Review Committee (ARC) - Discussion

Mrs. Block asked Mr. Warner how many seats are on ARC. Mr. Warner stated originally there were three (3), then ARC asked that it be increased to five (5) and five (5) members were appointed. Shortly thereafter, Lorraine Riess resigned leaving one opening. Mrs. Block recommended Liz Bazazi be considered as a member of ARC. Mr. Brookes stated he would like the rest of the Commission to have an opportunity to think the matter over and asked that the matter be tabled until the next meeting.

b) Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) – Discussion

Mr. Warner reported that P&Z adopted the POCD on 7 December 2017 (effective 23 January 2018), it's valid for 10 years, and can be amended at any time; however, after 10 years it has to be reviewed, updated, and amended as necessary. Mr. Warner stated the POCD is the town's master plan and briefly touched base on the Action Items. Mr. Warner explained that P&Z is established by two (2) different statutes – 1) planning and 2) zoning – and the two (2) can be combined into one (1) as Haddam has done. Mr. Warner also explained why Haddam needs a POCD – 1) Meet requirements of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) as the penalty for not having or updating a plan includes that the town “shall not be eligible for discretionary state funding.” 2) Advisory document that guides important decisions in the town such as preferred density, preservation of natural/cultural resources, variety of housing choices, location/type of commercial activity, and level of municipal services. As the POCD relates to P&Z – it is an advisory document and it should be implemented by creating/modifying Zoning Regulations to shape future development.

Mrs. Gillespie stated she has read the POCD several times and asked how the Commission can create a holistic picture of all the comments/ideas and proposed projects. Mrs. Gillespie asked for a reference of all currently existing town resources such as properties – open space, commercial, private, etc. Mrs. Gillespie also asked for recommendations for further education. Mr. Warner suggested the POCD and the zoning map (pointed out the areas where projects are either taking place or proposed – Tylerville and Higganum Center). Mr. Warner spoke in regard to the 8-24 reporting process.

Mr. Brookes asked for clarification - the POCD is an advisory document and not a document that must be followed such as the regulations. Mr. Warner stated it is a two (2) step process – is a proposal consistent with the POCD (planning) and then when an application is filed, it (POCD) becomes more advisory (Commission needs to look at application via zoning).

Mr. Karam stated he believes the POCD is a tool/guide, but it should be acting as the Commission's guide/tool in the decisions that they make. Mr. Farina agreed and that it would depend on the economy at the time. Mr. Karam also stated he believes there's a lot in the POCD that the regulations do not reflect (need to be reviewed). Mr. Warner stated he did not want the Commission to think that the POCD is not working because it has noting the Tylerville Village District (created) and the Dollar General, Route 81 (area designated commercial and permitted as of right).

Mr. Warner continued with his presentation reviewing subdivisions, site plan reviews, special permits, and zone changes. Mr. Brookes asked Mr. Warner to give an example of a special permit. Mr. Warner stated within residential zones – churches, daycares, schools; in commercial zones - pretty much everything; village districts - more flexible as the Commission has more control over design; and all the apartments in Tylerville were by special permit.

Mr. Karam asked Mr. Warner to explain the opportunities that may be available on the site where the barn was torn down (Hall's Power Equipment, 817 Saybrook Road). Mr. Warner stated there are other areas scattered around – Larry's Garage, 125 Saybrook Road; down by the river, mostly owned by the State. Mr. Warner stated he conducted a presentation regarding the commercial zones in town (due to a zone change, Hall's cannot build a new retail building). Mrs. Block asked about a property that's half commer-

cial, half residential (212 Saybrook Road, Higganum). Mr. Warner explained how this took place. Mr. Warner stated Hall's can rebuild as they have non-conforming rights to do so. Mrs. Block asked if the Commission could re-review all the commercial parcels. Mr. Warner stated yes.

Mrs. Gillespie asked if a part of P&Z would be to look at what would enlarge the town's tax base such as what kind of development would be wanted – types of businesses, where they could go, and how to attract them - and then include it within the POCD. Mr. Warner stated there is no suitable land – steep hills or wetlands - for large scale development. Mrs. Block stated industrial uses would help the tax base, but commercial uses are a drop in the bucket. Mr. Warner stated higher density increases taxes. Mr. Warner also stated the town would have very reasonable taxes if it weren't for the Board of Education (BOE) as the new increases would more than cover the general government (\$680,000 from new development).

Recording Clerk's Note: Copy of the presentation on file with the minutes in the Town Clerk's Office and the Land Use Dept., Exhibit A – eight (8) pages.

c) Presentation on Affordable Housing

Mr. Warner distributed copies of the Affordable Housing Plan, approved 12 September 2022, (can be found on the town's website, Land Use Dept., Studies and Reports). Mr. Warner noted this presentation was the same one presented to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) which summarized the Affordable Housing Report that the town has.

Mr. Warner began his presentation explaining the difference between Section 8 housing and CGS 8-30g requirement (allows developer to ignore zoning regulations as long as 30 percent of the housing units are affordable and the Commission can only say no if it can identify a public health or safety problem). Mr. Warner stated Haddam will not reach the 10 percent requirement (351 units; would need 301 additional units). Mr. Warner reviewed Haddam's market base (reasonable goal is to create 10 to 30 affordable units in next 10 years and the targeted age groups).

Mr. Karam asked if the parcel (former Condil property) adjacent to the Commonwealth Senior Living at Haddam (former Saybrook at Haddam) would be an extension of that facility. Mr. Warner stated yes, it would be 55 and over cottages/duplexes (24 units).

Mr. Warner reviewed income levels, families spending over 30 percent of their gross income on housing costs, a typical family budget for a low to moderate income family of four (4), cost burden (over 27 percent of households in Haddam paying over 30 percent on housing; 946 households – 2,175 people struggling), outlined those who would fall into this category – teachers, emergency personnel, administrative staff, etc., and four (4) examples of situations that have taken place in Haddam.

Mr. Warner talked about pathways to moving forward – finding champions or creating an affordable housing committee to assist with this matter, educating people, creation of a housing trust fund, create and administer housing rehab program to aid in aging in place, and work with realtors to educate qualified buyers about USDA and CHFA mortgages and down payment assistance programs.

Discussion turned to aging in place – in 10 years over 60 percent of Haddam's population will be over 60 years old, avoiding social isolation (especially men), BOS needs to recognize and advocate for – properly sized and staff senior center, Meals on Wheels, Dial a Ride, visiting nurse program, handyman service (Mark Lundgren, Chairman, Committee on Aging, recommended this service), enhanced tax abatement programs as allowed by state statutes. Also discussed what a housing trust fund could assist with – first floor living, ramps, accessible bathrooms, kitchens, laundry facilities; create affordable accessory units for relative, health care provider, additional rental income. Funds recaptured at sale of home and reprogrammed into fund. Temporary health care structures. High Meadow Senior Housing – 22 units, 94 applicants on waiting list and it may take over three (3) years before a unit becomes available, anticipate a lack of

senior housing units (will get worse over time), and expanding senior house (town should work with management at High Meadow). Advocate the town seriously discuss with for profit and not for profit housing developers who would be interested in development of town owned properties.

Mr. Warner reviewed ways in which P&Z could help with this matter – adopt the Affordable Housing Plan as an addendum to the POCD, amend regulations to comply with P.A. 21-29 in residential zones, amend residential zones to allow as of right three (3) – four (4) unit structures on larger lots (include design guidelines to protect rural, single family residential character), eliminate mobile homes and mobile home parks, meeting definition in state statute, from prohibited use section, amend Section 13, mixed use zone, and Section 13B Housing Opportunity District (HOD; review/consider), and proactively rezone properties identified in this report to HOD zone using an overlay zone technique.

Mr. Karam stated Haddam seems to be extremes of many different end points – aging senior population growing, but at the same time a growth in young families; based on Census data we're the most affordable town in the lower Connecticut River Valley, but we also have a significant amount of residents needing affordable housing. Mr. Warner stated Haddam is affordable compared to Chester and Essex. Mr. Warner also stated the report changed the median age (went down slightly).

Recording Clerk's Note: Copy of the presentation on file with the minutes in the Town Clerk's Office and the Land Use Dept., Exhibit B – 16 pages.

Affordable Housing Maps – Mr. Warner reviewed sites along bus routes, as transportation is important, and had decent land. Mr. Karam asked about Haddam Center – area of library, senior center potentially being a good area for senior housing development. Mr. Warner stated he didn't see a good area for it and noted that Haddam Center is a National Registered Historic District.

Mr. Warner stated that all sites were reviewed by the town engineer and a landscape architect).

1) Larry's Garage, 125 Saybrook Road/Thayer Road Extension – Potential for three (3) - two (2) story town houses, 28 – one (1) bedroom units, indicated in red. Septic and stormwater retention areas indicated in green and blue, respectively. **2) HES**, 272 Saybrook Road – Planned talks regarding affordable senior housing. Applied to state and received \$4.5 million. Mr. Karam asked if it would be affordable or senior housing. Mr. Warner stated it would be senior affordable housing which can be done at 80 percent of market (a lot of seniors cannot afford this they can only afford 50 percent of median). **3) Route 81/Killingworth Road (Higganum Center)** – In-fill along this route - 10 units on the Kovacik parcel, commercial building by road in front of plaza, eight (8) units behind Brewed Awakenings, two (2) units next to Da Vinci's, and eight (8) and four (4) units behind Hi-Way Package Store and the Roadrunner. Thirty-two (32) units in total. **4) High Meadow**, 15 High Meadow Place – Twenty-one (21) additional units. They have a HUD mortgage that is almost paid off. This project could easily be done. Mr. Brookes noted Haddam residents would not have first option. Mrs. Block asked what would stipulate the price point at High Meadow versus affordable housing in Higganum Center. Mr. Warner stated the housing source – HES would be private development and would following the 8-30g requirements. **5) Jail**, 945 Saybrook Road – Use the jail for what people have talked about while including six (6) units as well as 12 units across the street and 10 units between the jail and Social Services. Mr. Warner noted there is a massive septic system located at the bottom of Station Hill Road. **6) Jeff Rummel's Property**, 1129 Saybrook Road (across from the Shad Shack) – Site is approved for three (3) single family homes, but it has fantastic soil. Potential for four (4) –five (5) unit structures. Privately owned and capable of doing a majority of his own construction. Zoning currently doesn't allow it so there would be the need for a zone change (HOD) or he could apply for under 8-30g. **7) Merchant House**, 1583 Saybrook Road – 20 units using existing building with some town houses.

Mr. Warner stated all the maps are within the Affordable Housing Plan. Mr. Warner suggested the Commission be proactive and zone some of these parcels in a way that they are shovel ready.

Mrs. Gillespie stated the Power Point was a very good summary and asked if it could be made accessible as there is a lot of information.

Mr. Karam asked if Haddam Neck is not an ideal location for senior housing due to the lack of services. Mr. Warner stated there's no transportation and the housing opportunity zone specifically outlines that applications under the HOD zone must be on the west side of the river.

The Commission thanked Mr. Warner for the presentations (very informative).

Recording Clerk's Note: Copy of the presentation on file with the minutes in the Town Clerk's Office and the Land Use Dept., Exhibit C – eight (8) pages.

9. Chairman's Report

Plan of Conservation and Development Implementation Committee (PIC) - Mr. Brookes reported that he had spoken to Mr. Warner and Bob McGarry, First Selectman, regarding the PIC. This committee was formed by P&Z; however, per the Charter, the BOS should be responsible for making the appointments. Mr. Brookes stated at this point in time, the BOS will handle the matter. Mr. Karam stated the PIC is basically stalled due to the lack of a chairman and he will follow up with Mr. McGarry.

11. Scheduling of Hearings

Mr. Warner reported that there are no hearings scheduled at this time.

12. Town Planner's Report

Mr. Warner reported there will be a presentation to the Commission regarding the Rossi Property, Town Garage, and Playground on Thursday, 18 January 2024. Reviewed dates of importance regarding this matter: BOS - 8 January 2024, EDC – 10 January 2024, public hearing – 16 January 2024, and the town meeting – 25 January 2024.

4 January 2024 – Mr. Brookes asked Mr. Warner if there was anything scheduled for 4 January 2024. Mr. Warner stated no.

MOTION: Scott Brookes motioned to cancel the 4 January 2024 meeting. Mike Farina second. Motion carried unanimously.

13. Adjournment

MOTION: Scott Brookes motioned to adjourn. Dorothy Gillespie second. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bunny Hall Batzner

Bunny Hall Batzner
Recording Clerk

THE THURSDAY, 4 JANUARY 2024, MEETING HAS BEEN CANCELLED.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 18 January 2024.