

Planning and Zoning Commission
March 2, 2021 – 7:30 PM
Meeting Minutes

Please Note: This meeting was held online.

Members Present:

Walter Parsell
Laurie Semprebbon
Joe Hall
Bob Shabot
Doug Roberts

Also Present:

Mike D'Amato -Zoning Agent
Ashley Stephens- Assistant Zoning Agent

W. Parsell called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

C. Applications to be Received:

1. PZ-21-6 Special Permit Renewal Section 15 Excavation, Sand & Gravel at 180 Tolland Turnpike Applicant: Diane Becker Owner: Holt Mountain LLC
2. PZ-21-7 Special Permit Renewal Section 15 Excavation, Sand & Gravel at 171 Tolland Turnpike Applicant: Diane Becker Owner: Becker Lawrence
3. PZ-21-8 Special Permit Renewal Section 15 Excavation, Sand & Gravel at 9 George Dr. Applicant: Diane Becker Owner: Becker Lawrence
4. PZ-21-9 Special Permit Renewal Section 15 Excavation, Sand & Gravel at 328 Ruby Rd Applicant: Diane Becker Owner: Ruby Associates General Partnership

D. Public Hearing:

1. PZ-21-4 Section 19.07.02.04 Special Permit to modify commercial plaza signage at 11 Phelps Way Applicant: Greg Bristow Owner: BTV Realty of Willington LLC

W. Parsell opened the public hearing for this application.

M. D'Amato stated that they needed a clear plan for how much signage would be decided up for each tenant space, so if a new tenant comes in, in the future, we will keep everything consistent. We wanted to keep the sign plan unified by the linear frontage and the sizes of the signs. The applicant showed the linear frontage and the calculations for the sign.

G. Bristow stated he measured everything at the actual site. They are looking to be reasonable, and not max out the signage. The regulation states it is 1 square foot per 1 square foot of lineage with a 100 foot square foot maximum, which equates to very small signs per tenant which does not work with the plaza, which is why they are applying for a special permit.

B. Shabot asked what size the capital letters are

G. Bristow stated they will be about 26 inches tall for caps and per the narrative is to make the signs consistent as in 2 feet tall, botched illuminated sign, clean and simple look. There is a band where the current signs are mounted, and all of the new signs will be mounted there too, but the signage will be longer and consistent with 2 feet high.

W. Parsell asked if everyone is on board to buy these signs.

G. Bristow stated yes the owner will buy the signs and replace them all at once, and figure out how they will be paid for at a later time.

W. Parsell asked if the signs were illuminated.

G. Bristow stated no they are not, but they would like to add gooseneck lighting later on. He also spoke about the road signs, where they are looking to place them and the differences in what they are proposing opposed to what is there now. They are looking for Led illumination for the road signs, and do black out at night, so the lettering will light up, not the backgrounds.

There was discussion about placing 'upper level' on the sign for the upper level entrance to make it more noticeable as well as if the logo with the train should count towards the square footage allowance.

M. D'Amato stated he wanted to make things clear and that this plaza falls under a unified commercial plaza and the commission has the ability to approve a greater signage plan than what we would normally allow. The applicant is running into a problem because the regulations cap out at 100 square feet.

Section 19.07.02.04 allows for an additional identification sign which is what we're talking about for the upper level. The maximum that is allowed is 20 square feet, and what they are proposing is around 48 square feet, but in my opinion, the header panels at the top, doesn't need to be considered as part of the sign area. The smaller part where the tenant's names go, could be reduced to just 20 square feet, and keep the logo.

The regulations refer to this signage design, and they are proposing that all tenant spaces have the same design sign in the construction, location and potentially illuminated in the future, used with the same mounting hardware, etc, but what will be different is that they will not be red with the gold engraving. We can't tell someone they cannot have different designed signs. This regulation is at a disadvantage with the sizes, logos, etc. They were held to having everyone have the same exact sign but what they are proposing is that they are going to be diversified signs.

R. Tulis of 45 village Hill road stated with respect to the logo on signs, he tends to agree, that the logo should not count towards the square footage allowance. Issues with permits, is plantings and shrubbery around a sign. The Dunkin sign is opaque, is permitted with illuminated sign and text which I am a strong advocate of and they are much clearer to read then an entire illuminated sign. Road signs, the orientation should be considered so people can read it driving by. Agrees with putting the upper and main level on the bottom part of the signs.

There was discussion on internally illuminated signs on the building and the ground signs.

B. Shabbot made a motion to close the public hearing. L. Semprebon seconded the motion. W. Parsell closed the public hearing.

2. PZ-21-3 Text Amendment: Section 7.07.02 Livestock and Poultry of the Willington Zoning Regulations. Applicant: Willington Planning and Zoning Commission

M. D'Amato stated that most people know we have been working on these regulations for a while. We have reviewed CT guide to agriculture, issues we've had, neighboring towns regulations, people's interest in wanting backyard poultry. The proposed regulations are a culmination of all of these things. We were not able to get them out as widely spread as we wanted. M. D'Amato wants to speak with the planner of Ellington to hear if there are any issues because these regulations are based on their regulations. We were commended by CRCOG about the changes we are looking to make. M. D'Amato stated the Commission should keep the public hearing open to be able to receive more feedback.

B. Shabot agrees we should keep the Public Hearing open to get more feedback.

C. Donaldson from 142 Tolland Turnpike asked for a short run down of the regulations and what the changes are. She feels people should be allowed to have their own food sources, especially with chickens. She also asked what the average size lot is in town, wondering if there is wiggle room with less acreage to have 4 chickens.

There was a discussion about how the regulations are being changed and why.

L. Semprebon stated a building lot is 80,000 sq ft, but there are places where houses were built before zoning regulations with only an acre or less in size. We have to be considerate of neighbors and someone who might only have .5 acre.

W. Parsell stated this was sparked because of complaints to the Land Use Office.

C. Donaldson asked if there was a way to regulate free range versus non free range.

B. Shabot stated that sanitation needs to be considered and a lot of people want to keep chickens but they don't have an animal background. So if there is a lot of extra food, it could attract rodents.

W. Parsell stated free ranging birds also attracts predators, which we have an abundance of in Willington.

B. Shabot stated the town gets a lot of complaints from around town, so what we are trying to do is allow more people to keep chickens, but also regulate how chickens are kept. Running the department should take precedent over the keeping of chickens, or lack of taking care of the chickens, so the office isn't inundated about phone calls about chickens.

R. Tulis stated he is in favor of the change in regulations, and re-formatted the section to show the requirements in a way that he feels is clearer. He stated the commission should look into the definition of bovine which includes several other animals. If you allow bovines, you can have those animals. Goats and sheep are not talked about how they should be kept, and there is more focus on the chickens.

W. Parsell stated we will leave the public hearing open for the next meeting.

M. D'Amato stated something we struggle with in the office is people aren't capable to find certain items in our regulations, because the section numbers are repeated in multiple places. We are trying to modify some formatting so the sections are a little more unique in the way they are defined so people who are not used to these documents they can find them much easier.

E. New Business:

5. PZ-21-4 Section 19.07.02.04 Special Permit to modify commercial plaza signage at 11 Phelps Way Applicant: Greg Bristow Owner: BTV Realty of Willington LLC

W. Parsell stated he personally like the ideas with the signs, and to keep the train because it adds to it and not include it in the square footage.

B. Shabot stated he agrees and wants to not consider the top of the sign as part of the square footage because it adds to the sign. What has been done before hasn't been successful and he hopes to see if this signage plan works better for them.

I. Semprebon stated she agrees and sees no issues.

D. Roberts and J. Hall like the signage and agree with the commission on how it was proposed.

The commission agrees to allow 'upper level' & 'main level' on the signs.

M. D'Amato stated the applicant wants to get the store open and not have to do temporary signage, and if the commission is comfortable to move on tonight, these are my suggestions, Conditions:

1. The signage plan provided as part of the application shall govern the specific signage totals allowed for each tenant space, and shall comply with 19.07.02.04.03
2. The additional identification sign at the Eastern entrance shall be revised to comply with Section 19.07.02.04.01
3. Any future illumination will require a modification to this approval by the Commission.
4. The final location of any freestanding signage shall be subject to review and comment by Town Staff and shall not be within the Town or State Right of Way.

The commission agrees on M D'Amato's suggestions.

W. Parsell made a motion to approve PZ-21-4 Section 19.07.02.04 Special Permit to modify commercial plaza signage at 11 Phelps Way Applicant: Greg Bristow Owner: BTV Realty of Willington LLC with the following conditions:

1. The signage plan provided as part of the application shall govern the specific signage totals allowed for each tenant space, and shall comply with 19.07.02.04.03
2. The additional identification sign at the Eastern entrance shall be revised to comply with Section 19.07.02.04.01
3. Any future illumination will require a modification to this approval by the Commission.
4. The final location of any freestanding signage shall be subject to review and comment by Town Staff and shall not be within the Town or State Right of Way.

B. Shabot seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed.

6. PZ-21-3 Text Amendment: Section 7.07.02 Livestock and Poultry of the Willington Zoning Regulations. Applicant: Willington Planning and Zoning Commission

This is tabled to the next meeting and the public hearing will remain open.

F. Unfinished Business:

N/A

G. Approval of Minutes:

a. January 5, 2021

B. Shabot made a motion to approve the minutes from January 5, 2021. J. Hall seconded the motion. All in favor.

b. January 19, 2021

D. Roberts made a motion to approve the minutes from January 19, 2021. B. Shabot seconded the motion. All in favor.

c. February 16, 2021

B. Shabot has asked to correct his last name to only have one 'B'.

L. Semprebon made a motion to approve the minutes from February 16, 2021 as amended. W. Parsell seconded the motion. All in favor.

H. Correspondence

M. D'Amato stated Loves is expecting site work to be in May and is finishing their permits from the State. It means that the town has to solicit for a RFQ/RFP to hire a clerk of the works on behalf of the town, paid by Loves.. They are in the process of working through the attorney's comments for the conservation easement as part of the wetlands approval. Some things were modified. They are no longer going to build the tire changing building. The air compressor will be moved inside the building now. The EPA is requiring them to expand the concrete pad area around underground storage tanks, but there are no changes to overall plan from what the commission reviewed. This will not be coming back to the Commission for review as the EPA is mandating this adjustment.

I. Public Comment:

The Commission will hear brief comments at this time from anyone wishing to speak. No business can be conducted here nor can any comments be made about any items on the agenda.

J. Staff Report/Discussion

N/A

K. Adjournment

W. Parsell adjourned meeting at 9:09pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Stephens