



TOWN OF RIDGEFIELD

Planning and Zoning Commission

APPROVED/REVISED MINUTES PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION Zoom Webinar Meeting

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not a verbatim transcription.

December 22, 2020 Present: Susan Consentino (Joined at: 7:03 p.m.)
Joseph Dowdell
Joseph Fossi
George Hanlon
Robert Hendrick
John Katz
Rebecca Mucchetti, Chair
Ben Nneji
Charles Robbins, Vice Chair

Also Present: Richard Baldelli, Director, Planning and Zoning, ZEO
Karen Martin, Assistant Town Planner
Eileen White, Recording Secretary

Call to Order

Chair Mucchetti called the Meeting to Order at 7:00 p.m. She gave an overview of the Agenda and the aspects of Zoom Webinar procedures.

Item Number Four under Discussion was considered after Item Number Two under New Submissions.

Discussion:

1. Discussion on Businesses in town. % Commissioners

Commissioner Fossi suggested that a Subcommittee be created to discuss ideas about how to help Ridgefield's business zones that have been greatly affected by both on-line shopping and Covid-19. The Subcommittee could consist of representatives of the Economic Community and Development Commission ("ECDC"), property owners in the business districts, commercial realtors and be Chaired by Ms. Martin.



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Commissioner Fossi said that the Business Zone Subcommittee could create a list of possible remedies and bring that list back to the Planning and Zoning Commission for discussion.

Ms. Martin said the concept of combining zoning changes with economic development and viability could be greatly beneficial.

Commissioner Robbins stated that the Town of Chappaqua is considering using “form-based planning” where the character of a building is kept, but the usage of the building can be varied.

Commissioner Katz said that it was good to define the goal and how to reach that goal for this Subcommittee.

Materials such as articles about “form-based planning” will be distributed to the Commissioners.

Mr. Baldelli said that with Ms. Martin as Chair, the Subcommittee would have to meet during business hours in order for the Office Administrator, Ms. Paranjape, to do the Minutes.

The Chair recommended that the Subcommittee consist of no more than seven people so that it not be too unmanageable.

Mr. Katz motioned, Mr. Robbins seconded, to appoint a Business Zone Subcommittee to explore business zones to see what can be done by regulation regarding the impact of the Covid-19 and the economy, with Ms. Martin as Chair. Motion carried 9-0.

2. Discussion on TOD. % Staff

Mr. Baldelli stated that Transit-oriented development should be viewed in a different light, given the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic, and potential long-lasting effects once the Pandemic is over.

Mr. Baldelli said that many people are now working from home and this has affected the use of public transportation, including the Branchville Train Station service, which has been cut back. Branchville’s current challenges do not include just the lack of sewer capacity. It is anticipated that post-Covid ridership will not reach pre-Covid levels.

Mr. Baldelli also stated that Ms. Martin is monitoring other towns to see how their TOD’s are being affected.

Commissioner Katz said that public transportation may have to be varied because more people prefer to drive in their cars instead of using public transportation for safety from the Covid-19.

The Chair asked the Commissioners if they had further questions or comments and they did not.



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3. Discussion on Accessory Dwelling Unit. (ADU) % Staff

The Chair stated that there are three aspects of Ridgefield's ADU regulation she would like the Commissioners to consider: the owner occupancy requirement; increasing the square footage from 900 to 1200 square feet; and allowing two bedrooms.

Mr. Baldelli said that prior to 2003, Ridgefield did not have a viable ADU regulation. Post 2003 the process for creating an ADU required a Special Permit and necessitated a lot of certifications. Since the ADU regulation was adopted in 2003, 140 ADU's have been approved. ADU applications have to be approved by the Health Department.

Mr. Baldelli continued that the staff does not see a downside to changing the ADU regulation to have two bedrooms.

Commissioner Dowdell asked if there are other issues that the Commission should be considering as well based on the ADU applications that are submitted.

Commissioner Robbins asked if the Town allows more than one ADU per property? Mr. Baldelli said it does not.

Commissioner Robbins also asked if ADU's contribute to afford housing as discussed by Desegregate Connecticut? Mr. Baldelli stated that "Desegregate Connecticut" has not entered into the thinking process with the proposal being set forth by staff.

Commissioner Hanlon stated that, since there is a rental shortage in Ridgefield, there is an opportunity to have a legitimate apartment for them. He added that this is not a State of Connecticut idea, but a Ridgefield one.

Commissioner Katz said that this proposed regulation change is "down zoning," which has the potential for having a bigger population in Town.

Commissioner Consentino said that she could understand having two-bedroom ADU's for seniors, but that, as a parent, she was concerned with more students coming into the schools.

Commissioner Nnjeni said that with his research on middle housing, some states allow 2 ADU's on the property and reduced setbacks and he agreed with Commissioner Hanlon's comments.

Chair Mucchetti stated that other Towns have different ADU regulations. In Greenwich, ADU's must be affordable. Ms. Mucchetti said that language could be put together for review by the Commission.



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Commissioner Hendrick said that he would be happy to look at language.

The Chair also asked if the PZC would be interested in considering inclusionary housing. It is an issue that is being widely discussed and Westport has an IHZ that they feel has been very successful. They have shared a power point presentation that outlines their regulations and the Westport Planning and Commission Chair has offered to meet with Ridgefield's PZC if they wanted to discuss Westport's take on this issue. The Chair will distribute the power point presentation and the PZC will discuss at the January 12 meeting whether to invite the Westport Chair.

The Chair also said that in WestCOG's revised housing concepts 3.2, ADU's would not count as housing equivalent points toward an 8-30g moratorium. Also, Ms. Mucchetti said that there are many components being considered for affordable housing.

4. CT 169 Webinar Update. % Commissioners.

The Chair, Commissioner Robbins and Commissioner Consentino attended the Webinar hosted by CT 169 Strong, which highlighted a discussion by Tim Herbst, the former First Selectman of Trumbull, who is the attorney representing the Town of Woodbridge.

The Town of Woodbridge has received applications to amend their POCD and zoning regulations to permit multi-family housing. The applications were submitted by Yale law students who contend that the Woodbridge Plan of Conservation and Development ("POCD") and its zoning regulations are in violation of the Federal Fair Housing Act, the Connecticut Fair Housing Act and the Connecticut State Constitution.

Attorney Herbst said that this case could affect all Connecticut municipalities.

Comments from Commissioners include that a POCD is an advisory document and does not mandate certain criteria.

New Submissions

1. **#2020-078-REF:** Referral notice from the city of Danbury for permit to conduct regulated activity. Zoning Commission of City of Danbury.

The Commissioners had no comment about 98 Reserve Road which was originally permitted to become a 10,000 square foot office building. The new owner would now like it to become a rehabilitation hospital.



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2. #2020-080-REV(SP): Revision to Special Permit Application per Section 9.2 of the Town of Ridgefield Zoning Regulations, to install ground mounted solar system for a property located at 900 Ridgebury Road (Boehringer-Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals) in RAA zone. *Owner: Boehringer-Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals. Applicant: Louth Callan Renewables, LLC. For receipt and scheduling a site walk.*

Mr. Katz motioned, Mr. Fossi seconded, to Receive, Schedule an in-person Commission Site Walk for January 10, 2021 and a Discussion for January 12, 2021. Motion carried 9-0.

Correspondence
None.

Bond Release

#2019-001-S-SP: 167-173 High Ridge Avenue, Request for Bond release of \$42,000.00 posted for Erosion and sediment control and Stormwater management.

Commissioner Consentino asked if the stipulations in the holding of the bond were now satisfied. Mr. Baldelli responded that his memo stated that the area under the bond's jurisdiction was now 100% stabilized, with paving and curbing also completed.

Mr. Katz motioned, Mr. Fossi seconded, to Release the Bond. Motion carried 9-0.

Approval of Minutes:

- **PZC meeting- December 01, 2020**

Mr. Fossi motioned, Mr. Robbins seconded, to approve as amended. Motion carried 9-0.

Adjourn

Hearing no further discussion, the Chair adjourned the Meeting at: 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eileen White

2020-12-22

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