



TOWN OF RIDGEFIELD

Planning and Zoning Commission

APPROVED/REVISED MINUTES PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

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

January 11, 2022

Present:

Susan Consentino
Elizabeth DiSalvo
Joseph Dowdell (Vice Chair)
Robert Hendrick (Chair)
John Katz
Mariah Okrongly
Joseph Sorena

Absent:

Christopher Molyneaux
Ben Nneji

Also Present: Eileen White, Recording Secretary

I. Call to order

The Chair called the Zoom Meeting to Order at 7:01 p.m. The Agenda was revised by unanimous consent to cancel Item Number Two Under Discussions because the ECDC Chair had to cancel and to add an update on Department Staffing by the Chair under New Submissions.

I: Discussions:

1. **SP-21-23:** Revision to Special Permit Application per Section 9.2 of the Town of Ridgefield Zoning Regulations to construct ground mount solar panels at a property located at **60 South Street (Recycling center)**. *Owner: Town of Ridgefield. Applicant: Dwayne Escola.*

Mr. Dwayne Escola of RACE (“Ridgefield Action Committee on the Environment”) presented the Application which consisted of a 4 Kilowatt set of ground mount solar panels with batteries to blow air into compost mixture that will be on the ground.



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Mr. Escola introduced Ms. Jennifer Heaton-Jones, Executive Director of the Housatonic Resource Recovery Authority (“HRRA”), the regional governmental solid waste and recycling authority for Western Connecticut.

Ms. Heaton-Jones stated that the intention was to create a site composting system so that food scraps could be incorporated into the leaf pile in a controlled way. It would be an ASP System that would force air into the leaf pile to accelerate composting.

Commissioner Consentino expressed a safety concern with reflections off the solar panels affecting motorists and busses coming down the hill toward the transfer station.

Mr. Escola said that originally he had asked that a tree be removed on the site. He did a sun-eye measurement and found close to 100% sun without removal of the tree.

Commissioner Sorena said that the site walk had shown that the engineering specifications showed that safety was probably not going to be an issue and said that conditions of approval could be added to the Motion to offset safety concerns.

Commissioner Katz stated that solar panels absorb sunlight. They do not reflect sunlight.

Ms. Heaton-Jones conveyed that she had written the USDA grant for the Town of Ridgefield, it being only one of a dozen in the U.S. given to municipalities. She said that, ultimately, all of the property would be owned by the Town of Ridgefield, when asked by Commissioner Hendrick, about future ownership.

Mr. Katz motioned, Mr. Sorena seconded, to approve with the condition, "if the installation generates a problematic glare in the direction of South Street, that the applicant will mitigate via screening or other technical methods." Motion carried 7-0.

2. Discussion with new ECDC Chair Glori Norwitt to hear about 2022 priorities and initiatives and understand how/where PZC support and collaboration would be appreciated. c/o Chair.

This item was removed by unanimous consent because the ECDC Chair had to cancel. This item will be discussed at a later date.

2. Update on Department Staffing c/o Chair.

The Chair stated, for the Record, that the Applicant interviewed at the Special Meeting on November 30, 2021 had accepted the Planning and Zoning Commission’s offer. She is slated to begin on January 24, 2022.



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The Chair furthered that the contract Zoning Enforcement Officer (“ZEO”) has been hired and is scheduled to start on January 13, 2022 at 10 hours per week or 40 hours per month.

Chair Hendrick said that he was aware of three applicants who have been following-up for ZEO attention during the weeks over the holidays since the last Commission meeting; one item was resolved by Mr Baldelli on his last day (Jan 3, 2022) and two need attention as soon as the contract ZEO is onboard – aiming for Thursday January 13, 2022.

Commissioner Sorena asked if they were in Executive Session. The Chair replied that he did not call for a Motion for Executive Session, but if anyone would like to discuss sensitive personnel matters, they could motion for an Executive Session.

The Chair continued that the Interim ZEO would be contracted until the end of February to allow the new ZEO to have extra help until she was more familiar with her new post.

The Chair also stated that under the law, Ridgefield could have more than one ZEO, but that the town’s IT system is only setup to accommodate one ZEO. If ever the Planning and Zoning Commission deemed it necessary to have more than one ZEO, it would have to overcome an IT issue.

III: New Submissions:

1. SP-22-1: Revision to Special Permit Application per Section 9.2 of the Town of Ridgefield Zoning Regulations for a permanent liquor license for a property located at **258 Main Street** (Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum). *Owner: The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum Inc. Applicant: Jacqueline Duke. For receipt and schedule discussion.*

Mr. Katz motioned, Mr. Dowdell seconded, to acknowledge receipt and schedule a Discussion for Public Meeting on January 25, 2022. Motion carried 7-0.

IV: Approval of Minutes:

- **Regular Meeting-**December 14, 2021
- **Sitewalk Meeting-** January 09, 2022

Mr. Katz motioned, Ms. Okrongly seconded, to approve both Meeting Minutes with the following modification for the December 14, 2021 Minutes: "Mr. Nneji asked if the continuing education for the Commissioners was included in the budget and Mr. Hendrick stated that APA membership will provide some educational content for 2022, but the 2023 state requirement for commissioner education [per PA-21-29] may require additional funding." Motion carried 7-0.



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Commissioner Sorena, who is an engineer, asked if the Continuing Education for Commissioners was necessary, given the professional expertise of some of those on the Commission in maintaining their licenses and the expense involved in the Continuing Education.

Commissioner DiSalvo, who is an architect, said that she would be happy to take more Continuing Education.

Chair Hendrick said he would check on the Continuing Education requirements for the Commissioners.

The Chair also reminded the Commissioners that the Minutes can always be re-opened for amendments at future meetings.

Commissioner Sorena asked if the next meeting would be on Zoom and the Chair replied that it would be, given the level of Omicron cases.

Hearing no further discussion, the Chair adjourned the meeting at: 7:32 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Eileen White