

**TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**

***SPECIAL Meeting #1603*
December 19, 2011
WORKSHOP – With Route 140 Consultants:**

*******Draft Document – Subject to Commission Approval*******

The Meeting was called to order in the Community Room of the Park Hill Elderly Complex, Park Hill Road , Broad Brook, CT. at 6:35 P. M. by Chairman Ouellette.

ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM:

A quorum was established as four Regular Members (Devaney, Gowdy, Ouellette, and Thurz) and two Alternate Members (Sullivan and Zhigailo) were present. There are no Hearings or Applications before the Commission this evening; the only Item of Business under discuss this evening is the Workshop with the Route 140 Consultant.

Also present was Town Planner Whitten.

GUESTS: Alan Baker, Board of Selectmen Liaison to the Planning and Zoning Commission; Dale Nelson, Selectmen; Richard P. Pippin, Selectman; Kathy Pippin, Board of Finance; AND Heidi Samokar of Planimetrics.

WORKSHOP – With Route 140 Consultants:

Ms. Samokar reported the consultants are at the end of their contract with the Town; they are looking for feedback from the Commission and will continue to work with Town Planner Whitten regarding regulation drafts and development guidance.

Discussion occurred on the following topics:

Design Guidelines:

Ms. Samokar suggested the Commission can make developers aware of their preferences but noted denial couldn't be based on architectural preferences. Discussion followed regarding commissions in surrounding towns which deal with architectural issues.

Possible Changes to Zoning Regulations:

Ms. Samokar noted most of the land currently located within this corridor is under agricultural and B-2 uses. She has suggested creating a new zone designation (Business District B-3) specifically for this corridor. The Commission noted that

many of the current uses will become non-conforming, especially due to a significant set-back from the street line. Waivers of standards can be utilized to address the existing uses; variances can be acquired to permit expansion of an existing use.

Ms. Samokar reviewed her proposal for Bulk and Area Requirements for this new zone. A 200' frontage requirement is proposed, although that can be reduced if parcels share a driveway. Ms. Samokar noted some requirements are higher than those of the current B-1 and B-2 Zones. The front yard set-back is being maintained at 50' to keep the rural character of the town. Chairman Ouellette questioned if parking can be located within that 50' set-back distance; Ms. Samokar replied negatively.

The Commission felt the widening of Route 140 was almost inevitable; Chairman Ouellette felt it was reasonable to consider that the current two lane road would be widened to five lanes. Ms. Samokar suggested anything over 100' street set-back would require combining many of the existing parcels; many of the existing house lots contain a 50' front yard/building line set-back. The Commission considered a 75' street set-back as a compromise. Selectman Baker felt increased road set-backs would discourage development due to wetlands restrictions along Route 140. Ms. Samokar reviewed various options for waiving regulation requirements to encourage development.

Ms. Samokar suggested the proposed building heights are based on the distance the buildings are located back from Route 140. Selectman Pippin suggested if the Commission goes to 4 or 5 stories it would require a double width/22' minimum requirement around the building to allow set-up area for aerial ladders. Landscaping aisle couldn't be located within that 22'. Selectman Pippin also noted that the 4 or 5 story height would require installation of sprinklers, which will currently not be possible without water service along Route 140.

Discussion turned to the location of parking. Town Planner Whitten suggested if the Commission doesn't allow parking in front of the development, and requires a 400' set-back for the building location development will be challenging. Discussion continued regarding wetlands restrictions.

Ms. Samokar offered a table of potential Permitted Uses. The Commission considered the approval options of Site Plan (SP) approval vs. Special Use Permit (SUP), which includes a Public Hearing. Town Planner Whitten noted the PZC typically completes a Special Use Permit approval in 2 meetings, which is a quick turnaround. She suggested that approval of retail is approval of a use, not a trademark.

Chairman Ouellette questioned how businesses with drive-through windows would be handled? Ms. Samokar suggested the Commission consider drive-

through features for retail services and banks by the Special Use Permit process. She indicated the Commission's approval rate is laudable but questioned if a developer would look at the Special Use Permit process as a deterrent. The Commission suggested the SUP process allows them to consider many development issues which are typically site specific, such as traffic circulation issues within the site, traffic to the site, fire access, etc. Ms. Samokar suggested that during the workshops she felt the public wants the Commission to consider architectural styles more on this corridor. SP approval would not allow the Commission input with regard to architectural features.

Selectman Sullivan suggested he envisioned development to be several small "village" parcels with small retail within each parcel. Selectman Baker suggested he felt the lack of the availability of gas and water as a deterrent to larger development. Town Planner Whitten agreed, noting there is a lot of land but there are many wetlands restraints. Selectman Baker felt larger development can be done but it would require creative design of low impact development with wetlands mitigation. Ms. Samokar suggested the Commission must decide on minimum square footage as a starting point. She also concurred that drainage will be a challenge as the existing soils don't drain well.

Ms. Samokar polled the Commission on their preference for SP vs. SUP; the majority of the Commission preferred the SUP, with Chairman Ouellette undecided. He felt the biggest barrier to development was the infrastructure. Town Planner Whitten suggested the SUP process has been working well, and gives both the developer and the Commission flexibility to negotiate. Commissioner Gowdy noted Town Planner Whitten has been doing a good job of working with the developer prior to application submission to guide them through the regulation requirements and advise them of the Commission's preferences.

Ms. Samokar suggested parking standards are currently on the high side; she suggested the number of spaces required in relation to the square footage is high. It was noted that Selectman Pippin had suggested enlarging spaces at a previous meeting. The Commission considered reducing the minimum number of spaces required.

The Commission considered a 200' separation distance between driveway curb cuts. Chairman Ouellette felt the State standard is higher, and noted it also depends on the function of the road.

Chairman Ouellette submitted suggested language for submission of the traffic analysis.

Ms. Samokar continued to review the draft regulations for this new Business Zone (B3).

Town Planner Whitten felt she could have a draft revision available for the first or second meeting in January, 2012.

Possible Changes to Plan of Conservation & Development:

Ms. Samokar reiterated they are proposing the creation of a new business corridor zone for Route 140 in the area where the sewer has recently been installed. It was noted the area under consideration is impacted by a significant amount of wetlands and poor drainage. While the installation of the sewer opens the door for development the lack of participation by water and utility providers at this time may limit or restrict the type of development which occurs initially.

Ms. Samokar reviewed with the Commission the various types of businesses which discussed at earlier workshops. Desirable businesses ranged from medical offices/facilities to light industry and research and development facilities to offices, retail, and gas stations. Gas stations were suggested as little is available east of Route 5; residents must go to surrounding towns to purchase gas. Less desirable businesses included fast food restaurants, and retail auto uses.

The Commission revisited residential uses. No one favored stand-alone single family residential. The Commission might consider residential as a component of a “village” concept parcel – retail towards Route 140 with residential (perhaps townhouses) separate and to the rear of the retail. None of the Commissioners favored separate townhouse developments.

Commissioner Devanney questioned inclusion of banquet facilities – something along the line of Merlot on the Water. Chairman Ouellette felt such facilities require massive amounts of parking. The Commission wasn’t generally excited about banquet or hospitality facilities.

Ms. Samokar then reviewed 9 principles and standards for business development in the Route 140 corridor. Discussion determined that while design/aesthetics is important to the Commission it is the uses that are a major concern. The Commission discussed approval via Site Plans vs. Special Use Permits, which allow the Commission more input into the use, and the standards for its development. Selectman Baker felt use of Special Use Permits would restrict development as he felt the process is more time consuming. Town Planner Whitten noted that the PZC has been approving Special Use Permits quickly when information is presented correctly and meets regulation requirements. Chairman Ouellette questioned if preliminary discussion would be considered for this zone, as it currently is for the HIFZ (Highway Interchange Floating Zone). Discussion continued regarding the benefits of preliminary development discussions.

The Commission considered options for limiting the number of similar uses within the proposed zone, i.e. separation distances, parking locations, set-backs

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from street lines, etc. Discussion continued regarding the process for revising the current POCD.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: To ADJOURN this Meeting at 8:38 p.m.

Gowdy moved/Zhigailo seconded/VOTE: In Favor: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

Peg Hoffman, Recording Secretary, East Windsor Planning and Zoning Commission
(1563)