



Planning and Zoning Commission, Town of East Haddam Land Use Office

Regular Meeting Minutes

June 12, 2018

(Not yet approved by the Commission)

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Mr. Brownell called the meeting to order at 7:19 p.m. at the Municipal Office Complex.

2. **ATTENDANCE**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Cary Brownell-Chairman (regular member), James Curtin (regular member), Bernard Gillis (regular member), Louis Salicrup (regular member), Richard Pettinelli (alternate member) and Joe Zaid (alternate member).

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Kevin Matthews (regular member), Harvey Thomas (regular member) and, Ed Gubbins (regular member).

Mr. Pettinelli was seated for the absent Mr. Thomas and Mr. Zaid was seated for the absent Mr. Matthews.

OTHERS PRESENT: Jim Ventres (Land Use Administrator).

3. **MINUTES:** The minutes from the May 22, 2018 meeting were accepted with the below amendment.

- It should be noted that Mr. Curtin recused himself and left the room for the Masotta application.

4. **BILLS - None**

5. **SITE PLAN REVIEW - None**

A motion was made by Mr. Curtin to change the order of business. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gillis and carried by a unanimous vote.

7. **DISCUSSION**

A) Plan of Conservation & Development

Mr. Ventres noted that the East Haddam News sent out over 5000 flyers to East Haddam households. The responses to the online survey increased dramatically over a two week period from 237 responses to 492 responses. The deadline is Friday, June 15, 2018. There will be a special meeting scheduled for Wednesday, June 27, 2018 to discuss the Plan of Conservation and Development with the consultant. It was noted that the Lions Auction on July 14th may be an event to attend.

8. **ZEO REPORT**

A) Mr. Ventres noted that the Church of Christ/Inglesia Ni Cristo is planning a special worship service gathering some time at the end of the summer. A meeting is scheduled with the Selectman to get more details.



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- B) The new owners of Shadybrook continue to clean up the facility and plan on pulling permits to remove some of the structures.
- C) The East Haddam Radio Tower Committee is at an impasse over the radio tower construction even though the project was approved by the Board of Education and the Planning & Zoning Commission. A letter was written to the Radio Committee from the Board of Education asking for more information prior to any work proceeding.
- D) Mr. Ventres stated that the environmental reviews have started on the old town office site in East Haddam. The contractor will complete Phase III testing and a Phase III report for the entire property and the three buildings.
- E) Mr. Ventres stated that the towns of Haddam, East Haddam, the Lower Connecticut River Council of Governments, and the Connecticut Department of Transportation are still pursuing the Federal Build Grant for the walkway on the bridge.
- F) It was noted that the Smith Farms has their first event this past weekend. Mr. Ventres stated that there were no complaints.
- G) Bob Casner, EDC Chairman, said that a possible bidder for the old town hall site presented conceptual plans to use the entire property. They also had plans for a dock hugging the shoreline.
- H) Bob Casner also reported that he attended a meeting held by the Connecticut Land Marks Association to discuss the future of the Palmer-Warner House. They plan on disassembling the barn and rebuilding a new post and beam structure but will try to reuse the solid beams. They also are conducting a house inventory that might take a year. They also have no intention of opening the Amasa Day House on Plains Road but will increase maintenance. The meeting was attended by the executive director and five other board members. The East Haddam residents were not pleased that the meeting was held with such short notice and wanted answers about the endowment. There will be another meeting held in September or October.

Motion by Mr. Curtin, seconded by Mr. Gubbins and unanimously passed to take an 8 minute recess.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS

C) NEW-#18-08 – Christopher and Gail Staehly, 23 Petticoat Lane, Special Exception Review for a Tasting Facility for wine and cider made from fruit grown on farm. Assessor’s Map 28, Lot 1.

First Date: May 22, 2018

Last Date: June 25, 2018

Chairman Brownell read into the record the public hearing notice.



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John Paul Garcia, P.E. presented the return receipts. He stated that the proposal was to re-use the existing barn for a wine and cider tasting facility made from fruit grown on the farm. The property

is located on 23 Petticoat Lane and contains fifteen acres and the barn is approximately 2300 square feet.

A new septic system has been designed and the well has received preliminary approval from the Connecticut Department of Health. The property presently has two acres of blueberries, two acres of peaches, and two acres of raspberries planted. There are also thirty acres on the other side of the street. The barn will be converted to a wine and cider tasting facility with a capacity of forty to sixty people. They also will only serve pre-packaged foods such as cheese purchased from other farms. There will only be soft interior music played. The plans also had a parking lot across the street that can hold twenty to twenty four cars. He noted that the site has received approval from the Connecticut Department of Health, the East Haddam Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, and the Chatham Health District. He also presented preliminary drawings of the barn and proposed changes. Final drawings will be re-submitted to the commission. Chris Staehly said that he would like to be open Fridays and Saturdays from 12:00pm to 8:00pm and Sundays from 12:00pm to 6:00pm.

Mr. Gillis asked if there was proposed signage and lighting. John Paul Garcia, P.E. said that would come later. Mr. Garcia also stated that there was no lighting proposed in the parking lot and only full cut off lights on the building.

Mr. Pettinelli noted that there was no crosswalk shown on the plans and lighting would be needed if the events went past sundown. Mr. Garcia said the sight line was in excess of 500 feet and didn't think the commission would want crosswalks.

The commission questioned if parking could be placed on the same side of the street as the barn. Mr. Garcia said that parking on that side would take up agricultural land, use the front lawn of the rental house, or be in the wetlands to the west.

Mr. Ventres read into the record the following:

- A. An approval letter from the East Haddam Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission dated May 9, 2018.
- B. Phase I approval for the well location from the Connecticut Department of Public Health.
- C. An approval letter from the Chatham Health District dated June 12, 2018.

At this time Chairman Brownell opened the hearing to the public.

Terry Dickinson of Daniel Peck Road questioned why crosswalks and lighting were needed when it wasn't required at the old town hall site.



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Attorney Charles Skimkus, representing Julian and Dee Colquit, abutting property owners, stated that his clients object to having commercial activity in a residential district. Especially since the proposed use is the principal use and is not subordinate as the regulations require. The Colquitts will be the most adversely impacted because they are the closest property. The attorney expressed concerns regarding the lack of screening, hours of operation, lighting, and potential noise from bands. The Colquitts didn't move here to be next to a night club. He also said that there were not traffic studies and there is not an impact statement. Attorney Skimkus also questioned why they should have or need a second facility when they have a wine tasting facility down the road.

Mr. Ventres presented aerial photography that showed the separation of the properties. Attorney Skimkus submitted photos of what it looks like now from his client's house.

Mr. Garcia responded that most of the activity will be on the opposite side of the building (on the South side of the existing barn) and will be further screened by the addition. He clearly disagreed with Attorney Skimkus about the use being subordinate. The property is fifteen acres with ten acres planted and the structure is only 2300 square feet. The use is rural in an agricultural setting. They will be selling product that is grown on the farm. He also noted that the Staehlys have planted forty Christmas trees on the back line.

Chris Staehly said that the main intent for the majority of the property was to set up a pick your own field. They may be opening the fields this year. The intent is to farm the whole property and not just the cider and wine tasting room.

Ms. DeRaad of Petticoat lane spoke in favor of the project.

Bob Casner, Economic Development Committee Chairman, said that he has been on the site and the barn is in the best condition of any barn that he has seen of this period. He feels that the intended use is wonderful and the building should be open for the public to see. This use is exactly what the Economic Development Committee is looking for, something to add for tourism.

Sarah Dickerson of Daniel Peck Road said that the application should be approved. Venues like this bring more young people to town and helps retain those that are here. Young people are looking for small unique places.

Robert Smith of Boardman Road said that he was fully in favor of the project. He felt that it would have minimum impact on the neighborhood.

David Henderson, a neighbor, said that one property should not have more say than any other property. He said that projects should be based on past behavior to see what the future behavior would be. Presently there are no complaints about the Staehlys existing wine tasting facility. He was in favor of the project.

Bill Cross of Alger Road stated that the project would help grow the town's grand list. If the site was not approved what would be the impact of a developer constructing houses.



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Brad Parker of Town Street noted that he was also very close to the site and was in favor of the proposal. The Staehlys are good neighbors and community supporters. The town spent considerable time and money to find ways to help tourism and agriculture. This project fits those needs.

Todd Gelston of Bogel Road supported the application and thought viewing crops growing was a better view than houses.

Attorney Skimkus said that the question of accessory use has not been answered and there still is a concern about noise and the frequency of use. He also noted that economic impact is not an element that should be considered by the commission.

Mary Colpoys of Clark Hill Road spoke in favor of the project.

Terry Dickinson of Daniel Peck Road added that at the other site any overflow parking was easily handled by the Staehlys.

Richard Parker of Great Hillwood Road said that the cider and wine was a continuation of the cycle of the product.

Kevin Staehly of Town Street stated that fruit on the site will all be used for ciders and wines. He also stated that by creating a second facility they were adding to the critical mass of places for people to visit. It would be another place or destination for people to visit. Mr. Staehly then read into the record a two page letter explaining how the application meets the goals and objectives of the East Haddam Plan of Conservation and Development.

Mr. Ventres read into the record letters of support from the following:

1. Tom Dudchik of 314 Town Street
2. Glenn Gustine of Wolf's Den Campground, 256 Town Street
3. Diane Kaemmer and David Henderson MD of 135 Town Street

The commission and the applicants engineer reviewed what would be needed for a completed application. The items were as follows:

1. Lighting for the building and the parking lot.
2. Inclusion of a crosswalk and proper signage.
3. Signage proposal.
4. Hours of operation.
5. Screening.
6. A complete narrative.

Mr. Ventres also said that he would get a legal opinion about the question, if the use can be considered subordinate, from the commission's attorneys.



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Attorney Skimkus presented a picture of the plantings along his client's property. He felt that it was not adequate.

A motion was made by Mr. Curtin to continue the public hearing to the next scheduled meeting on June 26, 2018. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gillis and past by a unanimous vote.

9. ADJORNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Curtin to adjourn the meeting, the motion was seconded by Mr. Pettinelli and passed by a unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

James Ventres
Land Use Administrator