

Planning and Zoning Commission, Town of East Haddam Land Use Office
Regular Meeting Minutes
June 26, 2018
(Not yet approved by the Commission)

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Curtin called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. at the Municipal Office Complex.

ATTENDANCE:

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: James Curtin (regular member), Kevin Matthews (regular member) Harvey Thomas (regular member), Louis Salicrup (regular member), Ed Gubbins (regular member), Richard Pettinelli (alternate member), and Joe Zaid (alternate member).

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Crary Brownell-Chairman (regular member), and Bernard Gillis (regular member).

OTHERS PRESENT: Jim Ventres, Land Use Administrator

MINUTES: The minutes from the June 12, 2018 meeting were accepted with the below amendment.

*Correction in Zeo Report: (F) Smith Farms “had” their first event this past weekend.

BILLS:

Milone & MacBroom 3,750.00

A motion was made to approve the above bill as presented. The motion was seconded and passed by a unanimous vote.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A) New #18-10 - Roger Nemergut (agent), W. Cameron Beard (owner), Honey Hill Road, proposed two lot subdivision. Assessor's Map 005, Lot 001.

Mr. Ventres explained that a special exception review is necessary because it is an interior lot application for a subdivision. He also confirmed that the East Haddam Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission has been to the site to view the Wetlands.

Motion by Mr. Salicrup, second by Mr. Gubbins and unanimously passed to schedule a public hearing on July 24, 2018 for application #18-10 - Roger Nemergut (agent), W. Cameron Beard (owner), Honey Hill Road, proposed two lot subdivision. Assessor's Map 005, Lot 001.

A motion was made by Mr. Curtin to change the order of business. The motion was seconded by Mr. Thomas and passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION

A) Plan of Conservation & Development: Mr. Ventres handed out, to all members, a 29 page Plan of Conservation and Development report. It contains survey results and economic development goals and strategies. Mr. Ventres stated the plan will be discussed in detail at the June 27, 2018 special meeting.

B) The build grant for the proposed walkway on the East Haddam/Haddam swing bridge: Mr. Ventres stated that the State of Connecticut is moving forward to rehabilitate the bridge to last for the next 30 to 50 years, with a projected cost of \$55 million dollars. The state is including the cantilevered sidewalk off the bridge at a proposed cost of \$16 million dollars, and the approach on the Haddam side is \$1.3 million. Mr. Ventres stated that 30% of funds available in the grant program or \$450 million dollars are designated to rehabilitate rural areas. East Haddam is considered rural not urban, therefore the grant application does not require the town to match contributing monies.

Mr. Ventres plans to have Geoff Jacobson from Nathan L. Jacobson and Associates look at the East Haddam side of the bridge to give an estimated cost for a 120' x 6' walkway, protected by a cement retaining wall, to be installed from the Goodspeed Opera House to the bridge. Mr. Ventres stated transient people who use Andrews Marina on the Haddam side of the river need a way to safely cross the bridge. He also noted that actors who perform at the Goodspeed Opera House usually don't have transportation, so the proposed walkway would allow them to cross the river to go grocery shopping without relying on a designated shuttle bus.

Mr. Gubbins questioned the time of year the work will begin. Mr. Ventres estimates the winter of 2019-2020. Mr. Curtin questioned the weight of the bridge in reference to the proposed improvements. Mr. Pettinelli answered that the foundation of the bridge could handle the weight, it is a matter of balancing the bridge to handle the weight of the walkway. Mr. Thomas questioned the definition "Scour Critical" listed under the structural appraisal portion of the report. Mr. Pettinelli and Mr. Salicrup explained it has to do with the velocity of the river flow around the piers of the bridge. Under a flood condition too many piers in the river could impact the velocity of the water, therefore effecting the foundation of the bridge.

Mr. Ventres, with the cooperation of the Connecticut Department of Transportation, is collecting data to finalize and submit the Grant application by July 19, 2018. If East Haddam receives the Grant, notification of the award will be by December 2018.

ZEO REPORT

Mr. Ventres stated he met with members from The Sanctuary, a church/land trust, stewardship of the land organization to discuss their intentions to conduct "Sustainable Architecture" classes regarding building tiny houses. Master Architect Hans Lohse will demonstrate how to recycle gray water, collect rain water, and use solar power to simplify living. Mr. Ventres ask the commission if the Sanctuary had to ask for a "special exception" for the building class. Mr. Pettinelli asked if it would be on a trailer. Mr. Salicrup asked if the house was permanent. Mr. Curtin asked what would happen with the tiny house after it is built. Mr. Ventres stated the tiny house will be on a trailer and remain on the property as an educational, demonstration piece and the only regulation violation is if they live in it. The Sanctuary would need a building permit for permanent use. (Reference copy of email from Justin at the Sanctuary to Mr. Ventres, dated June 26, 2018 for complete details of the Environmental Education Program at the Sanctuary). The commission determined that no Special Exception Review was needed for The Sanctuary to hold "Sustainable Architecture" classes.

Mr. Ventres stated that members of the Church of Christ/Inglesia Ni Cristo asked him if they needed a “special permit” for having a church ceremony with two thousand five hundred members attending. Mr. Ventres stated the East Haddam police reported that the last ceremony the church had at the Johnsonville Chapel was very organized and efficient. Members of the church stated that this is step one on moving forward with the event that will take place on August 18th or 25th or September 1st. Mr. Ventres stated that the final details of the event will follow. Mr. Curtin stated this is events moving forward, step 1. (Reference letter to CT Department of Transportation, District 2 from Roldan E. Mercado, Event Coordinator of Iglesia Ni Cristo, aka Church of Christ for details of “Special Worship Service Gathering”). The commission determined that no Special Exception Review was needed for this particular church ceremony.

A motion was made by Mr. Thomas to take a 10 minute recess. The motion was seconded by Mr. Matthews and passed by a unanimous vote. The meeting will resume at 8:00pm.

PUBLIC HEARING

A) CONTINUED - #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.

Mr. Matthews read into record the public hearing notice.

Mr. Curtin asked John Paul Garcia, P.E., L.S. of Weaver and Associates, P.C., representing the Staehlys, to begin with changes made to application.

Mr. Garcia referenced the June 19, 2018 letter to Mr. Ventres from Weaver and Associates, P.C. that addresses the additional information requested by Mr. Ventres, East Haddam Land Use Administrator, dated 6/13/2018, for exact detail of the changes made to application. Mr. Garcia referred to an overall site plan C-1, C-2 and C-3 of 23 Petticoat Lane and concisely stated:

To prove that the parking lot and cider tasting barn are subordinate uses to the farm, the application was amended to include all the lands owned by the Staehlys on both Town Street and Petticoat Lane which is approximately 88.67 acres.

The facility will be open 7 days a week, 52 weeks per year. The hours of operation are noon to 6 p.m. Sunday to Thursday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday. The hours of operation and facility procedures are with intentions to eventually run a Pick Your Own fruit operation out of the barn.

There will be no music at the barn for the first two years of operation. If the Staehlys decide to have music then they will have to apply for an amendment to their permit.

Pre-packaged or pre-cooked foods will be served with the cider and wine. Prepared foods will include cheeses, fruits, assorted cured meats, and specialty foods from other farms. There is no intent to run a full service kitchen. Private tastings will be done during normal business hours.

Site plan pages C2 and C3 show lighting on the building, walkway, and parking area. The parking lot lights will be powered by solar and will only be on for time of use. Building plans will give exact

detail of all lighting involved.

There will be a standard 2' x 4' free standing sign near tasting barn to direct people to barn and parking area. Mr. Garcia will submit a plan for the sign to Mr. Ventres for review before installation.

There will be a planted screen of (9) 8' high white pine trees along the Colquitt's property line.

To address the question about the increase of traffic on Petticoat lane Mr. Garcia suggest a cross walk from the parking lot to the tasting barn. According to the latest State of CT. DOT traffic study of 2012, the increase of cars on Petticoat Lane is minimal.

Mr. Salicrup asked if there will be signs that say vehicles must stop for pedestrians in crosswalks. He stated he is not in favor of a crosswalk, he thinks crosswalks give a false sense of security. Mr. Garcia stated there is a very low volume of traffic on Petticoat Lane. It is a matter of situational awareness and people should take responsibility for themselves while crossing the road. Mr. Pettinelli stated that we as a town require a crosswalk for protection from a lawsuit. Mr. Ventres recommends a standardized walkway that everyone recognizes. Mr. Ventres stated that for tour buses and people who are not familiar to the area, there should be a Connecticut Department of Transportation standard crosswalk with signage on both sides of the road alerting drivers of the crosswalk.

Mr. Ventres read into the record the following letters:

Attorney Matthew Willis in reference to Subordinate vs Primary use of the farm.

Goodspeed Musicals in support of the Staehly Farm and Winery Barn project.

Attorney Charles Shimkus, Jr. on behalf of his clients Julian and Dee Colquitt, objecting to the hours of operation and application for tasting barn.

Jay Moreau of Mount Parnassus Road spoke in favor of the proposed project.

Kevin Staehly read a letter from Patricia Stricter 41 Petticoat Lane supporting the proposed project.

Bob Casner, Economic Development Committee Chairman, stated he is in favor of the proposed project.

Robert Smith of Boardman Road is in favor of the proposed project.

A motion was made by Mr. Curtin to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gubbins and carried by a unanimous vote.

Discussion before the vote:

Mr. Curtin recapped 7 amendments to application. He stated there is absolutely no change on property values of houses adjacent to the Staehly Farm and the tasting barn. Mr. Curtin stated the barn has been there for 100 years and it has no effect on property values. If anything, it would increase property values.

Mr. Ventres noted that the following should be included as conditions: there will be no music in the

tasting barn. Mr. Ventres states prior to opening the tasting barn, the septic, bathrooms, white pine screening, lighting, signage and crosswalk are to be installed.

Mr. Salicrup made a motion to approve application #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, with the stipulation that all conditions stated by Mr. Ventres are met prior to opening of tasting barn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Zaid and passed by a unanimous vote.

A motion was made by Mr. Matthews to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gubbins and passed by a unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Toni Marie Dumaine
Recording Secretary