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Town of Stafford
Planning & Zoning Commission
Regular Meeting
April 24, 2018
7:00 p.m. – Veterans' Meeting Room
Warren Memorial Town Hall

Shirley J. ...
TOWN CLERK

Members Present: Nancy Ravetto, Chair
Kathy Bachiochi
Gene Julian
Cynthia Rummel
Christopher Joseph, Alternate

Also Present: Dave Perkins, Zoning Enforcement Officer
Dave Palmberg, Alternate
Leonard Clark, Alternate
Michael Delano, Alternate

Agenda

1. Call to order and establish a quorum
2. Review minutes of April 10, 2018 regular meeting.
3. Planning discussion – POCD – Strategies for Commercial Development
4. Review zoning regulations – Signs; Breweries.
5. New and other business.
6. Adjournment

1. Call to order and establish a quorum.

Nancy Ravetto, Chair, called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., establishing a quorum with Nancy Ravetto, Chair; Gene Julian, Kathy Bachiochi, and Cynthia Rummel and seating alternate member Chris Joseph for Ron Houle.

2. Review minutes of April 10, 2018 regular meeting.

Gene Julian made a motion, seconded by Kathy Bachiochi to approve the April 10, 2018 regular meeting minutes. Gene Julian, Kathy Bachiochi, Nancy Ravetto, and Chris Joseph voted in favor. Cindy Rummel abstained. Motion carried.

Nancy Ravetto noted that the combined PZC, Economic Development Commission, and Board of Selectmen meeting previously scheduled for May 1, 2018 has been cancelled. She said Marketing Specialist Amber Wakely expects to be ready with a tentative marketing plan for May 15, 2018, so they will reconvene Tuesday, May 15.

3. Planning discussion – POCD – Strategies for Commercial Development

Nancy Ravetto said that in planning for the future of Stafford, the PZC is forming a subcommittee to look at possibilities for creating a Business/Industrial Park. The subcommittee will consist of Leonard Clark as chairman, Kathy Bachiochi, and Dave Palmberg. They will be charged with looking at the various zones in town, potential regulation changes, and other matters that would play a role in creating such a park. The subcommittee will post their meeting dates and minutes with the town clerk, and will report back to the PZC with their findings and recommendations.

Nancy Ravetto noted that strategies for commercial development can be found on Page 21 of the current Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).

Chris Joseph said that the town's POCD must be consistent with the state's plan, but could not find a copy of the state plan. Dave Palmberg said the draft state plan is very comprehensive and is online. He said he would email Chris a copy. Dave Perkins explained that towns are required to update their POCDs at a minimum every ten years.

Cindy Rummel asked if the subcommittee is being charged with looking at the feasibility of a business and/or industrial park. Nancy Ravetto said this would be part of it, as well as where one might be best located if it is deemed feasible. She said the Commission had looked at this in the past. Dave Palmberg noted he was involved in researching it back in 1999.

Chris Joseph said he would like to see the subcommittee go forward with a more specific vision, such as what type of industry focus they should consider, so any subsequent regulations or recommendations could be better tailored to bringing in that type of business or industry.

Dave Palmberg said they would not be laying out any sites, nor building any buildings but just trying to figure out where a park might fit, the types of uses it might include, and consider the infrastructure (i.e. sewer capacity and water availability) that might be required. He said the PZC touched on some of these considerations when they created the new Highway Industrial Zone. He said a business park might require creating a new zone or modifying an existing zone. Cindy Rummel said the distance to highway access has always been a factor when considering creating a business or industrial park.

Gene Julian said strategies for commercial businesses covers a lot of ground. Nancy Ravetto agreed. She said it could include planning for development with a college or educational component or partnership.

Leonard Clark said there are two big considerations. The subcommittee would want to consider creating a park that would attract businesses that offer higher skilled jobs and wages, which would benefit residents, and that would also help grow the grand list for Stafford. Dave Perkins said these could be industries like bio-tech or energy efficiency, but it was also noted that a park could include multi-use industries. While the subcommittee cannot specify any particular businesses they want to bring in, Leonard Clark said they can market to those industries. The findings will be shared with the EDC and the Board of Selectmen.

4. Review zoning regulations; signs, breweries..

Dave Perkins provided sign size information for some of the businesses in the Downtown Main Street area. Happy Nails has a 3 foot high by 4 foot wide sign. There are a few oval-shaped signs that are about 2-1/2 feet by 4 feet. There was some consensus that the oval-shaped signs are more attractive and discussion followed about whether incentives, such as a larger square footage, might be offered to encourage store owners to go with an oval sign. The Commission discussed setting a maximum distance a sign could extend from building facades. Dave Palmberg suggested limiting it to 4 to 5 feet so that the signs would not extend over the sidewalk. Commissioners also discussed setting a minimum vertical clearance.

Dave Palmberg said the allowable projection of signs might have to include a separate regulation for Downtown Main Street businesses as they are all at the road. Dave Perkins suggested these special distances might apply to the Village Overlay Zone. Dave Palmberg said as long as they are looking at sign regulations again, they may want to consider addressing technology, such as LED signs. Because technology changes so fast, he suggested lighted/LED signs require a special use permit so they can consider them on a case by case basis.

Gene Julian asked if the 15 percent increase in signage incentive, outlined on Page 69 of the regulations, might be too little. Dave Perkins suggested they might want to consider language that simply allows the Commission some broader discretion for what they would allow.

Nancy Ravetto asked about the status of the bake shop and vape shop signs. Dave Perkins said the bake shop sign is grandfathered, but the vape shop would need to either apply for a variance or wait to see what regulation changes the Commission comes up with. He said the vape shop owners are not pushing the issue right now, but the Commission will need to consider it.

The Commission discussed breweries. Dave Perkins provided a handout with definitions for breweries, brewpubs, and brewpub/restaurants, which he found in other towns. He said the Commission will need to put them into their table of uses.

Dave Palmberg asked if these categories each have classifications where the Commission can incorporate their words into Stafford's definitions. Dave Perkins said they could do this. Dave Palmberg suggested they talk to Dan Tomlin of Stafford Cidery as he is likely up-to-speed on legislation and terminology around these categories. Dave Perkins said the state regulations are pretty straight forward and based on the number of barrels one is allowed to produce.

Nancy Ravetto said she felt a brewpub/restaurant is redundant with a brew pub, as many brew pubs start out just offering tastings, but later expand to add food.

Dave Perkins asked where the Commission would want to allow brewpubs. There was consensus to allow them in all but residential districts---LB, HB, HI, Industrial, and Central

Business zones. The Commission also discussed whether they should require a special use permit if they have an outdoor patio where they plan to have music.

Nancy Ravetto asked Commissioners to do some research on the regulations for brewpubs in other towns. She said she would look into Sonny's Place in Somers.

5. New and other business.

Nancy Ravetto discussed forestry regulations, noting that forestry is required to be regulated by the Inland Wetlands Commission. She asked if the PZC needs to send a letter to First Selectman Mary Mitta about this. Dave Perkins said the IWWC first needs to write forestry regulations and that he is going to be simply moving the PZC regulations on forestry into the IWWC regulations and making a few tweaks to them. He said the PZC only needs to vote to take them out of their own regulations, and the IWWC will then contact Mary Mitta about setting up a public hearing on the change. He said the PZC will need to first wait until the IWWC has ironed their regulations out.

Nancy Ravetto noted that on Page 22 of the updated Zoning Regulations that under Section 3.16.E, the first sentence should be updated to state that accessory buildings to farming use are regulated in Section 7.4. Also, on Page 39, items F, H, and M in the table should be eliminated and the table should be re-lettered. Lastly the amended updates on Page 125 need to be updated.

Gene Julian pointed out that some of the revised pages for the Zoning Regulations handed out at the previous meeting appeared to drop some information. Dave Perkins said he will review the revisions and bring back corrected ones.

Dave Perkins said the Big Y gas station is now under construction and they are putting in the new tanks and removing contaminated material. They are also doing some repairs to the building.

6. Adjournment

Kathy Bachiochi made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Cindy Rummel. All were in favor. The April 24, 2018 Planning & Zoning meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Annie Gentile
Recording Secretary