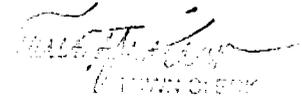


Town of Stafford  
Planning & Zoning Commission  
Special Meeting  
September 3, 2020  
Senior Center – 3 Buckley Highway

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Members Present: Dave Palmberg, Chair  
Cindy Rummel  
Rich Shuck  
Ron Houle  
Chris Joseph, Alternate

Also Present: David Perkins, Zoning Enforcement Officer  
Paul Arute, applicant  
Sandra Collette, applicant  
Attorney Wendell Avery, applicant  
Larry Vaughn, Jr., DBA Stafford Sand and Gravel, LLC  
Mark Zessin, P.E., Anchor Engineering Services, Inc.  
Public

### Public Hearings

Dave Palmberg opened the public hearing at 7:00 p.m., establishing a quorum with Dave Palmberg, Chair; Cindy Rummel, Rich Shuck, Ron Houle, and seating alternate member Chris Joseph for Lorin Dafoe. Cindy Rummel read the legal notice.

#### **Special permit and site plan approval for Golf Driving Range at 55 West Street – Regulation 5.2 Line 23.**

#### **Commercial Recreation**

**Applicant: Stafford Springs Enterprises, Inc.**

**Location: 55 West Main Street – Map 47, Lot 16 – Zone: IN**

Paul Arute of Northbridge, Massachusetts, operator of the Stafford Speedway at 55 West Main Street would like to put a golf driving range in the parking lot at the speedway. An area will be fenced with the balls to be driven out toward the river and cemetery. Presently there are fifteen bays and an automated kiosk with a ball dispenser. Parking is laid out behind the bays. They plan to operate the driving range from dawn to dusk.

Dave Palmberg asked if the driving range will have any lighting and if it will have any netting to catch errant balls. Paul Arute said there will be no lighting, as the range will only be in operation during daylight hours. There will be no additional netting. It would be very difficult to hit a ball beyond their property line. He said there is netting at the backside near West Street, and there is a fence around the bays.

Rich Shuck asked if there will be any site grading. Paul Arute said they put down a concrete pad like a sidewalk and they put down millings in the parking lot behind the tee boxes and planted some grass.

Chris Joseph asked how long during the year the range will be in operation. He also asked about signage. Paul Arute said he would expect people to utilize the range up until it gets too cold. He said he plans to add a sign at the speedway's front entrance and in the field to display yardage.

Dave Palmberg asked that a handicapped parking spot be added. He said this proposal adds a form of recreation they don't yet have in town.

The public hearing was opened to public comment. John Wittenzeller of 2 Stafford Street said he felt it was a good idea and a good use of the property.

There were no other questions or comments. Cindy Rummel made a motion, seconded by Ron Houle to close the public hearing. All were in favor. Motion carried.

**Resubdivision application of Sandra Collette to create a new lot at 44 Collette Road East**

**Applicant: Sandra Collette**

**Location: 44 Collette Road East, Stafford, CT, Map 54, Lot 9.3 – Zone: AA**

Ron Houle recused himself for this application.

Sandra Collette of 16 Collette Road East said she would like to cut a piece off the subject property for her nephew to build a home. She said her father gave property to her brother some time ago, giving him the first cut. She noted the plan includes the locations of the house, septic and driveway.

Cindy Rummel asked what the total acreage is of the property. Sandra Collette said it is about 11-1/2 acres and it will be subdivided roughly in half, and the remaining piece will remain in agriculture.

David Perkins said the Collettes got a variance because they plan to build on an unaccepted town road. He said the North Central Health District has approved the septic and Wetlands has granted their approval.

Dave Palmberg asked if any approval should include waivers since none will apply in this application. David Perkins suggested they state that internal improvements to the subdivision are not required.

There were no questions or comments from the public.

Rich Shuck made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Chris Joseph. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Ron Houle was reseated for the remainder of the meeting.

**Special Use Permit Renewal for Larry Vaughn, Jr. DBA Stafford Sand and Gravel, LLC – Regulation 7.2 Earth Removal/Blasting**

**Applicant: Attorney Wendell Avery**

**Location: 156 Cooper Lane, Stafford, CT, Map 46, Lot 3 – Zone: AA**

Attorney Wendell Avery attended the public hearing with the business owner Larry Vaughn, Jr. and his engineer, Mark Zessin of Anchor Engineering Services. The applicant would like to renew his earth removal/blasting permit for another three years. Attorney Avery said he expects about the same level of activity will continue, subject to the demands of the market.

Attorney Avery said part of the operation is quarrying, but they do some blasting about eight to ten times a year. Independent companies do the blasting and monitoring. Attorney Avery said they are not aware of any complaints since their last renewal.

Mark Zessin, P.E. noted this is a long-standing quarry, and a lot of sand and gravel have been removed since the 1950s. The quarrying operation was started in the late 1990s, and the demand for aggregate varies with the economy.

Dave Palmberg asked if work will continue into the Phase II area on the map. Attorney Avery said it will. They should see more of a set of steps instead of a large drop and they will add intermediate access roads, gates, and fencing. Larry Vaughn said they have started moving into Phase II and III, and are preparing to finish out Phase I. He reviewed a photo taken that day, noting they will need to bench and prepare the stages. He said he follows the advice of federal inspectors who make recommendations to ensure safety.

Larry Vaughn added that excavation is going on for a finished driveway and they will be removing trees away from the cliff. He noted inspectors from the Federal Bureau of Mines as well as the fire marshal have had no issue with the operation to date.

Ron Houle asked Larry Vaughn if he has ever experienced well problems, living close to the operation. Larry Vaughn said he has not, nor have his abutters.

David Perkins said he inspected the site today and noted the crushing operation is a much cleaner one than three years ago.

There were no questions or comments from the public. Rich Shuck made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Chris Joseph. All were in favor. Motion carried.

**Regulation Changes to the Table of Uses**

**Proposed zoning amendments pertaining to various changes to the Table of Permitted Uses in the WM, OS, LB, HB, CB, IN, and HI Commercial Districts including but not limited to adding upper story apartments, sale of alcoholic beverages, trade schools, hotels, restaurants, and woodcutting/sawmills.**

Dave Palmberg reminded the Commission that this work was started by the previous Commission and that their consultant Dr. Donald Poland recommended changing some of the uses from Special Permit to Site Plan approval. Special Permit approvals require a public hearing, while Site Plan approvals do not. Additionally, the Commission looked at some uses to see if they should be expanded into other zones or limited further. The recommended changes are all for commercial and industrial zones, not residential zones.

David Perkins noted they received a letter from the Capitol Region Council of Governments, and they had no comments on the proposed changes.

David Perkins noted some of the highlights of the recommended changes, including allowing one family dwellings and apartments above the first floor in the LB zone. Non-commercial kennels are recommended to be allowed by Site Plan rather than Special Use Permit. He reviewed where retail uses can be allowed by Site Plan and when they would require a Special Use Permit, based on square footage.

The public hearing was opened to public comment. John Wittenzeller said he saw the proposed changes several months ago and felt they were positive changes. He noted also that the Economic Development Commission supported the changes.

The Commission discussed the fact that they have not seen the proposed changes in several months, since Covid-19 had restricted holding meetings for some time. There was agreement to keep this public hearing open to give everyone time to re-familiarize themselves with the proposed changes and to give the public adequate time to review them.

Ron Houle made a motion to continue the public hearing to the next meeting, seconded by Cindy Rummel. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Agenda:

- 1) Call to order and establish a quorum
- 2) Review minutes of the July 16, 2020
- 3) Discussion and possible action on Public Hearing items.
- 4) Zoning Citation Ordinance Discussion
- 5) New Business
- 6) Adjournment

**1) Call to order and establish a quorum.**

Dave Palmberg called the meeting to order, continuing with the quorum established for the Public Hearings.

**2) Review minutes of July 16, 2020 meeting.**

Ron Houle made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 16, 2020 meeting, seconded by Rich Shuck. All were in favor. Motion carried.

**3) Discussion and possible action on Public Hearing items.**

**Special permit and site plan approval for Golf Driving Range at 55 West Street.**

Rich Shuck said he had no issue with the driving range, but was concerned no formal site plan had been submitted. He wanted to be careful that any approval defines the scope of the approval, so it does not expand without Commission approval. He said the applicant should provide a drawing to David Perkins for the record. Dave Palmberg agreed with Rich Shucks' concerns. He said they could include the present scope in the approval. The applicant can always return for a site plan modification if business increases. David Perkins suggested conditioning the approval, limiting it to one vending machine and fifteen tee boxes.

Rich Shuck made a motion, seconded by Cindy Rummel to approve the Special Permit and Site Plan for a Golf Driving Range at 55 West Street as presented – Regulation 5.2, Line 23, Map 47, Lot 16, Zone: IN, with the conditions that the operation be limited to 15 tee boxes, there be no external lighting, and that any expansions to the operation require a return to the Commission with a formal site plan. A vote was taken and all were in favor. Motion carried.

**Resubdivision application of Sandra Collette to create a new lot at 44 Collette Road East.**

Rich Shuck made a motion, seconded by Cindy Rummel to approve the resubdivision application of Sandra Collette to create a new lot at 44 Collette Road, Map 54, Lot 9.3, Zone: AA with no site improvements required. Rich Shuck, Cindy Rummel, Chris Joseph and Dave Palmberg voted in favor. Ron Houle abstained. Motion carried.

**Special Use Permit renewal for Larry Vaughn, Jr. DBA Stafford Sand and Gravel, LLC – Regulation 7.2 Earth Removal/Blasting**

Ron Houle made a motion, seconded by Cindy Rummel to approve the Special Use permit renewal for a period of three years for Larry Vaughn, Jr., DBA Stafford Sand and Gravel, LLC – Regulation 7.2 Earth Removal/Blasting – at 156 Cooper Lane, Stafford, CT, Map 46, Lot 3, Zone: AA. All were in favor. Motion carried.

**4) Zoning Citation Ordinance Discussion.**

David Perkins noted he put out a request on the Planners website and found that two out of three towns tend to have an ordinance for zoning violations. He said these types of ordinances are used mostly for minor issues. It is an effective tool to write a citation including a monetary penalty. He said most of the time people will get in conformance within a week and it is not necessary to collect the penalties. Additionally, people have the option to appeal the decision to a hearing officer. Dave Palmberg agreed, saying it is a quicker, less expensive option than going to court.

Chris Joseph said he is not opposed to using such tools, but would want them to clearly define how the money would be collected. He suggested they consider who might complain and limit it to abutters only. He also recommended that any complaints be required to be made in writing with a name.

Rich Shuck said it does not matter how a violation comes to the attention of the ZEO. If the ZEO receives a violation, he is obligated to investigate.

David Perkins shared some regulations from Tolland, where they have designated specific fines for specific violations. Dave Palmberg said Stafford could prepare a specific list with violations also. Chris Joseph said he would send David Perkins some specifics he would want to see. Dave Palmberg said they should also prepare some type of flowchart or something similar that would outline the process for addressing zoning violations.

There was consensus from the Commission to continue this discussion at their next meeting.

**5) New Business.**

Commissioners discussed the status of several ongoing items. Ron Houle asked about the status of the proposed gun shop. David Perkins said this is moving forward and the owner is getting his federal firearm license.

David Palmberg asked about the status of the physical therapy business. David Perkins said a building permit has not been taken out.

The Commission discussed the blight situation at 32 West Stafford Road. David Perkins reported that fines have accrued.

*September 3, 2020 – Stafford Planning & Zoning Commission*

Ron Houle asked about the status of Simon Says. David Perkins said they are showing some progress. Arbor vitae have been planted and a handicapped space has been created. The building on the left has some lifts and work is being done there. The retail shop is not ready yet from a building permit standpoint.

**6) Adjournment.**

Ron Houle made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Cindy Rummel. All were in favor. Motion carried. The September 4, 2020 meeting of the Stafford Planning and Zoning Commission was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Annie Gentile  
Recording Secretary