ENFIELD PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
LIVE REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
THURSDAY OCTOBER 12, 2023 – 7:00 PM
ENFIELD TOWN HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBERS
820 ENFIELD STREET - ENFIELD, CT

RECEIVED
ENFIELD TOWN CLERK
2023 OCT 20 AM 10: 04
Sheila M Bailey

Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call
Secretary Petronella took the roll and present were Lewis Fiore, Kenneth Hilinski, Virginia Higley, Linda DeGray, Francis Alaimo, John Petronella, Joseph Mule, and Alternate Commissioners Nicles Lefakis and Christian D'Antonio. Absent was Alternate Commissioner Vinnie Grillo.

Also present were Laurie Whitten, Planner, Matt Davis, Assistant Town Planner, Rick Rachele, Certified Zoning Enforcement Official and Rebecca Jones, Recording Secretary.

Chairman Fiore welcomed Commissioner Mule to the Commission. Commissioner Majmudar moved out of town.

Approval of Minutes
a. September 28, 2023

Motion to approve September 28, 2023, regular meeting minutes made by Commissioner Higley; seconded by Commissioner DeGray and approved by a unanimous vote of 7-0-2. Chairman Fiore and Commissioner Alaimo abstained. *Commissioner Hilinski watched the YouTube video of the meeting and felt so qualified to vote.*

Town Attorney Report
None.

Enforcement Reports
Zoning Enforcement Official Rick Rachele was present for the discussion. He submitted a report related to 359 Hazard Avenue. The owner is seeking a Certificate of Occupancy *(referred to as 'CO' hereafter)* and Mr. Rachele has concerns. It is initially approved as mixed-use with apartments and medical offices in the basement space. A text change amendment was applied for and approved. It included medical offices in the basement and 9 residential apartments. The applicant then submitted a building permit and in reviewing the plans, Mr. Rachele saw that the medical offices and elevator were removed from the plans. The project engineer confirmed that it was the applicant's opinion that the medical offices were no longer necessary. This change was requested formally and approved administratively. Presently, there are 8 occupied apartments with no CO. Mr. Rachele is not comfortable with signing off on the CO until the basement area is addressed. It is currently being used as storage and has water damage, poorly painted walls and there are exposed pipes in every room. He is seeking the Commission's input as to how best to proceed.

Secretary Petronella confirmed that the elevator was only needed for the medical offices to ensure they were ADA compliant. Without the medical offices, the elevator is no longer necessary. He stated he has never seen a sign advertising office space and feels there has been no attempt to even try to rent out the space. Further, there has been no attempt to even present something to show as rentable space. Commissioner DeGray expressed concern related to the apartments being occupied without the CO. Commissioner Alaimo noted that when originally presented, this application was emphasized as mixed-use. He also expressed concern that there are apartments occupied with no CO. Mr. Rachele explained that the onus is on the property manager. It was made clear in the special use permit approval what was to be allowed on site. Basement offices are completely unoccupiable and there has not been an attempt to prepare it. Commissioner Alaimo confirmed that there is a working sprinkler system on the main floor continued to express concern about the safety of the tenants. Chairman Fiore opined that Mr. Rachele should work with the Building Department because they need to be involved. Commissioner Hilinski recommended enforcement action. Secretary Petronella asked staff if the Town of Enfield has an obligation to notify the tenants that they are occupying the space without a CO. He also asked if the Town would have any liability in that matter. Commissioner D'Antonio echoed Commissioner Alaimo's concerns related to the safety of the residents. Commissioners recommended contacting the Town Attorney for further guidance.

Chairman Fiore does not want this to fall through the cracks and is concerned that are other properties operating without COs in town. Commissioner DeGray asked if fines can be imposed. Mr. Rachele stated that a Notice of Violation can be issued for the conditions of approval, which is the first step in the regular process for enforcement. Other departments will be contacted for guidance.

Public Communication
None.

Bond Release(s)
None.

Presentation
None.

Continued Hearings
None.

New Public Hearings
None.

Old Business

a. **PH# 3074 – Laughlin Rd** – Application for a 3-lot subdivision; Carl and Loretta Nelson, Applicant/Owners; Map 106/Lot 2; R-88 Zone

Chairman Fiore and Chairman Alaimo recused himself from this application due to previous absence. Chairman Fiore seated Commissioner Higley as Chairperson and seated Alternate Commissioners D'Antonio and Lefakis as regular members.

Motion to waive Section 3.0 of the subdivision regulations related to street light requirements made by Secretary Petronella; seconded by Commissioner Hilinski and approved unanimously by a roll call vote of 7-0-0.

Motion to waive Section 5F of the subdivision regulations related to sidewalk requirements made by Secretary Petronella; seconded by Commissioner DeGray and approved unanimously by a roll call vote of 7-0-0.

Motion to waive Section 4H of the subdivision regulations related to the developer's agreement made by Secretary Petronella; seconded by Commissioner DeGray and approved unanimously by a roll call vote of 7-0-0.

Motion to approve PH# 3074- Laughlin Rd with associated waivers and notes made by Secretary Petronella; seconded by Commissioner DeGray and approved unanimously by a roll call vote of 7-0-0.

b. CRCOG – Enfield Square Mall Traffic Impact Study

CRCOG representatives were present for the discussion. The purpose of this study is to explore the various potentials for redevelopment of the mall property as well as identify what improvements to the networks would need to be required and what would be desired.

The study area was focused on the Enfield Square Mall and 15 related intersections. Crash history was reviewed. There were 4 locations with 40 or more crashes per year. Traffic operations with 3 different peak periods were studied. The peak periods were weekday morning, weekday evening and Saturday afternoons. Traffic counts were taken in 2021 and served as the base condition and future no-build projections were calculated as well. The no-build projection assumed that the mall is at 100% occupancy. Level of service was discussed and is graded on an A through F system. Level A is likened to a country town with no business and Level F is considered a failing roadway. The worst level of service occurs during the peak periods. Critical intersections were both I-91 interchanges and Elm Street, Freshwater and Elm Street, and Freshwater and Hazard Ave.

Market study showed that multifamily residential was identified as a primary opportunity along with other types of housing. Specific types of retail including restaurants and mixed-use development were also found to have market potential. The Visual Preference Survey input was included in this study. There will be a focus on creating a pedestrian-friendly corridor with improvements for smoother traffic flow. There are currently four access points to the mall that are all used equally. The traffic study looked at two new access point options (Option A and Option B), which were selected by the public and confirmed by the Commission at a prior CRCOG presentation. Option A would close access to Elm Street from the western driveway. Option B would create a right-turn only lane at the same location.

Level of Service was discussed for each Option. Neither Option A nor B improved 91 intersections. It was not reviewed with the potential for major improvements as out of the scope of the plan. Road diet was reviewed for Elm Street, which included reduction of travel lanes and construction of a median. Traffic signal operations on Elm and Hazard would have modified coordination, improved pedestrian phasing, improved vehicular detection, and a double left turn removal. Modern roundabouts located at Elm Street at Freshwater and Elm Street at the I-91 Ext 48 ramps were also considered as potential improvements.

Recommendation of the study would be Option A, which would include the closure of western wall driveway on Elm Street (Route 220). This would improve traffic signals operation on Elm Street and Hazard Ave, allow for transit improvements as well as pedestrian improvements. 2045 future "Build with Improvements" Level of Service would improve with this option. CRCOG representatives are now asking for the Commission for support of the recommendations. Other relevant next steps were discussed.

Chairman Fiore expressed concerns about pedestrian improvements along Elm Street. He does not want to wait for a potential future developer to do something with the mall when the pedestrian improvements are needed now. Commissioner D'Antonio asked about crosswalks and related pedestrian-only signals. Commissioner DeGray expressed concern related to the individual property owners within the mall parcel. She opined that Option A will block business access. She also asked again for CRCOG representatives to study the Holyoke Mall traffic flow. Chairman Fiore reminded Commissioner DeGray that there was not a majority who recommended reviewing the Holyoke Mall flow of traffic and the options that had the majority vote were included in this study.

Commissioner Alaimo expressed concern about emergency vehicle access and was concerned about the time of the counts as 2021 is still a period of COVID quarantine in his opinion. He also asked about determining potential funding opportunities. CRCOG is not directly involved in the funding portion of the project and the DOT representative is identifying a process that implements the project. DOT project manager confirmed that there are ways to find the funding for this project once it is endorsed. Representatives at CDM Smith and CRCOG will work with the town to develop a memo and then create a proposal to DOT. Commissioner Hilinski feels Option A is the safest option, which the crash history supports. Secretary Petronella asked about the logistics of approving curb cut closures. He also discussed the backup on Hazard to I-91. He shared information related to the 291 Exit Ramp in Massachusetts, which has impressive traffic distribution.

Chairman Fiore asked CRCOG representatives what the next best steps are for the Commissioners are to take to facilitate the process. For the memo to be created, the Commission would have to give their endorsement. No determination of Option A or B would need to be made immediately and it is more important for Commissioners to give their endorsement related to traffic signalization, pedestrian improvements, and the elimination of the double left-hand turn. Secretary Petronella asked Ms. Whitten if another traffic study will be required should a new development be proposed on the property of similar nature. Chairman Fiore recommended that this item remain on the agenda and that the Commission can proceed with resolution discussion at the next meeting.

Motion to table discussion related to the Enfield Square Mall Traffic Study made by Commissioner Higley; seconded by Commissioner DeGray and approved unanimously by a show of hands vote of 7-0-0.

Moton to take a 5-minute recess made by Commissioner Higley; seconded by Commissioner DeGray and approved unanimously by a show of hands vote of 7-0-0.

Chairman Fiore left the meeting at 8:40pm and seated Commissioner Higley as Chairperson in his absence. Commissioner D'Antonio was also seated as a regular member.

Commissioner Higley called the meeting to order at 8:47pm.

Secretary Petronella took the roll and present were Kenneth Hilinski, Virginia Higley, Linda DeGray, Francis Alaimo, John Petronella, Joseph Mule, and Alternate Commissioners Nicles Lefakis and Christian D'Antonio. Absent was Chairman Fiore and Alternate Commissioner Vinnie Grillo.

New Business

a. **SPR# 1922- Mullen Road - Application for Site Plan Approval and associated improvements; Mullen Road Property Owner, LLC; Applicant/Owner; Map 16/Lot 3; I-1 Zone.**

Applicant representatives were present for discussion. There have been two meetings with staff prior to this presentation where many staff recommendations have been addressed. GFI Partners will be the project developers and have an extensive commercial real estate portfolio. The proposed project site is located off Mullen Road and includes 14.64 acres of vacant land. It is zoned Industrial-1 (I-1) and permits the use of wholesale, warehouse, and distribution facilities. The proposed warehouse is approximately 130,000 square feet with twenty-eight loading doors, 2 drive-in doors and 104 passenger vehicle spaces. It is located between Exit 45 and 46 of I-91. It is designed so that there will be a minimum intrusion of the surrounding area. Mullen Road is higher than Field Road. The surrounding topography was reviewed, including the wooded areas to the west which separates the R-33 residential land use area in the same area. The first fifty feet of the buffer will be completely wooded and then a berm will be created. Additional plantings of native pollinators will also be included through the site.

Truck traffic will be coming to and from the west. Signage will be used throughout the site to encourage westbound traffic. On site, trucks will enter through the north side of the property and travel in a counterclockwise direction around the lot. The loading court area is on the opposite side of the R-33 residential area. There are 105 parking spots with 104 required by regulation. EV charging stations will be provided. It is the applicant's opinion that this development proposal will have minimal impact on the surrounding community and will help in several ways, including growing the grand list.

There is potential that it can be split into two tenancies but there is a possibility it could be a single tenant. A fire suppression system will be located on the north side of the site as recommended by Fire Department officials and will be fully screened. Location of propane tanks was discussed. A future tenant may wish to give up a loading dock for a dumpster for service.

The lowest point of the site is the southeast corner and highest is the northwest corner. Wetlands consultants have confirmed that there are no wetlands on the site. It was also determined that there are no archaeological resources on the site of any substantive nature, and it is not a factor of development on the site. The proposed development is well under the impervious surface requirements.

It was discovered that the abutters at 18 Mullen Road encroached on the southeast corner of the site through their drainage system and associated swale. Mr. Davis recommended that GFI Partners grant an easement to the abutter to memorialize that and give continued rights to use it and the applicant will tie into that for the final point of discharge. The applicant confirmed that there will be no increase of discharge. There was also a 90-foot open space easement encroachment that was discovered on the south side. Town staff suggested that the applicant apply to the PZC as a condition of approval to formalize that and waive the requirement for drainage and the like.

Grading and drainage plan was reviewed. There will be three retaining walls on the site. All drainage will be caught in catch basins and will go into underground storage units. There are four existing drainage areas with five proposed after construction completion. Projections show significant reductions of drainage flow. Utilities were detailed. WPCA asked for a specific type of manhole, which will be incorporated into the plans and added as a condition of WPCA's permit to construct. Location of fire lanes and hydrants will be determined at the time of construction per the Fire Marshall's comments. Erosion and sediment control will be based off the 2002 ENS standards. There will be silt fences and hay bales with a tracking pad for the entrance.

The landscape plan was reviewed in depth. Evergreen shrubs and perennial flowers will be planted at parking lot ends. Shade trees will be located to the north and south of the loading dock and near the entrance. There is a 100-foot landscape buffer along the western property line. Existing trees will remain along the first fifty feet followed by evergreen and shrubs to be planted on an 8-foot-high berm on the second 50 feet. A perennial meadow mix is also proposed in that area. The top of the 8-foot-high berm will be approximately twenty feet higher than the finished floor elevation proposed. Proposed lighting was discussed. There will be a mix of pole mounted lights and wall packs.

Traffic study was discussed. The intersection reviewed was King Street at Mullen Road and speed data was collected along the site frontage. Traffic counts were taken on May 11, 2023. The peak hours were from 7:00-8:00 am and 4:00-5:00pm. It is the applicant's opinion that the site is a low traffic generator, with 39 morning peak hour trips and 42 afternoon peak hour trips. Most traffic will be traveling from ninety-one to the site. Capacity analysis yielded efficient operations maintained at King Street and Mullen Road intersection. Stopping site distances were satisfactory and consistent with state requirements. Police recommended specific signage related to I-91 and Route 5 along with a 'no right turn' signage at the site driveway exit. Another recommendation included a loop or video vehicle detection to detect vehicles exiting the driveway. The goal is to connect the detector to a new "Trucks entering When Flashing" sign on Mullen Road.

Architectural design was reviewed. It is a pre-engineered steel frame construction with nine bays with structural steel system. There is also office space and a potential dividing wall. Exterior elevations and materials were shared. Renderings shared are coherent with the industrial design for warehousing.

Commissioner Hilinski asked about the turning radius onto Mullen Road and related truck traffic. He is concerned about traffic backup making left hand turns onto Route 5. The applicant representative confirmed that there will be a slight increase but little overall impact. 90% of truck traffic is estimated to be turning left and 10% turning right. Secretary Petronella expressed concern about traffic turning left onto Mullen Road and a potential bypass lane. He confirmed that the applicant has no intent to make intersection improvements. It was confirmed that this application will be submitted for an OSTA administrative decision review. He asked about the fire suppression tank elevations as they were not noted on the plans. He also asked about the installation of the retaining walls. It was confirmed that there was a typo related to the EV ready stalls.

Motion to extend the meeting past 10:00pm to end no later than 12:00am made by Commissioner Higley; seconded by Commissioner Hilinski and approved by a show of hands vote of 7-0-0.

Commissioner Alaimo asked for further clarification related to the easements. Mr. Davis explained that the PZC did not approve a swale on this property as part of the site plan for 18 Mullen Road. The site plan was approved during the construction process, and the improvement got built over the property line. It was discovered by staff when they received the as-built plan for the Certificate of Zoning Compliance. Commissioner DeGray reminded the applicants about dumpster screening and asked about 'no idling' signs. Secretary Petronella confirmed that the applicant does not have to go before the Commission again to approve tenants once selected so long as the use fits the zoning regulations.

Commissioner Hilinski continued to express concerns to staff related to the traffic on Route 5. He confirmed with staff that Commissioners can express concerns to OSTA, but this is allowed use under the zoning regulations. Ms. Whitten confirmed that OSTA will not give any preliminary guidance and will only do a full review of the application once local approval has been granted. Commissioner D'Antonio asked the applicant's opinion related to the size of the parking lot development. He also confirmed that street trees will be included.

Motion to approve SPR# 1922- Mullen Road with 35 modifications and conditions made by Secretary Petronella; seconded by Commissioner DeGray and approved unanimously by a roll call vote of 7-0-0.

b. SPR# 923- 157 South Road – Application for New Site Plan Review for self-storage use; Eric Hewitt, Applicant/Owner; Map 55/Lot 82; I-1 Zone.

   Tabled to October 26, 2023

c. Lodestar- Town Farm & Abbe- Proposed Solar Field

Applicant representatives were present for discussion. This presentation is not a requirement as this project is approved through the State, however, the Commission requested an overview at their last meeting. The project is located on three parcels totaling 15.8 acres. There will be approximately 12 acres of disturbance. There will be two gated access drives, one located off Abbe Road, and one located off Town Farm Road. There is one area of wetlands on the property in the northwest corner and a 100ft buffer will be maintained. Stormwater permit will be applied for through DEEP. Swale is proposed to direct stormwater runoff, but no other grading will be required.

Commissioner DeGray asked how the panels will be disposed of after the project. As required by CT citing counsel, the company must completely decommission the project at the end of the lifetime. They hold a 25-year warranty and will be recycled. Secretary Petronella confirmed that the panels are not cleaned by hand but by rainwater. He also confirmed that these panels will be installed east to west and screening trees will be evergreens. Commissioner Alaimo confirmed that abutters will be notified when this application is heard by CT citing counsel.

Other Business
None.

Correspondence
None.

Commissioner's Correspondence
Commissioner DeGray shared that Adam Winstanley purchased MetroNorth.

Director of Planning Report
Ms. Whitten shared preliminary information with the Commission related to the new CivicPlus software. Secretary interviews will begin again next week.

Opportunities/Unresolved Issues
None.

Administrative Approval Report
None.

Receipt of applications
None.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner DeGray; seconded by Commissioner Hilinski and approved by a unanimous vote of 7-0-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:46 PM.

Prepared by: Rebecca Jones

Respectfully Submitted,

____
John Petronella, Secretary