

TOWN OF WARREN
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
50 Cemetery Road, Warren, CT

MEETING MINUTES- Tuesday, April 2nd, 2024

1. Call to order, Roll Call, and Designation of Alternates

The P&Z meeting was called to order by Chair Victoria Sahadevan Fossland at 7:00 PM on April 2nd. Members present were Casper Grathwohl, Jack Baker, Ryan Curtiss, and alternate Caroline Klein. Vice-Chair Pete Sandberg and Member Deb Ouellette joined the meeting during roll call at 7:02 PM. Chair Victoria Sahadevan Fossland stated the Caroline Klein was seated for absent member Joanne Mansfield. Janell Mullen was present as the land-use official.

Present members of the public included Howard and Loreen Lethbridge, Greg Lethbridge, Abby Conroy, Joslyn Pollock, and Bill Pollock.

There was no Zoom component for this meeting because it was held in the land-use office.

2. Items to Add to the Agenda

Chair Sahadevan Fossland made a motion to add an item under “New Business”: 5B Affordable Housing. Commissioner Grathwohl seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Approval of the Minutes

Commissioner Sandberg moved to approve the minutes of the last regular meeting as written. Jack Baker seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Alternate Aaron Schiller joined the meeting at 7:06 PM.

4. Official Correspondence

There was no official correspondence received by the land-use official on behalf of the commission.

5. New Business

A. SP#24-2 on behalf of John & Karen Mullen of 152 Curtiss Road (Map 7, Lot 15-01)

Mr. Wyrick was present to provide preliminary information about a new application for consideration of a special exception for the construction of a single-family residence as required in accordance with regulations Section 22, Excavation & Grading.

Mr. Wyrick stated the grading of the site for the construction of the foundation, driveway, and other improvements would exceed 1,000 cubic yards of earthwork and a recently revised building plan delineates the buildable area as well as slopes that greater than 25% grade.

Chair Victoria Sahadevan Fossland moved to officially receive the application and to set a public hearing for the next regular meeting, May 7th at 7:00 PM. Deb Ouellette seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Affordable Housing

Chair Sahadevan Fossland gave the Commissioners an overview of a workshop that she had recently attended which was hosted by the Northwest Corner Housing Collaborative. She described the regional initiative which is bringing together stakeholders in local towns to address affordable housing in tandem with land conservation efforts. The most recent meeting was attended by her, Greg LaCava, Warren First Selectman, as well as representatives from the Warren Land Trust and the Warren Affordable Housing

Corporation. She stated she had shared the slides from the presentation with the commission prior to the meeting and would forward information about future meetings to any commissioners interested in participating.

The Chair also stated that she had revisited the Town Plan of Affordable Housing and suggested that in its role as a planning commission, the P&Z should start to consider addressing actionable steps within the plan. She also mentioned the Warren Affordable Housing Corporation's project and suggested commissioners familiarize themselves with the information provided on the corporation's website, which she would provide.

Ms Mullen added that she had met with the architect and the engineer that would propose the corporation's eight (8) units of affordable housing. This project would be adjacent to the Town Hall on Cemetery Road. She added that it would need to go before the Inland Wetlands & Conservation Commission as well as the Planning & Zoning Commission as a Special Exception.

6. Old Business

A. Regulations Review

i. Home Businesses

While reviewing the draft of the Home Businesses proposed amendment provided at the meeting, Ms Mullen noted that she had inadvertently made copies of the wrong version. The outdated copies were replaced with the most recent version that had been provided to the Commissioners by the Chair via email, dated April 2, 2024.

Commissioner Ouellette asked about whether uses for "Shop & Storage" would require zoning permits instead of a special exception. After discussion, the Commission agreed that zoning permits would be the appropriate avenue for such use.

Commissioner Baker noted that the Plan of Conservation & Development had supported the expansion of home business opportunities and that this amendment would be in line with that priority.

The Chair moved to bring the amendment to a public hearing on May 7th. Commissioner Ouellette seconded the motion. The motion to bring the text amendment regarding Home Businesses to Public Hearing on May 7th passed unanimously.

ii. Article II Section 7—Requirements for Permitted Accessory Buildings, Structures, and Uses

The Chair Victoria Sahadevan Fossland reminded the commissioners that following the public hearing held in March, the Commission had considered re-evaluating and reworking the section rather than deleting it in its entirety. A draft of possible changes and considerations was circulated.

Regarding the concept of primary vs principal when discussing uses and/or structures, Vice-Chair Pete Sandberg questioned whether the distinction was necessary, how it would be made, etc. He stated that the zoning districts North and South were predominantly residential so perhaps the language could differentiate between residential and non-residential.

The Chair mentioned that she looked at the regulations for other towns, such as Kent and Washington, and discovered that they were quite specific with respect to primary and secondary or accessory uses and structures. Commissioner Schiller added that Washington required a residence before the establishment of a barn. He also added that in Bridgewater, one would need to prove the financial viability of agricultural uses in order to establish a barn on a lot without a residential structure.

The Chair suggested that the Commission revisit this memo next month with the addition of a comparison to the regulations of neighboring towns.

7. Zoning Agent's Report

Ms Mullen summarized her agent's report. The Chair noted 53 Curtiss Road was no longer on the report; she questioned whether that work had halted or concluded. Ms Mullen stated that she would look into it and add it back to the report.

8. Other Business Proper

A. Commission Training – Affordable Housing

The Chair provided an overview of Connecticut General Statute 8-30G and made it clear that the Town of Warren could be subject to its application because its stock of affordable housing is less than the minimum requirement of 10% of all available stock.

B. *What's Legally Required*, Chapter 20 – Monitoring Compliance

Ms Mullen stated that its good practice to get into the habit of approving applications with expiration dates. As everyone could see from the reading, the expiration dates can be complicated and difficult to remember without their documentation.

9. Opportunity for Public Comment

Howard Lethbridge of 67 Jack Corner Road stated his interpretation of “primary use” within residential zones throughout Town should be understood to be residential because Warren is a residential town.

Joslyn Pollock of 253 Woodville asked to clarify a statement that Janell Mullen had made regarding pre-existing non-conforming uses.” Ms Mullen stated it is the property owner’s responsibility to prove to the Town that their use pre-existing zoning and/or pre-existing an update to the regulations.

10. For the Good of the Commission

Commissioner Grathwohl asked about the concept of pre-existing non-conforming structures. Janell Mullen stated that their protection is built in by means of Connecticut General Statutes, and the key is that they are not to be expanded in mass and/or in use.

11. Adjournment

Vice-chair Pete Sandberg moved to adjourn at 8:36 PM. Commissioner Baker seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned unanimously.