

PLANNING & ZONING
COMMISSION
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TOWN HALL ANNEX
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, Connecticut 06897

**WILTON PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MINUTES
JUNE 7, 2010
CANNONDALE INFORMATIONAL SPECIAL MEETING**

PRESENT: Chairwoman Sally Poundstone, Vice Chairman John Wilson, Secretary Doug Bayer, Commissioners Alice Ayers, Marilyn Gould, Bas Nabulsi, Eric Osterberg, and Dona Pratt

ABSENT: Michael Rudolph (notified intended absence)

ALSO

PRESENT: Robert Nerney, Town Planner; Daphne White, Assistant Town Planner; Recording Secretary; members of the press; and interested residents.

SPECIAL AGENDA ITEM:

1. Public discussion regarding future land use policies for the Cannondale area

Ms. Poundstone called the Special Informational Meeting to order at 7:17 P.M. She briefly reviewed the subject of this evening's informational meeting about the Cannondale/Cannon Crossing area. She noted that there would be a number of public hearings in the future when interested persons would have additional opportunities to speak on the matter, as well as the traditional methods of contact with the Commission, including letters, emails, faxes, etc. She stated that several Commissioners who have had personal experiences in the Cannondale area would speak briefly this evening and she requested that all participants keep their comments to a 5-minute maximum.

Mr. Bayer briefly spoke of his experience as a commercial tenant at 436 Danbury Road about two years ago. He stated that the area was a great place in which to work, although he noted a concern from a business perspective regarding limitations that are placed on the ability to enlarge many of the existing older structures, referring in particular to the

difficulty of rewiring these buildings. He also stated that his view of what the Cannondale area includes is rather limited in scope, encompassing some properties along Cannon Road and up to the railroad station.

Ms. Gould next spoke, noting that she has lived in the Cannondale District for the past 35 years. Referring to an 18th century map of the Cannondale District, as well as a book of Cannondale history, she explained the historic definition of the District, noting in particular the much larger scope of the area as it was defined at that time. She also explained the adaptive use concept adopted by the Town in 1972, noting that it has been the most effective means of preserving older homes along the northern Route 7 corridor by allowing them to be used commercially. She stated that it is an important neighborhood which needs to be looked at from a broader perspective.

Ms. Poundstone seated members Ayers, Bayer, Gould, Poundstone, Pratt, and Wilson.

Mr. Bayer referred for the record to an email dated June 7, 2010 from Carolan R. Workman to Robert Nerney; an email dated June 7, 2010 from Steven Georgeou to Robert Nerney; and an email dated June 7, 2010 from Eric & Kimberly Cameron to Robert Nerney.

Ms. Poundstone asked if anyone in the audience wished to speak on the matter.

Bob Faesy, 10 Kellogg Road, architect, stated that he owns property in Cannondale and has had a long involvement with adaptive use since 1972. He noted that the history of the area dates back to at least the mid-1800s and he suggested that the Wilton Historic District Commission be involved in any land use planning for the area. He cited the architectural character of the buildings, mature trees, extraordinary properties and its pedestrian-friendly nature, noting that it is all aesthetically worth saving and that appropriateness of uses is important.

In response to questions from several Commissioners, Mr. Faesy elaborated further. He stated that a careful inventory of the entire community should be taken, and while the buildings need to be brought up to date to address modern day needs, design elements should incorporate the architectural style that has already been established. He felt that the “green” approach is where the Town should be heading.

William Richter, landscape architect and designer, stated that he was participating in this evening’s informational session on behalf of Marc Gueron, a property owner in the area. While he noted that retention of existing buildings and their architectural styles is important, he felt it equally important to allow integration of contemporary features in order to create an economically viable development. He stated that close attention should be focused on the area’s bulk requirements to allow for a wider array of uses. He felt that the area would be well served by an artful integration of many of the Town’s already

P&Z Minutes – 06/07/10 – Page 3

existing regulations, noting in particular that an historic district does not necessarily have to be restricted to low-density development.

Harry Clark, 68 Cannon Road, felt that there are several facets to the area that need to be considered. He stated that adaptive use regulations had served the larger area well and have proved extremely valuable. He felt that while there is opportunity to allow property owners the ability to modernize their buildings, the area should not be allowed to look like Route 7 south. He also cautioned the Commission that the Norwalk River area is a watershed and, as a result, a large amount of buffer space needs to be maintained.

In that regard, Town Planner Nerney described recent floodplain map/regulation changes effective June 18, 2010. He referred to a posted map of the area, noting that the floodplain encompasses a very large swath of the Cannondale area and therefore future development must take this factor into careful consideration. He felt that the Village District Overlay District, proposed by the Commission some time ago in connection with the Cannondale area, seemed to be a good model from which to work.

Mr. Nabulsi arrived at 7:55 P.M.

Mr. Nerney referred to a zoning map of the area and explained the genesis of adaptive use zoning. He explained that adaptive use regulations allow older homes to be used in a light commercial manner, but with strict development limitations as concerns the maintenance/preservation of the historical structure. He noted that a building in the area known as the Titus barn was approved in 1960 via a use variance, which he explained is no longer a permitted type of variance. He stated that a recent proposal in connection with the rewrite of the Plan of Conservation and Development was to consolidate the two existing commercial districts in the Cannondale area, thereby resulting in a change of the underlying zoning, and to adopt new design standards as well. He explained that new design standards were adopted, referring in particular to the creation of the Village District Design Consulting Committee, but the underlying commercial districts were not consolidated and are therefore still in place.

Mr. Nabulsi was seated at 8:01 P.M.

Mr. Nabulsi stated that he lived in the Cannondale area for about 10 months in 2001 and 2002, noting that it was a special location, citing its pedestrian and bike-friendly accessibility, its active shops, and its proximity to the center of Town. He stated that there is a need for the Town and the community to think about the future of Cannondale with an open mind, with the realization that it will not stay “frozen” in its current state, but rather will evolve and change over time. He felt that many Wilton residents feel a sense of shared ownership with respect to the Cannondale area.

Kathleen Murphy of Nod Hill Road expressed concern that there is no uniformity of

P&Z Minutes – 06/07/10 – Page 4

architectural design, nor is there any plan for such, in the Town. She felt that the Town should be better able to control commercial expansion, particularly in such a beautiful historic district as Cannondale. She expressed concern that the entire Cannondale Village will eventually be destroyed as a result of inappropriate development/expansion.

John Rich, 3 Lambert Common, agreed with Ms. Murphy. He expressed concern that a liquor store could potentially be allowed in the Cannondale area and questioned how the Town would address such a possibility.

Ms. Gould explained that the maximum number of liquor stores permitted in Town (=7) is regulated by the State. While she acknowledged that a liquor store might be allowed in Cannondale, if it met Town zoning regulations and did not exceed the State-mandated maximum, she also noted that market pressures would eventually determine which liquor stores in Town would prosper.

Mr. Osterberg arrived and was seated at 8:10 P.M.

Steven Jones, 200 Pimpewaug Road, stated that he chose to live in the Cannondale area because of its historic feel and proximity to the railroad station. He felt that while the Titus barn is a modern building, it fits in with the existing architecture and scale, and looks very appropriate for the area. He stated that he would prefer a small business environment, where structures are not jammed together and are appropriately spaced, noting in particular that the aesthetics/look of the area is a very important factor.

Rob Sanders, 172 Range Road, stated that his office has been in Cannondale since 1965. He felt that the Commission needs to create design guidelines and to essentially create an aesthetic derived from the buildings that already exist in the area. He cited 195 Danbury Road as being a successful example of a “friendly” development, noting that although it is large, it consists of two separate residential-looking structures whose bulk is concealed within good architectural form.

Mr. Sanders felt that there needs to be a different treatment for the Route 7 area as compared to the historic commercial district. He noted that there are really three different connections between the residential areas and the Cannondale Village itself, namely from Seeley Road, Cannon Road, and Pimpewaug Road. He felt that Cannon Road needs special consideration because it is the connector from Route 7 to the residential areas.

Mr. Sanders felt that adaptive use regulations need to be broadened so that commercial owners are not penalized via what he termed as a disincentive to develop in adaptive use areas. He suggested expanding permitted site and building coverages under adaptive use regulations to be more compatible with what commercial owners are generally allowed to do by right, thus making these properties along Route 7 more viable.

P&Z Minutes – 06/07/10 – Page 5

Tim LaBont, chef/owner of the Schoolhouse Restaurant in Cannondale, encouraged the Commission to preserve Cannondale's history and character. He expressed concerns regarding difficulties caused by the recent Route 7 construction; the removal of the cannon landmark; the traffic now speeding past the Cannondale area as a result of the Route 7 widening; the lack of appropriate Cannondale signage on Route 7; and conditions near his restaurant site, including non-paved roadway areas, parking availability/safety, and maintenance of a pedestrian-friendly environment.

Regarding signage, he felt it should be in keeping with the character of the Cannondale area, such as wood-carved signage, as opposed to standard reflective signs on large metal posts that are the standard DOT issue.

Amy Quigley, 37 Cannon Road, asked when the landmark cannon would be coming back to Cannondale. Ms. Poundstone suggested that she inquire with the First Selectman's office.

Ms. Poundstone thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and for their input/recommendations. She noted again that there would be multiple opportunities in the future for the public to participate in the Cannondale planning process as it evolves.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION was made by Ms. Poundstone, seconded by Mr. Wilson, and carried unanimously (8-0) to adjourn at 8:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Lorraine Russo
Recording Secretary