

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

WILTON PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MINUTES NOVEMBER 14, 2011 REGULAR MEETING

PRESENT: Chairwoman Sally Poundstone, Vice Chairman John Wilson, Secretary Doug Bayer, Commissioners John Gardiner, Marilyn Gould, Chris Hulse, Dona Pratt, and Michael Rudolph

ABSENT: Bas Nabulsi (notified intended absence)

ALSO

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS

REGULAR MEETING

A. Ms. Poundstone called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:15 P.M., seated members Gardiner, Hulse, Poundstone, Pratt, Rudolph, and Wilson, and referred to Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-11, Conflict of Interest.

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 1. October 24, 2011 – Regular Meeting**
- 2. October 3, 2011 – Special Meeting**
- 3. September 14, 2011 – Special Meeting**

The Commission discussed a possible revision to the minutes of October 24, 2011, although the final consensus was to approve the minutes of October 24, 2011 as drafted.

Commissioners Bayer and Gould arrived and were seated at 7:24 P.M.

MOTION was made by Mr. Rudolph, seconded by Mr. Wilson, and carried (8-0) to approve the minutes of October 24, 2011 as drafted, and carried (7-0-1) to approve the minutes of September 14, 2011 as drafted and the minutes of October 3, 2011 as drafted. Mr. Bayer abstained from the vote pertaining to the minutes of September 14, 2011 and October 3, 2011.

C. SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW

1. SDP, Plan B Retail Design, 920 Danbury Road, Signage Modifications

Mr. Nerney briefly summarized the subject application, noting that signage modifications are being proposed pursuant to an Alternative Signage Program (Section 29-8.A.8 of zoning regulations) which is available for nonresidential developments containing more than 10,000 square feet of gross floor area. He explained that the applicant wishes to replace and update existing signage on the Caraluzzi's shopping center site to reflect the recent reduction from 5 tenants to 3 tenants, including Caraluzzi's, Chase Bank and Classic Cleaners.

Present was Chuck Bomely, Plan B Retail Design, on behalf of the owner.

Mr. Bomely distributed a "Signage Summary" sheet indicating existing and proposed signage dimensions for replacement pylon and façade signs. He stated that he had difficulty obtaining any direction from Chase Bank, other than basic concept design. As a result, he explained that he was unable at this time to provide Chase signage details beyond indicating that the bank anticipates a good deal of directional/informative signage throughout the site, for which it will have to provide details to the Commission.

Mr. Bomely reviewed details of the proposed pylon sign, noting that the total pylon sign height would be reduced from 9'9" existing to 9'0" proposed, and total square footage would be reduced from 37.67 square feet existing to 34.81 square feet proposed. He explained that the pylon sign width would increase from 6' to 8'4", with the additional width attributable primarily to proposed brick piers on either side that would replace existing steel columns, and he noted that crown molding is proposed for the top of the sign. He stated that the pylon sign would remain externally illuminated, noting that no lighting changes are proposed. In response to questions from the Commission, he confirmed that the sign's location would be no closer to the road than currently, with the increased width extending further into the site itself.

Referring to the façade sign, he noted that the Caraluzzi's and Classic Cleaners signs would remain the same size as currently, at 60 square feet and 12.5 square feet,

respectively, and the new Chase sign would comprise 57.61 square feet.

It was the general consensus of the Commission that the Chase sign appeared too large relative to the Caraluzzi's sign, considering the amount of square footage dedicated to the bank as compared to the supermarket within the overall shopping center. Mr. Nerney noted that the proposed size is roughly double what would normally be allowed (i.e. no greater than 30 square feet if not part of an alternative signage program). As a result, he felt that the proposed size was a bit excessive, noting that it should probably be somewhere in between 30 square feet and the 60 square feet proposed. Ms. Gould agreed, noting that the Chase sign as proposed is out-of-scale both from a visual/design perspective but also from a zoning point of view.

It was also noted that the proposed exterior elevation rendering was not done to scale and, as a result, the relative size and therefore the visual impact of the proposed Chase sign in relation to the Caraluzzi's sign could not be determined. The Commission requested that the applicant reconsider the proposed size of the Chase sign, as well as submit another plan drawn to scale with an accurate representation of all proposed signage.

Mr. Bayer noted further that he was not comfortable not knowing exactly what the sign is going to look like. He felt that Chase owes the Commission additional information/details with regard to its proposed signage.

Ms. White also noted that the wheelchair accessible signage needs to be modified to meet State requirements.

There being no further comments from the Commission or the public, at 7:51 P.M. the discussion was continued until November 28, 2011.

D. ACCEPTANCE OF NEW APPLICATIONS

E. PENDING APPLICATIONS

F. COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Poundstone referenced a letter recently submitted by Commissioner Bayer indicating his intent to resign from the Commission effective November 30, 2011. She expressed her regrets, noting that he will be missed by all.

Ms. Poundstone reminded Commissioners of the gathering planned for Thursday, December 1 at 6:30 P.M., at Marley's in Town Center to recognize the contributions of recently retired/retiring Commissioners.

Ms. Poundstone also noted that an appeal was filed by Gregory and Adams law firm on behalf of Leon Hirsch in connection with his recent subdivision application at 2 Quiet Lake Lane & 144 Huckleberry Hill Road. In that regard, she noted that an executive session may need to be scheduled for the November 28, 2011 meeting to discuss the matter.

G. REPORT FROM CHAIRMAN

H. REPORT FROM PLANNER

I. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

J. REVIEW OF CURRENT REGULATIONS AND CONSIDERATION OF POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS

Mr. Nerney reviewed the most recent modifications dated October 17, 2011 that were incorporated into the original September 14, 2011 draft document pertaining to affordable housing regulations.

The major changes included:

- replacement of the term Property Manager with Compliance Manager
- provision of some latitude for developers, at the discretion of the Commission, with respect to construction quality and size of affordable housing units
- clarification of the affordable housing formula, with a specific example included to clearly reflect that the affordable units are to be considered part of the total number of units approved for the development and are not to be considered additional
- increase of restricted period from 20 years to 30 years
- modification of income eligibility in the case of rental units to include average income of the 3 previous years
- clarification of type, size and construction quality of residences deemed acceptable by the Commission for off-site affordable housing

A discussion ensued regarding a proposal that would require a developer to provide one additional affordable unit (per the established formula as set out in Section 10.f) if the off-site option were chosen rather than the on-site option. Commissioners were divided,

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with some expressing concern that such a requirement seems punitive and others opining that an extra unit makes sense since the off-site option would likely be less costly to a developer, resulting in a fair trade-off for both sides.

Mr. Hulse advocated for an affordable housing fund option whereby a developer could be required to provide 20% of the costs of development into such a fund, which would then be set aside for affordable housing options going forward. In that regard, Ms. Gould noted that the town of New Canaan recently established a trust that will be funded by a 1% fee on all building permits, to ensure continued investment in affordable housing.

Ms. Gould stated for the record that she is philosophically and ideologically opposed to this sort of social and financial manipulation, noting that the Town has many existing small homes that are affordably priced and it should be working to keep these prices affordable instead of manipulating via the proposed regulations.

Mr. Bayer expressed some concern with the effect that off-site affordable housing might have on nearby/surrounding home values, noting his preference that required affordable housing units be located where the developer is developing a new property.

Ms. Gould felt that if these regulations could be used to help preserve more of the affordable housing in Town, both in single family houses and condominiums, and if such housing could be made more affordable and improved a bit by way of these regulations, then this could be beneficial to the Town.

Upon further consideration/discussion, the Commission ultimately decided to strike the proposal to require an extra affordable unit when the off-site option is chosen.

It was the consensus of the Commission that staff should incorporate into the proposed document all agreed upon revisions and email a final copy to all Commissioners for final review.

K. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION was made by Mr. Wilson, seconded by Mr. Hulse, and carried unanimously (8-0) to adjourn at 9:17 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Lorraine Russo
Recording Secretary