

MIDDLEFIELD PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
405 Main Street
Middlefield, Connecticut 06455

Minutes of the April 15, 2019 Regular Meeting

Erin Howard called the meeting to order at 6:40 pm.

Attendance:

Members		Alternates	
X	Boyle, Kevin	A	Crocco, Mike
X	Brown, Jay	X	Hinsch, Ken
A	Ekblade, Eric		
X	Howard, Erin	Others	
X	Wojas, Jan	A	Colegrove, Geoff
		A	Curtis, Brian
		X	Russ, Jerry
		A	Bailey, Ed, <i>ex officio member</i>

A=Absent
 X=Present

Ken Hinsch was seated on the Commission. Erin Howard reported that Mike Crocco has resigned from the Commission.

Public Comment

None.

Independent Day School, Application for Site Plan Review

Jim Rumberger, Director of Facilities at the Independent Day School, was present with Adam Thompson, a parent and a P.E. who has been donating his time on this project. He explained that they are building a yurt in honor of Spencer Mugford, who drowned in Long Island Sound last Memorial Day weekend. The yurt will be used as a seasonal outdoor center and there will be no power, water or septic.

Adam Thompson reviewed the proposed location for the yurt and explained that it will be about 75 feet away from the reserve septic field and about 300 feet from the closest wetland. Smiling Woods Yurts

will be installing the yurt and they have their own designers, engineers and staff. There will be windows on the east and west sides with points of egress/ingress on the north and south. The pathway is 60 feet long and 5 feet wide and will be graded on level. The yurt will be 20 feet in diameter with a 10-foot flat pad around it. Drains will be installed around it.

Construction will be done in stages, with the grading and concrete pad work being done first. The yurt will be shipped in from Oregon and assembled on-site. Given the location, it will barely be visible from the road.

Kevin Boyle asked what materials will be used and Mr. Thompson explained that it will be birch and the roof is aluminum. There will be a skylight at the top and the inside will be white oak. They are proposing full windows and doors and may actually add even more windows than are shown. Mr. Boyle asked if there will be sheetrock on the inside and Mr. Rumberger thought it will probably be just plywood wainscoting. Adam Thompson explained that a second story can be added, but they plan to leave it open.

Jan Wojas asked if they will install a railing on the back side of the walkway and Mr. Thompson explained that they will have a gentle 3:1 slope off the back side, with just a 2-foot drop. Kevin Boyle felt that there would be no humidity control inside the building and Mr. Thompson noted that there will be windows. Mr. Boyle also questioned whether they needed power to illuminate exit signs.

Erin Howard asked if Geoff Colegrove had reviewed this and Mr. Rumberger explained that he had and the Wetlands Officer went to the site and reviewed it as well and stated that there was no wetlands impact.

Adam Thompson noted that the final drawings will be stamped by the Smiling Woods Yurts people and their architect will stamp them as well for the Building Inspector's approval. Kevin Boyle questioned the colors and Mr. Thompson did not think they were going to paint or stain the wood. Mr. Boyle also questioned signs or graphics and Mr. Thompson thought there may be a plaque next to the walkway indicating its purpose of honoring Spencer Mugford. Mr. Boyle suggested they apply for a sign permit after this. Erin Howard explained that if there is going to be a sign outside, it needs to be detailed on the site plan.

Erin Howard stated that the Commission had just received the plans today and Jerry Russ explained that the plans have been in the office for some time and an email was sent out. Kevin Boyle stated that he should not have to ask for plans and they should have been mailed to him. Mr. Russ thought that plans and memos were being sent out via email and Ms. Howard would come in to the office for plans and signing documents. Erin Howard stated that she will only sign documents on the nights that she is there for meetings. Mr. Russ explained that the drawings had actually been submitted before last month's meeting was canceled and have been on the desk in the office.

Ms. Howard explained that the system has not been fixed as far as applications coming in and getting emailed/mailed to the Commission members. She noted that three or four different people do things for the Commission and Mr. Russ noted that Debi Waz was the only one who sent agendas, packets and minutes. Ms. Howard felt that the process could be improved when the new Town Planner is brought on board. Erin Howard was also not comfortable moving this application forward without having any feedback from Geoff Colegrove, but did feel she could approve it with a condition that Geoff Colegrove signs off on it so as not to delay this any further. Jerry Russ explained that Mr. Colegrove had told him that this was an extension of an approved use and only had to come to P&Z for a site plan review.

Adam Thompson then reviewed the contours with Kevin Boyle, pointing out that they will be installing a silt fence. Again, no lighting, sewer, power or gas will be installed. Mr. Boyle questioned the need for lighting at certain times of year and Mr. Thompson stated that the only lighting may be at the walkway and it will be solar-powered. Mr. Boyle encouraged him to identify any possible lighting now and stated that he would want a condition of approval to state that there will be no lighting. Mr. Boyle also made reference to the Apple Nine building and did not want this project to become like that. He felt that the Apple Nine building was protected by Town people. Mr. Boyle does not want to see this turn into an obnoxious art project.

Jay Brown made a motion, seconded by Jan Wojas, to approve the application for site plan review for the Independent Day School at 115 Laurel Brook Road, with the following conditions: (1) final staff review and sign-off by Town Planner; and (2) any signage or lighting or changes to the site plan would require a separate site plan review and application. Motion carried unanimously.

Regional School District 13, 8-24 Review of Capital Projects

Jerry Russ explained that Geoff Colegrove had highlighted a few items on the list that was received. No one from the school district was present. Erin Howard explained that the 8-24 review is required by law.

Jan Wojas asked about LEDs and the replacement of the roof and Kevin Boyle hoped that they were not going to change the look of the roof like they did at Brewster. Mr. Boyle also wondered about the LED lights and what temperature bulb and color they would be. Mr. Wojas was not concerned about that, but would be concerned about the spillage on neighbors.

Erin Howard felt that this would be something that the staff could have handled. Mr. Boyle suggested making an approval with the condition that the roofs remain flat and the LED lighting upgrade is for interior only. If they are intending to upgrade exterior lighting, Mr. Boyle would want to see a lighting plan. Ms. Howard explained that the 8-24 review is just a referral for spending the funds and is not a site plan review. Any changes made to exterior lighting would have to be on a new site plan.

Jay Brown made a motion, seconded by Ken Hinsch, to make a favorable recommendation/approval for 8-24 review to Regional School District 13 for proposed improvements at Memorial Middle School, as described on their 2019-2020 Bonding Projects list. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion with Xenelis, Inc. Regarding Zoning Compliance

Erin Howard reported that she had spoken with Ed Bailey and was told that they are in the process of negotiating a lease with Mr. Xenelis, however Mr. Xenelis was not happy with the lease amount and is trying to propose an acquisition of the property. Geoff Colegrove is trying to encourage Mr. Xenelis to move forward with the lease. It was agreed to move this item to the next meeting.

Report of the ZEO

Jerry Russ reported that he has sent letters to all of the noncompliant taxpayers, with new end dates and conditions for compliance. He has received a nuisance call about Jimmy D's and spoke to the owner. There has been some interest in properties on Route 66, both at the corner of Higby Road (a possible convenience store) and by the power line easement (storage facilities). One new house is going up on Lake Road.

Report of the Town Planner

None.

Chairman's Report

Erin Howard reported that the Town is moving forward with a shared Town Planner's position with Durham. The First Selectmen will determine what the position will look like and they will look for someone who can be the Town Planner, ZEO and possibly wetlands as well. It has not yet been determined which duties will be done in which town. A job description will be developed and Ms. Howard will email it to Commission members. She would like to see someone hired within the next few months. Ms. Howard also explained that she did not attend any Board of Finance meetings about the budget since it is in flux with this new position.

Once a Town Planner is hired and the zoning regulations are updated, Ms. Howard would like to see applications come in and the Commission members should receive just one packet a week before the meeting. She also did not want applications being emailed without being reviewed first. Ms. Howard gave the example of the Independent Day School yurt project and felt that that should not need to come before the Commission.

Jerry Russ distributed a copy of a letter of violation that went out for the Monarca property on April 11, 2019.

Ms. Howard also received an email from Ed Bailey asking for the Commission to appoint a member and an alternate to the COG. Ms. Howard stated it would be very difficult for her to do that and explained that the meetings are on the fourth Monday of each month in Essex. Kevin Boyle and Jan Wojas agreed to alternate meetings.

Erin Howard reiterated that Michael Crocco resigned from the Commission and Ed Bailey will be looking for alternates.

Miscellaneous

None.

Approval of Minutes - February 25, 2019 Meeting

Kevin Boyle made a motion, seconded by Jay Brown, to approve the February 25, 2019 meeting minutes, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Ken Hinsch, seconded by Jan Wojas, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First