

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

Minutes of the February 26, 2020 Special Meeting

Kevin Boyle, Vice Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

Attendance:

Members		Alternates	
X	Boyle, Kevin	A	Hinsch, Ken
A	Brown, Jay	X	Pizzo, Paul
A	Ekblade, Eric		
X	Wojas, Jan	Others	
		X	Newton, Robin
		A	Curtis, Brian
		X	Russ, Jerry
		A	Bailey, Ed, <i>ex officio member</i>

A=Absent

X=Present

Paul Pizzo was seated on the Commission.

Public Comment

None.

Public Hearing

None.

Old Business

None.

New Business

- a. 8-24 Referral request from the Town of Middlefield, Board of Selectmen, to transfer title of piece of property or parcel owned by the Town known as 171 Hubbard Street, Middlefield CT 06455 to Middlesex Habitat for Humanity of Connecticut for the consideration of \$53,424.00 (Assessor's Map 12, Lot 105)

Robin Newton stated that there had been a town meeting last week where they approved the transfer of the title of the property, as listed above. Jerry Russ explained that the town had acquired this property through tax foreclosure. Habitat for Humanity approached the town and made an offer. They hope to close at the end of this month for \$53,424. They intend to find a veteran and family and have them work to obtain the house. The vote was unanimous to sell the property to Habitat for Humanity.

Jan Wojas asked about the state of the property and Jerry Russ explained that it will be 100 percent renovated. It is structurally solid, but had some roof leaks. The floors have buckled inside. Habitat for Humanity will take it down to the bones and rehab the whole thing.

Paul Pizzo made a motion, seconded by Jan Wojas, to forward a positive referral for a request by the Town of Middlefield, Board of Selectmen for an 8-24 referral to transfer title of a piece of property or parcel owned by the Town known as 171 Hubbard Street, Middlefield, CT 06455 to Middlesex Habitat for Humanity of Connecticut for the consideration of \$53,424.00 (Assessor's Map 12, Lot 105). Motion carried unanimously.

Report of the ZEO

Jerry Russ noted that there had been some question at the last meeting about activity across from Liberty Bank. He did speak with the property owner who had wanted to install a horseshoe driveway, but approval would be needed by the DOT and he decided against it. He then wanted to put in a two-car parking spot and Mr. Russ asked that the DOT approve that. There was no curb cut. DOT came out and sited the setbacks and, in his opinion, he did not need a permit.

Mr. Russ is anticipating the application for the storage facility to begin to break ground, but nothing has been received as of yet. Violations around town are getting noticed and cleaned up. There has been wood splitting going on at a property on Cherry Hill Road and they are now cleaning that up. Mr. Russ has not had to write any letters of violation and people have been responding to his requests.

Kevin Boyle asked about the cars and Jerry Russ stated that he had a discussion with the property owner on Route 66. They have also had discussions with the attorney about Jimmy D's. Mr. Russ has also

heard that there is someone interested in purchasing the Red Dog property. Jerry Russ has also done a site visit at the Cihocki property and he feels that his intentions are good.

Mr. Boyle also asked about the Monarca cease and desist and Mr. Russ explained that he spoke to Attorney Willis about next steps. He will go take some pictures and they may possibly put up a fence on the town line.

Report of the Town Planner

Robin Newton reported did put a draft of the by-laws that were discussed at the last meeting. They were based off a document that was supplied by Bill Warner. It was reviewed by Matt Willis. Because this is not specifically on the agenda, it cannot be voted on tonight. She asked members to email her directly with any questions or comments and then they can vote on them at the next meeting.

Ms. Newton is focusing on organizing the regulations so that all residential information is together and all commercial information is together. She feels that the current regulations are very disorganized. She had an outline for the commission to review. Ms. Newton hopes to have everything organized for the next meeting. She also found two small things that have to be changed, but will focus on the larger picture after that. Attorney Willis stated that even reorganizing the regulations would require a public hearing.

Robin Newton felt that they will be ready to send a document to River COG for review after the next meeting and then set a public hearing on just the appearance rework. She asked if anyone had a priority list of things in the regulations that are problematic.

Kevin Boyle felt that architectural standards are missing. Robin Newton asked if they were looking for a separate document outside of the regulations or to build those standards directly into the regulations. Jan Wojas and Kevin Boyle would like to see them in the regulations. She then asked if it would be just for a commercial zone or commercial/industrial zone and felt that you don't typically see design review guidelines for a residential zone. Mr. Boyle felt they should be commercial, industrial and maybe ECRD. Paul Pizzo asked if the commission cared about that if it wasn't on a public right-of-way and Mr. Boyle felt that they would allow more latitude, but don't want to necessarily have something like a Butler building.

Robin Newton explained that Simsbury had those guidelines in a separate document that included architectural design guidelines and landscaping, signage and lighting recommendations as well. Jan Wojas felt that signage is a big issue and Mr. Boyle agreed, adding that landscaping is as well. Mr. Boyle explained that they are not trying to mandate, but trying to set a bar that people should minimally hit. Ms. Newton will bring in an example of Simsbury's sign regulations that includes pictures. She felt that they could include pictures, once the commission decides on a standard. She also felt that there needs to be options. Jan Wojas also felt that they can then create application forms from the regulations that also include images.

Going back to the priorities, Ms. Newton asked what the top five items would be. She will speak with the ZBA about this as well. Jerry Russ felt that they should look at creating a zoning approval for all of the houses that are in subdivisions that are nonconforming. Robin Newton will take a look at those specific areas, but when variances are being chronically issued, the regulations should be looked at. She did explain that variances should be very difficult for somebody to get. Kevin Boyle cautioned her that that will be a slippery slope and she should be very careful as it is one thing to grant a specific variance for a front porch and another thing to change a setback from 60 feet to 20 feet.

Jan Wojas also mentioned that there are a number of zoning requirements that are different from other towns and are not really clear. He gave the examples of a roof overhang and allowable height. Ms. Newton stated that they will definitely take a look at definitions. She reiterated that they do not want ZBA granting variances for the same thing all the time, but Kevin Boyle noted that they have been doing that for two decades and it works here. He would be more for some sort of administrative approval for a low-grade encroachment that could be done for free. Ms. Newton will take a look at what variances are requested.

Paul Pizzo brought up issues at the lake. He felt there are height issues and lot coverage issues. Jan Wojas felt that they need to modify the height requirements there. There was discussion about specific properties at the lake.

Kevin Boyle brought up that he has asked in the past about concrete curbing for durability and he would like a standard for that. He thought they may want to look at road construction.

Robin Newton stated that the use tables are very antiquated and pretty much everything triggers a special exception and it really doesn't need to be. She agreed to start with these issues. Mr. Boyle suggested not rushing the regulations to the town if they intend to go deeper into them. Ms. Newton explained that she will definitely work on things in steps and some things may take longer than others. The plan will be for her to hand out a working Word document at every meeting, with draft sections attached. She will track the changes in the documents.

Election of Officers

Kevin Boyle made a motion, seconded by Paul Pizzo, to table the election of officers until the next regularly-scheduled meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman's Report

None.

Approval of Minutes - January 13, 2020

Paul Pizzo made a motion, seconded by Jan Wojas, to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2020 special meeting, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Scheduling of Hearings

Robin Newton stated there will be an application coming in for a nonconforming use to another nonconforming use and will require a public hearing. She asked how the commission likes to schedule their public hearings. Paul Pizzo felt that there should be at least a two-week window to allow the commission members to review the documents. Ms. Newton explained that there is a 15-day minimum to publish the legal notice of the hearing anyway. She also assured the commission that she will send the documents out as soon as they are available. Everyone agreed that that was reasonable.

Robin Newton also commented that she had not received any feedback that anyone had any issues working with DropBox.

Adjournment

Kevin Boyle made a motion, seconded by Paul Pizzo, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:14 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First