

Planning Board Minutes
June 15, 2016 – 7:00 P.M.
Town Council Chambers
125 Main Street
East Greenwich, RI

Members Present: Jason Gomez; Chris Russo; Brad Turchetta; John Ayotte; Dan Tagliatela;

Members Absent: Steve Brusini, Michael Donegan, David Eaton

Staff present: Lisa Bourbonnais, Planning Director; Aaron Lindo, Planning Assistant; Lorrie Byrne, Assistant Town Engineer

Mr. Gomez opened the meeting at 7:03 PM and introduced board members and staff present.

1. **RECOMMENDATION: Philip Ryan Homes, LTD** for property owned by Middle Park Enterprises, LLC. The applicant proposes construction of approximately 50 dwelling units on about 11 acres, being near utility pole 104 on Middle Road; Assessor's Map52, Plat 11, Lot 499 and a portion of Lot 500, zoned LI-O, Light Industry-Office. Project requires a Comprehensive Plan amendment and a Change of Zone to PD-R/4 which is a residential planned development zone. All Plan amendments and Zone changes to be enacted by the Town Council require a recommendation from the Planning Board.

Scott Spear, an attorney with Blish and Cavanaugh, introduced himself as the representative of the applicant. As this is an advisory recommendation for a zone change, the applicant is seeking the Planning Board's input to pass along to the Town Council. He went on to explain the proposed project site and review the details of the project.

Summarizing, he stated that there will be 47 age restricted units (down from the original proposed 52), with affordable housing advancing the state mandate. He explained that the project is consistent with the comprehensive plan and that the site is not going to be utilized commercially as it has been on the market for more than 10 years with no interested commercial buyers. He added that any decision made should consider project economics as the development will generate the most revenue from the site, compared to commercial and industrial uses and that it would be a net positive return for the community. Aside from the slight reduction in total units, there are no major changes to the plan.

Mrs. Bourbonnais asked the applicant, Tom Primeau, to present the change in the units as staff considers the unit change important.

Mr. Primeau was sworn in and explained the change. He stated that the project is being further engineered in preparation for the preliminary plan hearing. With the reduction of units, there are now no more than 3 structures on each cul-de-sac which eliminated concerns voiced by the Town's DPW and public safety officers.

Mr. Russo asked if the unit number is still flexible or set firmly at 47. Mr. Primeau commented that the unit number is concrete at 47 and can go no lower. If it goes any lower, no bank will finance the project.

Mr. Russo addressed a question to the owner of the property, Allan Gammons. He inquired about the lack of interest in the property from a business perspective. Mr. Gammons was sworn in and explained that other developments in town absorbed the demand for commercial space. There has been a lot of interest in other kinds of projects for the site but nothing commercial. In addition, there is plenty of built commercial space in Town as businesses are leaving East Greenwich and vacancies result.

Following up, Mr. Russo asked why businesses are pulling out of East Greenwich. Mr. Gammons did not have specifics on why or metrics on numbers but further opined that a lot of land developments were approved a number of years ago and then the economy slowed down so they didn't get built. He commented that the current residential project is a win-win for everyone.

Mr. Turchetta addressed the traffic concern relative to the project and asked if anything had been done to adjust the projected traffic flow. Mr. Gammons replied that the traffic from a residential project has been proven to be insignificant in the traffic study and would be worse from a commercial or industrial project. Mr. Spear echoed Mr. Gammon's comments and added that the applicant is willing to work with DOT to make sure the timing on traffic lights in the vicinity work in a way that makes sense with the flow of traffic for certain times of the day.

Mr. Ayotte inquired about the potential full yield of 87 units on the property and asked how it was calculated. Mr. Spear explained that the comprehensive plan says the site is suitable for higher density housing via a rezone to a R-4/PD, R-6, or R-10 density level plus a 20% density bonus, assuming from an engineering perspective the property could support that many units.

Mr. Gomez asked Mrs. Bourbonnais about the Comprehensive Plan changes that need to be made. He was answered that it is the future land use map that will change. In the map, the subject property is not shown for residential use. This was done so that the Council would have full authority to review any proposal for housing or any other use that might differ from the commercial zone.

Mr. Gomez asked if there were additional zoning waivers required. Mrs. Bourbonnais answered that there were and explained the waiver process as well as procedural options to take.

Mr. Gomez asked the Board for input. Mr. Russo commented that he was persuaded by the testimony and would give a favorable recommendation. Mr. Ayotte was in agreement with Mr. Russo. Mr. Turchetta was also in agreement and recommended that staff work up the language to present to Town Council. Mr. Tagliatela commented that he had a concern about the contradiction in the Comp Plan but given what happened with the appeal, resulting in granting Master Plan approval, he supported a favorable recommendation.

Mrs. Bourbonnais commented that when the Town Council receives the Planning Board's recommendation, they will get the history of the application with all the proceedings that have happened involving the application to be fully aware off all of the issues that have arisen.

Mr. Gomez commented that the Board was in agreement that staff would prepare and work out a letter to give a favorable recommendation of the application to Town Council.

Mr. Russo made a motion to authorize the Chair of the Board to submit a generally favorable recommendation on both the Comp Plan amendment and a zone change to a PD/R-4. Mr. Ayotte seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

2. Minutes: Approval of the 3/2/16 and 4/6/16 meeting minutes.

In the 3/2/16 minutes, Mr. Ayotte made a correction on page 8. The correction was noted and the minutes passed unanimously. Mr. Tagliatela made a motion to pass the 4/6/16 minutes, seconded by Mr. Russo and passed unanimously.

3. Planning Board Member Comments: For items not on the agenda and not relating to specific applications.

After a brief discussion on different subjects, namely future agenda setting and ordinance work to be undertaken by the Board, Mr. Russo made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Gomez. Meeting adjourned at 8:04 PM

Minutes respectfully submitted by Aaron Lindo, Planning Assistant.

For further information, please refer to the recording available in the Planning Department.