

NORWICH PLANNING COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 11, 2008

Tracy Hall - Meeting Room

Members Present: Tom Gray, Richard Stucker, Ralph Hybels, Brooke Adler, Jeff Goodrich

Members Absent: Daniel Johnson, Jaye Pershing Johnson

Clerk: Phil Dechert

Others: Henry Scheier, Terry Boone, Edye Scheier

Tom Gray, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

1. Approve Agenda – Add Energy Email to item #7

The Revised Agenda was approved by **unanimous consent**.

2. Comments from the Public – None

3. Announcements & Correspondence – None

4. Minutes – November 13, 2008 minutes approved by **unanimous consent** as read.

5. “Town Eating Day” – Saturday, February 28, 2009

Henry Scheier and Terry Boone appeared to encourage the participation of the Planning Commission at “Town Eating Day” (TED) again this year and to deliver a letter explaining the event. The PC slot will be at either 10-11 a.m. or 11 a.m.-12 noon. The topic should be general and not too technical and involve interaction with the audience.

The PC should confirm the topic by the February 12 meeting and inform the TED Committee.

6. Zoning – Proposed change in VR I District Boundary on Koch Road.

After reviewing a proposal to amend the Village Residential I (VRI) District MAP to include Lot 20-165 (4.4 Acres) and amend the Rural Residential (RR) District MAP to exclude Lot 20-165 (4.4 Acres), the Clerk was asked to contact the owner of the other parcel accessed by Hast Charm Way regarding the inclusion of both parcels in the change.

The Clerk will prepare a final proposal for the next meeting (Jan 8) at which time the Planning Commission will vote on warning the amendment for a public hearing.

7. Town Plan

Goodrich commented on the notes he provided to the members based on meetings with regional transportation planners and the Norwich Transportation Committee. He suggested that interrelation of Transportation, Land Use, and Energy should be emphasized in the town plan.

Gray reported on some apparent miscommunication with the Energy Committee on the schedule for providing input to the Town Plan process and the nature of that input. He will work with them to get the process coordinated and to make it clear that the Planning Commission welcomes input on the Plan.

8. New Business

Planning Commission Communications with the Public – The need to consider ways to improve communication with the public regarding the work of the Planning Commission was

discussed. One possible approach is greater utilization of “new media.” Possibilities include:

- posting draft documents on the web and allowing the public to post public comments
- wikis - A collaborative website whose content can be edited by anyone who has access to it.
- blogs or discussion groups

Gray and Dechert will work on some proposals for the Commission to consider.

Planning Commission Communications among Members

Stucker asked for clarification concerning the status of email communications among members of the Commission. Dechert and Gray reported their understanding of this issue as follows:

Email communication among members must comply with state statutes addressing “open meetings” and public documents.

The open meeting law requires that discussions and actions relating to town business by a quorum of the Commission must be at a warned meeting or hearing and open to the public. The Secretary of State has opined that the law is also likely to apply to email discussions shared among a quorum of the Commission, although this issue has not been ruled on by the courts. Accordingly, documents may be distributed by email but any discussion or action by a quorum of the commission regarding the documents should occur at a legal meeting.

The public documents law appears to require that emails or documents relating to town business be available for inspection by the public, though the exact reach of this law also has not been determined by the courts. Any emails between members relating to town business should be copied to the Clerk so that they can be archived on the town server.

Gray and Dechert will continue to research this issue and look for other options to facilitate communication among members that can be seen by the public.

Future Meetings:

Thursday, January 8, 2009 – Town Plan schedule and review of Natural Resource Chapter, Zoning District Amendment, Inclusionary Zoning Regulation

Adjournment – 9:30 PM

Phil Dechert

Approved 1-22-09

Future Meetings:

Thursday, January 8 at 7 PM

Thursday, January 22 at 7 PM