

Town Plan & Zoning Commission Meeting
October 22, 2015
Council Chambers
800 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield, CT
APPROVED MINUTES

In attendance: Barry Berson, Nicholas Panke, Abraham Ford, Jr., Alfred LeFebvre, Mark Jacobs, and José Giner, Director of Planning

1. Chairman Barry Berson called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

2. Acceptance of Minutes

a. Commissioner LeFebvre moved to approve the July 23, 2015, minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jacobs and passed unanimously.

b. Commissioner Panke moved to approve the September 24, 2015, minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner LeFebvre and passed unanimously.

Agenda Items

3. Request by the Town of Bloomfield for a Text Amendment to the Zoning Regulations to permit houses of worship in districts that currently allow colleges, public and private schools.

Commissioner Jacobs read the Legal Notice that appeared in the Hartford Courant on October 9, 2015 and October 16, 2015.

Director of Planning José Giner noted that the application had been referred to the Capitol Region Council of Governments and that he had received a memo stating that there were no conflicts with regional plans or policies with respect to the proposed amendments.

Mr. Giner stated that the issue of where religious uses were allowed in Bloomfield had come up for discussion at the staff level. He noted that there were also some inquiries regarding specific properties that had led to his drafting the recommended amendments at this time.

He noted that the amendments were intended to allow Churches, synagogues and similar places of worship in Districts that currently allow other forms of public assembly such as schools. Also, Definitions and specific terms are proposed for consistency across Districts. This is intended to further ensure compliance with the requirements of the Federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA).

Commissioner Panke asked if this proposed change was in response to an individual request from a private party.

Mr. Giner responded that although there were a couple of properties that had inquired as to either expanding or locating in a particular location that the issue had been on his radar for some time and that after discussion with other staff he felt it was time to make a correction to what he thought was an oversight when the last regulation revisions were made. He noted that Bloomfield allows such uses in commercial zones but not residential which does not seem logical.

Commissioner Panke expressed concern that we do not propose changes every time some individual asks for one.

Commissioner Ford stated that most regulation changes are typically proposed by individuals looking to facilitate a particular project. He did not see any issues with that because the TPZ always had the option of voting them down if they did not feel they were appropriate.

Chairman Berson echoed those sentiments and said that it didn't come up all that often.

Chairman Berson asked if there were any public comments. Hearing none **Commissioner Panke moved to close the hearing. Commissioner LeFebvre seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

Commissioner Panke made a motion TO APPROVE the request by Request by the Town of Bloomfield for a Text Amendment to the Zoning Regulations to permit houses of worship in districts that currently allow colleges, public and private schools, along with clarifying language and definitions to be effective November 1, 2015. Commissioner Ford seconded the motion which was approved unanimously.

4. 2016 Meeting Schedule

There was discussion regarding the proposed schedule for the next year. There was consensus that the meeting schedule presented was acceptable to all.

5. Planner's Report.

Mr. Giner reported on the following:

- a. October was Community Planning Month and that Chairman Berson had agreed to serve on a panel that would be discussing the Town Center, Past, Present, and Future on the afternoon of October 28 at 6:00p.m. in the Prosser Library. He also stated that there would be a walking tour of the Center on Saturday October 31 from 10:00 a.m. to noon.
- b. Mr. Giner stated that the Town Center Apartments had received a permit from the Wetlands Agency and that he expected an application for detailed Site Plan to come in shortly.
- c. Mr. Giner stated that the Commission had received a petition from residents in the Foothills Way area asking the Commission to review their regulations concerning home occupations to more tightly regulate landscaping businesses and contractors. The petition was also signed by residents on Burwood Drive.

Chairman Berson asked if this was a Zoning Enforcement issue. Mr. Giner replied that the request was for the consideration of tightening the existing regulations. He stated that the ZEO has pursued violations but that residents were frustrated because it took so long when someone resisted the enforcement action.

Commissioner Jacobs mentioned that it was a larger problem with smaller properties. He stated that you hardly notice these home businesses when they occur on larger tracts of land but that they tend to stand out when in close proximity to surrounding properties.

8. Adjournment

Commissioner LeFebvre moved for adjournment at 7:45 pm., Commissioner Ford seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Byron Lester, TPZ Secretary
BL/jg