

Paul K. Sprague, Planning Director
Robert Joyal, Town Engineer



Planning Commission
Minutes of January 22, 2014 Meeting
1670 Flat River Road
Coventry, RI 02816

Meeting Called to order at 7:00 PM by Standing Chairman Mr. Kalunian
Vice-Chairman Kalunian gave evacuation instructions for an emergency situation.

Members Present: Mr. Flynn, Mr. Crowe, Mr. Kalunian, Mr. Osenkowski, Mr. Bouchard, Mr. Brault, and Mr. Crossman.

Members Absent: Mr. Capwell, Mr. Nunes

Election of Officers

Mr. Kalunian explained that elections were being held for the positions of Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary. Nominations will be taken in order.

Mr. Flynn offered Mr. Crossman as a nomination for Chairman. This was seconded by Mr. Crowe. All were in favor so moved.

Mr. Flynn offered Mr. Kalunian as a nomination for Vice-chairman. This was seconded by Mr. Brault. All were in favor so moved.

Mr. Crossman offered Mr. Flynn as a nomination for Secretary. This was seconded by Mr. Brault. All were in favor so moved.

Approval of Minutes
November 20, 2013

A motion was made to approve the minutes of November 20th, 2013 by Mr. Bouchard; second by Mr. Crowe.

Mr. Kalunian asked to make a note of a misspelling of Mr. Cafone's name within the minutes.

All were in favor; so moved.

OLD BUSINESS

Pre-Application/Sitewalk: "Waterman Hill Minor Subdivision"; Douglas Enterprises, Ltd.
4-Lot Minor Conventional Subdivision or 5-Lot Minor Cluster Subdivision.

AP 327, Lot 3
124 Hall Road, Coventry RI.

Mr. Desimone approached the board representing Douglas Enterprises, he began by stating at the last PC meeting the company decided to identify additional uplands as part of the density calculations, the amount was insufficient to change said calculations for a traditional cluster so the company had to switch to a conventional although it bore less lots than the traditional. He continued to propose the building of modest homes similar to those at Falls at Scotts Hollow, marketing under \$300,000. He then approached the issue of the farm itself, that they were trying to keep the farm intact and that the farm house was operating, the barn just needed a roof and to be cleaned for Christmas season. He stated that the house was in better state for it's age, and that mechanicals needed to be updated. He explained that his son would be cleaning up the house, and in summary that Douglas Enterprises is going to try to market the tree farm as an operating business and that they want to save it. He is before the board today to ask about a conventional versus cluster subdivision.

Mr. Sprague spoke on behalf of absent member Capwell stating that he expressed his preference that there be as much dedicated open space as possible.

Mr. Desimone stated that open space existed as one lot that could be attached to any lot in the plat. If the open space was attached to owner of lot 5 the farm could remain open.

Mr. Sprague stated that conservation needed to be kept in mind.

Mr. Flynn stated his preference to not have a cluster subdivision with 1-2 bonus lots, with the area being all farm lands. He would rather see bigger lots.

Mr. Kalunian expressed his concern about labeling the open space but it not being appended to a particular lot size it would become somewhat of a free for all for all owners. He questioned if the open space could be appended to lot 5.

Mr. Desimone stated that regulations of the Home Owners Association allowed for the company to attach it to any one lot or donate it to the town.

Mr. Kalunian stated that lot 5 would have control of the lot in the case that it was attached to and the extra land would go toward the value of the property.

Mr. Osenkowski asked that there be some plan put into place for management of the open space. He expressed his disagreement with the Town receiving the piece of land, but that the person who purchases the lot may not be an active farmer and the town would not be able to take care of it.

Mr. Sprague stated that it would be dedicated as open space connected to lot 5.

Mr. Kalunian questioned if the land owner of lot 5 was expected to maintain the tree farm.

Mr. Desimone stated that the only way to keep the open space as the tree farm would be to attach it to lot 5, and that someone had previously made an offer on that specific property.

Mr. Sprague questioned if consideration would be given that the person whom purchases this land be an arborist.

Mr. Desimone stated that someday someone may want to use this as a different type of farm, as long as the land is used for agricultural use.

Mr. Sprague expressed that he would not like to see the land be clear cut.

Mr. Kalunian expressed his preference for the open space to be appended to lot 5, and that the owner restrict it to agricultural purposes. He questioned if the tree farm could be appended to lot 5 and the four remaining lots be enlarged.

Mr. Desimone stated that commissions in different towns typically want builders to downsize; he continued that the company could make them bigger, but not so big that it takes away from the viability of the tree farm. The bigger the lots become the more acreage is lost from the tree farm.

Mr. Crossman stated that when the matter first came forward, Mr. Desimone did not know that a cluster was a possible avenue, and that the original proposition was to have 4-5acre lots with no tree farm.

Mr. Desimone confirmed this information.

Mr. Crossman stated that he never envisioned a cluster west of Rte 102, but that it serves its purpose when used in an R-3 zone; he continued that he was sensitive to the continuing existence of the tree farm but preferred 5 acre lots. He also stated that the soil is not great as stated by the director's report. He expressed his preference for a 5 acre conventional subdivision.

Mrs. Fagan, on behalf of the Conservation Committee, stated that they were also in favor of the 4 – 5 acre lots and wanted to make one lot bigger to encompass the tree farm. She continued that there were wells in the area and septic clustered at the bottom which she felt would not work, concerned that there would be contamination. She restated that the CCC liked bigger lots, and that the city people coming out might want other types of farms.

Karen Carlson of 422 Waterman Hill Road approached the board to state that she was not directly abutted to the property, but that her family had moved to Western Coventry because of the 5 acre lot availability. In the RR-5 area, she expressed her concern for preservation. In these larger lots you do not always see your neighbors and she explained that this was of interest to her. She continued that her road, seen as a cut through to the State of Connecticut, was very busy and she was concerned that with more house development, more traffic would cause a problem. She continued to state that she did not know if the tree farm was a viable business unless someone was specifically interested in it. She asked that they take care of lot 5 and the open space. She finished by stating that in the spring her yard was very wet, and that another plan would add more houses and congestion.

Mr. Osenkowski stated that the concept was a great idea for conservation design for preservation of the tree farm, but that he was concerned with the maintenance of the tree farm afterwards. He expressed

that he would like to see clusters in preservation but this did not seem like the optimal situation, and that the conventional design seemed to work better.

Mr. Desimone stated that he was not a tree farmer or qualified to do so, but that the aim was to build and clean up the farm. That the land could be marked for someone to run it as a tree farm.

Mr. Kalunian referred to the plan for clarification on property lines.

Mr. Desimone stated that he felt that with a conventional subdivision, the design was not practical to save the tree farm.

William Bell of 11 Allison Avenue, lister of the property, approached the board. He stated that he would like to demolish the old house even though it was being saved, and keep the barn. He expressed his preference for smaller lots and that a tree farm would be hard to sell.

Mr. Sprague stated that the Planning Department had no specific opinion on the plan, that options were being discussed for the evening.

Mr. Bell stated that the company would make more money on a conventional subdivision.

Mr. Crossman informally polled the board on preference, all members preferred the conventional subdivision option.

NEW BUSINESS

Pre-Application & Recommendation to Town Council: “Cumberland Farms”;

Proposed Construction of Service Station & Convenience Store

AP Lots 17,18,19 & 20

2293 New London Turnpike

Attorney John Brunero approached the board representing the applicant. He began by stating that a petition had been filed to change the zoning, all neighbors and Chevalier LLC were in compliance so the whole project can be zoned business park. Hopefully this would be heard at the meeting in February. He continued to explain that the concern about changing the layout of the store was followed up by the company, that there was the same square footage but a different layout on the lot. He stated that there was a separation from the rear of the store and the abutting property. He continued that Cumberland Farms had a concern about creating an entrance on Gay St. for the tractor trailers.

Maureen Chlebek from McMahon Associates approached the board with a traffic report. She stated that there was an issue with the entrances from Arnold Road/ Gay Street/ and New London Turnpike, and the report was submitted to the board. She continued that the second Arnold Road entrance was preferable, and that weekday mornings had been analyzed, in each case, traffic extended to first driveway but not the second, she stated that she did not feel that stacking at the signal affected operations of the second driveway. She addressed the concern about traffic exiting onto New London Turnpike, and that the problem with a pork chop island would be getting fuel tankers in and out of the exit and entryways. She proposed scored concrete instead of a raised island. She was asked by Mr.

Crossman how often a Cumberland Farms needs to refuel per week and the answer was on average three.

Mr. Crossman stated that since an entrance from Gay st. was not feasible, then a slope-faced pork chop could be put in order to allow for the tanker to exit. His concern was the exiting to the left onto New London Turnpike.

Mr. Sprague stated his concern with the Planning Department being overwhelmed by all new information presented without timely notice, and being moved towards making decisions by Cumberland Farms.

Mr. Brunero stated that this was a work development session, any suggestions given would be brought back to Cumberland Farms to be worked on, and that the developers were trying to finish the project.

Mr. Crossman stated that the Planning Department would have benefited from having documents prior to this evenings Commission meeting.

Mr. Flynn suggested that since the front of the building has to face the pump station, to put an exit off of Gay street and have the Cumby's face CVS.

Ms. Labeck stated that they have been attempting to work out alternatives.

Mr. Kalunian observed that the site did not sound to have enough space, and the concern with two entrance/exits onto Arnold Road, was that two lanes of traffic coming from New London Turnpike would be merging into one lane in front of the opening for the gas station, and that traffic would be obstructed. He continued to state that some of the lots on Gay street were for sale, and would possibly be developed in the near future, that it would be beneficial to have a means of egress from Gay street to Arnold road; that it would alleviate traffic and promote business in the area. Safety should be taken into account.

Mr. Brault questioned if the egress onto New London Turnpike was for the main purpose of fuel delivery. He suggested that if this was so, possibly it could be a gated exit and entrance. He also suggested the possibility of installing jersey barriers in the middle of the opposite lanes of traffic. His concern was that projected traffic issues would tax the Police and Fire Departments of the town.

Mr. Flynn questioned if it were possible that fueling be done in the back of the building.

The Site Engineer for the project stated that this was just a perspective layout of Cumberland Farms.

Mr. Osenkowski stated that he did not recommend ingress and egress onto New London Turnpike, that people will take the left turn even if signage was present.

Mr. Crossman, referring to an aerial view of the project, addressed the jersey barrier possibility, and suggested that a 2ft raised island be built down the middle of the road, along with the presence of the pork chop island. It would make it impossible for customers to turn left.

Mr. Kalunian stated that there had to be caution in the extent of the barrier so that it did not block traffic for businesses on the opposite side of the street.

Mr. Brunero stated that the location was a great site for Cumberland Farms and it was needed for drivers traveling on the highway. He continued that it was desired to come up with the best plan.

Mr. Kalunian stated that he was pro-development of the project, but wanted to be sure that necessary precautionary actions were taken to insure proper ingress and egress. He also continued that he would like to see businesses in the area compliment each other, but was concerned that if it added to traffic congestion in the area it would create a negative effect.

Mr. Brunero stated that Cumby's will produce another design while taking concerns into consideration.

Mr. Kalunian stated that it would be beneficial to see a means of exit onto Gay street to relieve some traffic.

Mr. Brunero apologized for late submission of information.

Mr. Bouchard, reviewing a design presented, questioned the need for 35 parking spaces.

Mr. Brunero stated that a suggestion would be made to the client and engineers to recheck the amount.

Mr. Bouchard stated that with extra land, there would be more room for redesign.

Mr. Sprague stated that the ordinance recommended a certain amount of parking spaces be reduces on numerous occasions, and the applicant wanted to adhere to the ordinance.

DISCUSSION

OTHER BUSINESS

Planning Commission Issues of Interest

Mr. Flynn asked about the completion of the bike path. Mr. Sprague stated that a new company had taken over the next phase and that it should be open later in the year of 2014.

Public Works Director

None

Planning Director Report

No comments were made at this time. The report is attached to file and is made part of this record.

Public Comment

None

Mr. Bouchard made a motion to adjourn; motion was seconded. All were in favor of adjournment; so moved.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:30pm.