



City of Groton, Connecticut

Planning & Zoning Commission MINUTES

Tuesday, June 15, 2021

City Municipal Building
295 Meridian Street
Groton, CT 06340

Municipal Building;
Council Chambers OR
virtually via Zoom

7:00PM

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller, David Rose, Aundre Bumgardner, Susan Bergeron, James Streeter, Irma Streeter, Girard Keeler, Marie Carmenati & Terry Rice

Pursuant to State of Connecticut Executive Order No. 7B "Protection of Public Health and Safety During Covid-19 Pandemic and Response – Further Suspension or Modification of Statues", dated March 14, 2020, suspending in-person open meeting requirements, all public meetings will be closed to the public at this time.

Email communications relative to applications on this agenda to: creanel@cityofgroton-ct.gov and received by 12:00 noon May 18, 2021. Join Zoom meeting to view this meeting in real time.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller calls meeting to order at 6:34pm.

I. ROLL CALL & ESTABLISH QUORUM

Present: Chair Paul Kunkemoeller, Susan Bergeron, Andre Bumgardner, David Rose, Marie Carmenati, Terry Rice, James Streeter, Irma Streeter & City Planner Leslie Creane.

Absent: Girard Keeler

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller conducts roll call. With Girard Keller absent, Marie Carmenati is able to vote this evening as an alternate. Chair Paul Kunkemoeller introduces Terry Rice to the group as a new alternate with the commission and asks him to give a brief introduction of himself.

II. APPROVAL OF:

May 4, 2021 Special Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve minutes made by Susan Bergeron, seconded by Marie Carmenati. No comments.

Motion carried. 5-0-2 (James Streeter & Irma Streeter abstain)

May 18, 2021 Regularly Scheduled Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve minutes made by David Rose, seconded by James Streeter.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller comments on a few corrections to the minutes. Leslie Creane will correct the minutes per Chair Paul Kunkemoeller's request.

Motion to approve the minutes as amended made by David Rose, seconded by Aundre Bumgardner. No further discussion on the revised minutes.

Motion carried. 6-0-1 (Marie Carmenati abstain)

III. RECEIPT OF APPLICATIONS

A. APPLICATIONS RECEIVED with EFFECTIVE Date of Receipt 06/15/2021

WBR Text Amendment to include Single-family as allowed use.

Action	Deadline or Date	Notes
Date of Receipt (DOR)	June 15, 2021	Date of 1 st regular meeting after filing
Hearing	Public Hearing Required	Docketed for July 2021 regular meeting. Deadline for Decision is 35 days after commencement of the hearing: 8/24/2021
Notice Required	Yes	Notice to adjacent municipalities is required
Extension Available¹	See Footnote 1 below	1 st 35-day extension – 09-28-2021 2 nd 35-day extension – 11-02-2021
Notice of Decision²	See Footnote 2 below	Within 35 days after close of hearing

City Planner Leslie Creane speaks on behalf of applicant. Applicant is requesting a zone change within the WBR Zone to be able to sell this property as a Single-Family Home. No vote is needed.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller states that there will be a Public Hearing on this item in July.

150 & 0 (adjacent) Bridge Street

**Applicant: Eribart Gjonaj / Mark Zamarka, Esq., agent
GC Zone**

Site Plan # 483

Special Permit # 466

Action	Deadline or Date	Notes
Date of Receipt (DOR)	June 15, 2021	Date of 1 st regular meeting after filing
Hearing	Public Hearing Required	Docketed for July 2021 regular meeting. Deadline for Decision is 35 days after commencement of the hearing: 8/24/2021
Notice Required	Yes	Notice to adjacent municipalities is required
Extension Available³	See Footnote 1 below	1 st 35-day extension – 09-28-2021 2 nd 35-day extension – 11-02-2021
Notice of Decision⁴	See Footnote 2 below	Within 35 days after close of hearing

City Planner Leslie Creane speaks on behalf of the applicant. This application is to finish the renovations of the property and open as a business that was previously approved in past meeting by the commission.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller states that there will be a Public Hearing on this item in July. Application is accepted.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Item 1:

Description: Map Amendment: rezone from R-8 to R-5.1

Applicant: William Bellock, Bellsite Development, LLC

Agent: William Sweeney, Esq.

Owner: Town of Groton / John Burt

Zone Change: #07-21

R-8 Zone

¹ The applicant may consent to one or more extensions of time to commence a public hearing, complete any such hearing, and make the decision, provided the total period of all such extensions does not exceed 65 days.

² If City does not issue notice to applicant by certified mail and publish legal notice of decision within 15 days, applicant may publish legal notice within the following 10 days.

³ The applicant may consent to one or more extensions of time to commence a public hearing, complete any such hearing, and make the decision, provided the total period of all such extensions does not exceed 65 days.

⁴ If City does not issue notice to applicant by certified mail and publish legal notice of decision within 15 days, applicant may publish legal notice within the following 10 days.

Action	Deadline or Date	Notes
Date of Receipt (DOR)	May 18, 2021	Date of 1 st regular meeting after filing
Hearing	Public Hearing Required	Docketed for June 2021 regular meeting. Deadline for Decision is 35 days after commencement of the hearing: 7/20/2021
Notice Required	none	Notice to adjacent municipalities not required
Extension Available⁵	See Footnote 3 below	1 st 35-day extension – 08-24-2021 2 nd 35-day extension – 09-28-2021
Notice of Decision⁶	See Footnote 4 below	Within 35 days after close of hearing

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller read the rules governing public hearings.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller opens the floor for the Public Hearing-

William Sweeney speaks for the applicant, he is partner for a Land Use Attorney and is here on behalf of Bellsite Development, LLC. Also with William Sweeney is William Bellock, a developer with Bellsite Development, LLC. William Sweeney speaks to the purpose of the zone change - to renovate and adaptively use the current school as housing plus add an additional multi-family housing building to the property.

William Sweeney continues by providing history on the property and the proposed development. He explains the proposed zone change, the developer would be able to increase the amount of housing units to be built and make this project economically viable for the developer. He showed the commission a concept drawing to explain the proposal that they would like to move forward with; approximately 80 units, and continues by presenting the commission a zoning map which shows that R-5.1 & R-8 abut each other on that map. He further goes on by describing the benefits of this project and the positive impact it could have on the community.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller asks if there are any further comments in regards to this project from City Planner Leslie Creane.

City Planner Leslie Creane is in favor of this project.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller asks the commission if they there are any comments or questions.

Commissioner James Streeter – Has the town sold the property to the developer yet?

Attorney William Sweeney – They have signed a property agreement which is based upon stipulations including the zoning change as requested today. If the zoning change is accepted, next steps will be taken to further the project along for purchase by the developer.

Commissioner James Streeter – Did the Town and the City Planning Departments work together to review the RFPs for this project?

Attorney William Sweeney – He mentions that a representative Town Planning Department is here tonight and that this will come up later in the program.

Commissioner Terry Rice – Inquires as to a conceptual plan prior to filing the application.

⁵ The applicant may consent to one or more extensions of time to commence a public hearing, complete any such hearing, and make the decision, provided the total period of all such extensions does not exceed 65 days.

⁶ If City does not issue notice to applicant by certified mail and publish legal notice of decision within 15 days, applicant may publish legal notice within the following 10 days.

Attorney William Sweeney – Yes, there was a conceptual plan included with the negotiations with the Town but it is not required by law to have a conceptual drawing and in fact, generally discouraged. What was shown in his project was the drawing that they had, but that is now outdated.

Commissioner Terry Rice – Do you have an idea of the proposed height.

Attorney William Sweeney – 35 feet or less is the restraint that goes along with the zone change of R-5.1.

Commissioner Terry Rice – Recreational Facilities?

Attorney William Sweeney – Yes, there are obligations for some sort of a recreational facility per the agreement. Any specifics are not committed to until this step is completed.

Chairperson Paul Kunkemoeller asks if there are further questions from the Commissioners. None are declared.

Chairperson Paul Kunkemoeller opens the questions and comments to the public.

Page Bronc, Town of Groton Economic & Community Development – Explains the process of the RFP with this property. He confirms that it was a joint review committee between the City and the Town. He also mentions that they do not handle this as just a bid, highest bidder. They look at the proposal as a whole concept when they choose the site and/or developer.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller asks if there are further questions and or comments from the floor. None are declared.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller than asks if anyone is present to speak in opposition of the application. Yes, there is.

Ron Hall, 99 West Street – Ron lives at an adjoining property to the school. Although he is favor of developing the school, he is not in favor of the density of this specific proposal. He is concerned of the traffic on West Street and the effects on the neighborhood based upon the amount of units. He is in favor of the current zoning of 37 units versus the re-zoning and proposed of 80 units. He feels that 37 units is viable.

Karley Reising, 68 West Street – Speaks highly of the quiet nature of West Street and the City of Groton. She loves her pocket neighborhood and is concerned of the traffic that this new proposal. She is also concerned about getting rid of green space based upon global warming. She is in favor of the land being developed for housing but again is not in favor of the size of the proposal. She claims it will negatively impact the neighborhood and the residents of this area.

Craig Guild, 68 West Street – Very concerned about the environmental impacts of this project. Particularly concerned about the increased use of the surface, the density development. He is not opposed to development but this density is too high and would impact not only the residents but the wildlife also. He really hopes that this can be taken into consideration for the Conservation of the space.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller asks if there are any other comments in opposition to the application. None are declared.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller asks if there are any additional comments that are neither for nor in opposition of this application. None are declared.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller offers Attorney William Sweeney the floor to respond to the oppositions from the residents.

Attorney William Sweeney – He will address each resident individually. First, Mr. Hall, the project will not be 80 units, maximum number will be 71 units, and they believe the final number of units will be between 60 – 70 units. Attorney Sweeney then mentions that response can also directed at Karley Reising in regards to her concerns in

regards to traffic. They believe that the traffic will be far less for the housing versus what it was when the school was in operation, for example, the teachers, the parents, and the buses. He also mentions that with this approval there are many additional next steps that have to be taken to consider traffic, safety, and many other issues. Also in regards to the economic viability that Mr. Hall questions, this is a very expensive project to complete and unfortunately it cannot be done with 37 units, it needs to be worthwhile to the developer. To address Mr. Guild, they have specifically scaled the property back to be sure not to threaten the wetlands and the land density. He also mentions that there needs to be wetland approval with this project. They will need to prove that the conservation needs are met and there are no negative impacts on conservations. Lastly, the units will be energy efficient, this developer will be environmentally responsible.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller asks if there are any further questions from the commissioners or staff present.

City Planner Leslie Creane feels that everything has been thorough and she then clarifies that this application is only for the zone change and all other details will come back to the commission for further approvals. Further, traffic and environmental studies can be done after this step of the application process. She would also like to comment from her history as a planner for many years, the traffic from a school outweighs the traffic from multi-family homes is significantly more. Lastly, Leslie notes the efforts of making this area more bike and walking friendly so people do not need to drive their cars as often. This project could also help the city improve streetscapes within the city. Lastly, adaptive reuse of any building is a major commitment and an environmentally protective measure rather than rebuilding and needing more resources.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller asks if there are any further questions from the commissioners or staff present. None are declared.

With no other questions or comments, Chair Paul Kunkemoeller would like to mention a few comments. Changing the zone would be consistent with the area. There is a buffer between the development and the immediate neighborhood. The project is consistent with our needs, additional housing, pedestrian-friendly developments and the support of local business which this development could provide.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller asks if there are any further questions from the public. Yes there is.

Ron Hall, 99 West Street – Will there be any opportunity for written comments for the public?

City Planner Leslie Creane states when the Public Hearing closes for this application, there will no longer be a hearing for additional comments. He states that he does not agree with City Planner Leslie Creane's comments on traffic patterns. He also claims that Attorney Sweeney is inconsistent with his unit numbers and he still feels that this is not in the best interest of the environment, it is all about the money, the tax dollars. He feels this is too large, he would like to see it developed but with a different developer. He feels that all proposed development lately for the City of Groton is too large and out of scope.

Karley Reising, 68 West Street – She also disagrees with City Planner Leslie Creane's comments on the traffic. She would love a walkable City of Groton but she cannot envision that and does not know where people are walking. The area needs a lot more Economic Development in order for it to be more walkable. Her last concern is that this project will drive tax payers who own their homes in this neighborhood out in order to get more non-taxpaying renters in.

Craig Guild, 68 West Street – He feels that although they were told of transparency, he feels that they have not had transparency with this project. He again mentions all the highlighted issues including the environmental issues and the traffic concerns. He feels that the residents are being dismissed and that their concerns are not important.

Attorney William Sweeney restates that this project and this site are not like other proposals in the city, it is in-scope and will not increase traffic to this area in the way that these residents are concerned about. He also confirms the density of the project and with this approval, it does not apply to the density. This application is only to rezone the area and not for density. He also goes on to mention that he feels City Planner Leslie Creane's comments were spot on and with his past in Planning, he also agrees. Lastly, he pleads with the Commission to consider this zone change considering all that has been presented this evening. He hopes that this application is favorable and hopes to work with the group in the future.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller states he has one last question, what is Bellsite's experience with adaptive use projects?

Developer William Bellock addresses the Chair's question. William Bellock gives a history of his involvement with many adaptive use projects in Connecticut including a school in Enfield that was very similar to this project.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller asks if there are any comments from the Commission or staff present.

City Planner Leslie Creane first made mentions of the Exhibits as marked in the official file and lastly, wanted to also clarify that she did not have any intent to dismiss feelings or comments from the residents as they had felt she had.

Motion to close was made by Marie Carmenati, seconded by Sue Bergeron. No discussion on the motion. NO comments on the motion. None. Motion carried. 7-0-0.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller would like to move on to the decision. He asks if there are any comments from the Commissioners. None are stated. Chair Paul Kunkemoeller shares his thoughts. The rezone and density is consistent with the area. He again mentions the buffer between the property and the surrounding neighborhood. He also mentions that there will be traffic studies done to determine the impact of this property. He believes that this property could make a positive impact on Economic Development in the area.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller asks for a motion to change the zone from R-8 to R-5.1 with a proposed effective date of July 18, 2021. Motion to move the property at 120 West Street be re-zoned from an R-8 to an R-5.1 zone effective on July 18, 2021 after having considered the plan for conservation and development made by Marie Carmenati, seconded by Sue Bergeron. No further discussion. Motion carried. 6-1-0 (Andre Bumgardner opposed).

Item 2:

8-24 Referral – Sale of Surplus Property: 0 Broad Street (vacant lot)

8-24 Referral

Referral to City Council and consistency with the Plan of Conservation and Development

City Planner Leslie Creane introduces this referral by telling the commission that this referral is required at any time a Municipal is trying to dispense a property. This is in effort to sell the Mother Bailey property along with the adjacent 0 Broad Street property, both of which the city owns. The properties are being sold as a package due to the Mother Bailey property not being enticing to buyers on its own. The Mother Bailey House will require a large investment and therefore 0 Broad Street brings the opportunity possibly build to recoup some of this investment. She would like to be clear that the current RFP does include both properties and if this does not get approved it will derail the forward moving of the sale of the Mother Bailey House.

Commissioner James Streeter – Notifies the group that he will be recusing from the vote tonight as he did speak in favor of this sale at the Public Hearing. He then gives a brief history of the 0 Broad Street property. Although 0 Broad Street does provide some much needed parking to the city, he is torn as the Town Historian and the

historical attributes of Mother Bailey House. He makes mention of the proposed three homes on the property and from his view, he does not know how three houses will fit on that property.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller asks City Planner Leslie Creane in regards to the zoning of the property.

City Planner Leslie Creane states that she did see a sketch a longtime ago, but we are very far from seeing any concrete sketches for that property. She did research some existing buildings adjacent from the property to see the scope and size of what is proposed and mentions that Broad Street and Thames Street are already dense areas, being dense is typical for this area and not out of scope. She feels that there are many options for 0 Broad Street if this is approved by the Commission within the current zoning of the property.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller asks if there are any further questions. None are heard. Chair Paul Kunkemoeller determines that this vote is either favorable or unfavorable from the Commissioners.

Audre Bumgardner makes a motion of a favorable recommendation on the sale of the surplus property for 0 Broad Street, Irma Streeter seconded. Motion of a favorable recommendation carried. 6-0-1 (James Streeter abstain).

V. REGULAR MEETING

None.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

None.

VII. REPORT OF COMMISSION

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller wanted to disclose to the Commissioners that he received a letter from a resident on West Elderkin who is not in favor of the proposed 5-Corner project.

Commissioner Susan Bergeron also received a letter from a resident stating their dissatisfaction on her favorable decision on the Five Corners Project.

Commissioner Irma Streeter and Commissioner James Streeter also received a letter stating the same.

Commissioner David Rose also received a letter.

Commissioner Audre Bumgardner also received a letter.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller wanted to acknowledge David Rose's commitment to the Commission and also note that this would be his last meeting.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS (WRITTEN ONLY)

None other than the cards mentioned above.

IX. REPORT OF STAFF

Select Commissioner to take minutes

Revisions to Regulations – Discussion / Presentation

City Planner Leslie Creane shares her Presentation for Revisions to Regulations.

Chair Paul Kunkemoeller questions a few aspects of City Planner Leslie Creane's Revisions to Regulations.

City Planner Leslie Creane discusses the new laptop and the need for a commission member to complete the minutes moving forward.

The Commissioners will discuss amongst themselves and come back with a decision on whom will handle the minutes moving forward.

X. EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by James Streeter to adjourn, seconded by Irma Streeter. Motion carried. 7-0-0.
Meeting adjourned at 9:31pm.

*** THE COMMISSION, AT ITS DISCRETION, MAY CHOOSE NOT TO CONSIDER NEW BUSINESS OR AGENDA ITEMS
AFTER 9:30pm**