

APPROVED / REVISED
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
INLAND WETLANDS BOARD

June 27, 2006

Present: Joseph Fossi
Nelson Gelfman
John Katz, Vice Chair
James McChesney
Rebecca Mucchetti, Chairman
Patrick Walsh
Lillian Willis

Absent: Michael Autuori
Walter Slavin

Also Present: Betty Brosius, Inland Wetlands Agent

At 7:30 p.m. Chairman Mucchetti called the meeting to order and noted that there were no Pending or New items listed on the Inland Wetlands Agenda for discussion.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

MINUTES

The minutes of June 20, 2006 were distributed.

Hearing no further discussion, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Betty Brosius
Inland Wetlands Agent

APPROVED / REVISED
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

June 27, 2006

Present: Joseph Fossi
Nelson Gelfman
John Katz, Vice Chair
James McChesney
Rebecca Mucchetti, Chairman
Patrick Walsh
Lillian Willis

Absent: Michael Autuori
Walter Slavin

Also Present: Betty Brosius, Director of Planning
Richard Baldelli, Zoning Enforcement Officer

At 7:33 p.m. Chairman Mucchetti called the meeting to order.

PENDING ITEMS

1. **Workshop Session**, Zoning Regulations update with Glenn Chalder, Planimetrics

Chairman Mucchetti opened the meeting with a short discussion about funding for the zoning update project, and the need to ask the Board of Selectmen for additional funds. There is concern that the project is taking longer and costing more than originally anticipated. The Chairman indicated that Planimetrics has agreed to finish the project within the limits of the estimated additional funding.

Glenn Chalder spoke about the proposed schedule for continued review. There will be one more work session in July, no meeting in August, and a draft will be ready for view by the public at the end of September. Public hearings will follow, and adoption of new regulations would be anticipated for the end of 2006 or early 2007.

The work session for the meeting began with agreement that the Commission should focus on policy issues relating to the definitions, such as goals and objectives to be achieved by things like definitions for floor area, lot coverage and building height. If the Commission can define the intended goal, then details of the definition and regulations can be worked out by the consultant with staff.

The Commission discussed various methods for defining and calculating floor area and lot coverage, and the possibility that percentages could be geared proportionately by lot sizes, regardless of zoning district. For instance, there is a problem now with one-acre lots that are now subject to three-acre bulk regulations, and many homeowners need

variances for additions and renovations. But there is also a problem in that homeowners are “maxing out” the allowed lot coverages and floor area percentages, and Chairman Mucchetti mentioned hearing “loom factor” complaints when larger homes replace much smaller ones in some of the older neighborhoods.

There was discussion about the possibility of exempting open porches and garages from the calculation of floor area. Mr. Fossi referenced a letter from Harry Lipstein, architect, who suggested exempting open porches of certain sizes, and a percentage of all other porches on a building. Porches add architectural interest, and homeowners are leaving out these features in order to get as much liveable floor area as possible within the permitted FAR for the home.

The Commission finished discussion of the definitions section with Mr. Chalder and agreed that the consultant would meet with staff to do more work on this section prior to submitting a draft for continued review.

Continued discussion focused on Section 3 in the proposed new regulations, for the Residential Zones. Mr. Chalder asked the Commission for opinions on calculating lot density (page 3-26). This section will be completed with the help of staff, with the thought of making the regulation clear and simple for use and understanding by the general public and land use staff.

There was some discussion about the “Regularity Factor” requirement for determining lot shape, and whether this is a confusing or out-dated regulation. It is a mathematical equation used by surveyors to determine allowable lot shapes, and it is intended to prevent narrow and odd-shaped lots. An alternative would be to require each lot to accommodate a certain size circle within the property lines, starting the circle behind the front-yard setback. This method was used in Ridgefield in the past, and was abandoned in favor of the current Regularity Factor requirement, when there were problems with implementation of the circle requirement. It was agreed that more research should be done by the consultant and staff, and the Planner offered to talk to several of the surveyors who do work in town to see if they have any suggestions. There is a need to define “buildable area” if the requirement is for the circle to contain buildable land.

The Commission continued their discussion about building height and methods to calculate it. Mr. Chalder showed illustrations and methods used in New Canaan as examples. There are several ways to calculate building height, and various types of roofs have to be considered in the calculation. There is a need to clearly define “story” in a building.

Mr. Chalder offered information on Special Design Districts, for consideration by the Commission. In New Haven, a court case upheld the right of a Zoning Commission to establish a “Special Design District” that essentially allows a form of “spot zoning” in a narrow circumstance, for a specific piece of property. The case concerned a run-down section of harbor-front property in need of redevelopment and renewal. The

Planner will distribute the actual case to the Commission for their review. This is a new concept, not widely used in the State, but it is worth further investigation.

Mr. Chalder will meet with staff before the July work session, and continued discussion with the Commission in July will focus on Sections 4 and 6 (“Other Housing Zones & Uses,” and “Special Zones”).

NEW ITEMS

There were no new items.

CORRESPONDENCE

Chairman Mucchetti pointed out two pieces of correspondence, for brief discussion:

- Copy of a proposed ordinance for the “keeping of horses on residential property,” listed for discussion on the 6/28/06 agenda for the Board of Selectmen’s meeting. There was some discussion of the minimal and basic animal control regulations included in the proposed new zoning regulations, and how this compares and conflicts with the proposed ordinance.
- ZEO Richard Baldelli explained the reasons behind the memo to the First Selectman about illegal signs posted in road rights-of-way. Mr. Baldelli has been working with the Town highway department, the State DOT, and the Commission’s counsel to develop a legally defensible plan for removal of illegal signs on roadways. The highway departments have no problem with the ZEO’s removal of the signs, and Mr. Baldelli will develop a system for notification to the violator, storage of the illegal signs, and a proposed timeframe for the violator to pick up the illegal signs from the office. Staff will work with the local newspaper to produce an article in the Ridgefield Press before this plan of action is implemented. The memo to the First Selectman requested his sign-off to indicate agreement and understanding with the proposed procedure.

MINUTES

The minutes of June 20, 2006 were distributed.

Hearing no further discussion, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 9:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Betty Brosius
Director of Planning