

TOWN OF RIDGEFIELD Planning and Zoning Commission

APPROVED/REVISED MINUTES SUBCOMMITTEE ON BUSINESS ZONES SPECIAL MEETING

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not verbatim transcription.

February 05, 2021

Present: Joe Fossi
Bob Knight
Karen Martin, Chair
Bob Cascella
Geoffrey Morris
Susan Buzaid
Charles Robbins
Wing Biddle
Steve Zemo

Also Present: Aarti Paranjape, Office Administrator/ Recording Secretary

I. Call to order

At 8:35 AM, Ms. Martin called the meeting to order.

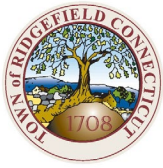
II: Discussion

- Continued discussion on the business Zone

Mr. Fossi briefly gave an overview of the Planning & Zoning Commission meeting where a presentation was made by Mr. Pade, a Planner from the Town of Canton about Form Based Zoning. He added that the form based zoning concept looks promising and the Town of Ridgefield should look into using this concept.

Mr. Robbins also informed the members about the discussion with Mr. Neil Pade. He said that Canton talked about the flexibility while at the same time having standards in design. The town worked with the residential and commercial zoning and provide flexibility.

He added that the Town of Ridgefield can increase the tax base or increase the square footage of retail or commercial in different zones. The Planning & Zoning Commission should be working with Board of Selectmen to create funding to do a study for some kind of form based zoning.



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Mr. Zemo shared his comments stating that the word flexibility is important for property owners. The town should be repurposing or modify new zoning regulations so that there will be fewer empty buildings.

Mr. Cascella talked about having an objective or a goal to discuss in near future.

Ms. Susan Buzaid inquired about the study performed by the Town in collaboration with Darien a few years back. The study wanted to focus on the walkability and parking.

Mr. Zemo stated the study was done five years back, which was handed to Board of Selectmen. However, the study done was not helpful and the recommendations suggested were not working. Mr. Biddle said that the study was more for the Main Street stores and not focused on the zoning aspect. The study was more on retail and how to strengthen it.

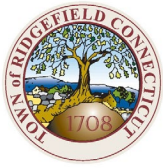
Mr. Fossi stated that the Planning & Zoning Commission should focus on how to reduce empty commercial spaces. There should be options available to the property owners for not just having retail on the first floor.

Mr. Robbins reiterated that we should demonstrate flexibility with the existing code available. The alternative should be thought for each case of property or business or zoning areas. He gave an example of the property on Bailey avenue which could be a potential location where the alternates could be worked on where Zoning modifications can be incorporated.

Mr. Knight agreed that the time are changing and we need to focus on the new demands of the people moving to the town. The infrastructure is the key for the business and residents. The flexibility given to retail or business is very important. He also mentioned that architectural standards be set for any new development (commercial or residential) in the downtown to match the character and drive further value in the downtown.

Mr. Fossi talked about the flexibility zone wise. He suggested that the members should start a conversation and look into different zones as B-1, B-2 or street wise around the downtown area.

It was discussed that Ms. Martin and Mr. Fossi will work on a draft map and various zoning changes stating what is allowed or not allowed, the parking issues and create a draft details which can be presented to the Planning & Zoning Commission and go forward from there.



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Mr. Zemo suggested looking into all the zones and not only B zones. The parking should be addressed in not just in central business districts but also in other business zones.

Mr. Robbins commented on the Route 7 area which has lot of scope to redevelop. He added that area is underutilized where there is opportunity to expand retail or commercial.

Mr. Biddle added that parking should be discussed. There should be the availability of shared community parking.

The discussion ensued about the details and discussion on the different zones. Members will create a priority list by creating maps and presenting the concept for the B districts. The involvement of WPCA regarding the sewer allocations will be crucial when working on the Route 7 corridor.

- Adopt the meeting calendar for 2021

Mr. Fossi motioned to approve the meeting schedule through July 2021 for the Subcommittee on Business Zones. Mr. Robbins seconded it. Motion carried 9-0.

III: Approval of Minutes

- January 22, 2021, Special meeting

Mr. Fossi motioned to approve the meeting minutes for the Subcommittee on Business zones. Mr. Robbins seconded it. Motion carried 9-0.

V. Adjourn

The next meeting is scheduled for February 19, 2021 at 8:30AM.

Hearing no further Ms. Martin adjourned the meeting at 9:21 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,

Aarti Paranjape