Parks and Natural Resources Committee (PNRC)
Tuesday, June 29, 2022, 4:00 PM
Special [virtual] Meeting
Minutes

1. **Call to order and roll call**
The meeting was called to order at 4:09 PM
Attending: Jim Morrow (Chair) [joined late], Ken Feathers (secretary), Tom Harrington, Sue Harrington, Quentin Kessel (Cons. Com. Rep.), Juliana Barrett (Alt.)
Town Staff Present: Jennifer Kaufman, Jay O’Keefe
Not attending: Vicky Wetherell, Charlotte Pyle, Miranda Davis (Alt.)

2. **Approval of Minutes**
   2.1 Minutes of the March 15, 2022, meeting were approved (moved Barrett, second Kessel)
   2.2 Minutes of the March 24, 2022 special meeting were noted for the record; this special meeting did not have an attending quorum.

3. **Opportunity for Public comment**
No members of the general public were present.

4. **Old Business**
   4.1 **Management Plans**
   By consensus this topic was tabled to be discussed at the next scheduled regular meeting.

5. **New Business**
   5.1 **Application to Amend the Zoning Regulations to establish a new Mixed-Use Center-Transition Zoning District, BPOZ 1750 Storrs, LLC, Applicant**
The committee discussed the revised application proposal included with the on-line agenda and had several concerns, summarized below:

   - The committee considered the use of the term “Open Space” to be inappropriate, and inconsistent with the concept as described in the POCD; this usage thus introduces confusion. The committee suggests a different term, such as “common use outdoor space”. It should not include the usual landscaped grounds typically associated with a roadway or the outside of a building, private yards, or decks, patios, or roof gardens, all of which the current definition would seem to include. In addition to undeveloped clearly publicly accessible common areas and trails, it may also include community amenities, such as described in the PBB or DMR zones. Consistent with the form-based examples for other development elements, the applicant should provide examples of what this common use outdoor space would be like, especially any included community amenities, and criteria for how they relate to the rest of the development, both in density and location, the latter especially important for any amenities that are pet-focused.
   - Feathers noted that the “common use outdoor space” even if a constructed amenity, should be for the most part designed to be permeable to rainfall to help minimize site runoff.
   - The committee felt that there was need for greater flexibility in criteria for trail design, since a trail through the buffer space might be different in use from the main non-vehicular spine trail, and site
conditions may dictate modifications as well. The committee suggests several trail design objectives be listed; accompanied by a design drawing providing an example of one trail design that is considered as meeting each objective, along with text specifics as to how each design element serves to meet the objective. Example design objectives might be “capable of two directional bicycle travel with minimal pedestrian conflict” or “capable of use by a pedestrian using a wheelchair or walker”. The proposed regulation should provide for approval of an alternative trail design (from the design example) that is demonstrated to also meet the design objective. (For example, stone dust surface as opposed to a permeable pavement.)

- Morrow expressed a concern that the regulations make no provision for trail connections to adjacent parcels. The committee considers it important to consider the Town’s trail network as a whole, not parcel by parcel, and has consistently made comments intended to ensure pedestrian connectivity for any development. Provisions should be included to evaluate connectivity, especially to ensure that pedestrians and cyclists can seamlessly access the Town’s existing trail network, allowing reduced use of vehicles. These might be part of the process for approval of zone adoption for a parcel.

- There was considerable discussion pertaining to the impact on existing adjacent R90 dwellings. The committee concluded that House owners should be able to have an expectation that they would be protected from development that would encroach on their property more than any development that would have been allowed for an adjacent parcel in a R90 zone under the rules that applied when their parcel’s development was approved. The committee noted that these expectations affected house placement, orientation, and design. At a minimum, the proposed regulations should not provide for encroachment to an existing dwelling (rear or side lot) closer than would have been allowed when that dwelling was approved. This may require review of the R90 history and the proposed buffer language and how they are phrased.

- Feathers noted that the proposed street landscape may appear more built up and “urban” than existing nearby development or development recently being proposed for other parcels in town. The resulting streetscape may thus stand out as anomalous and not serving the “transition” goal. The regulation development should include evaluation of how the proposed frontage would vary from the maximum development allowable under the existing zoning for the front of the subject parcel, and adjacent parcels. This might be part of the process for approval of zone adoption for a parcel. The regulation should not be limited by comparison to existing adjacent development configurations, but what would be maximally permissible under redevelopment of any parcel, and the final regulation form specifications should not result in an increased streetscape appearance of urbanization.

5.2 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Draft Scope of Work

Town staff noted that the packet included a copy of the draft scope of work for this project and asked committee members to review it (as a work still in progress) and provide any comments.

5.3 Parks and Preserves Programming

The agenda packet includes a working draft of the fall programming; this item was not discussed.

6. Communications

No communications were noted
7. **Reports from Members**
   No reports were made

8. **Executive session in accordance with CGS section 1200(6)(D)**
   There was no need for an executive session

9. **Future Meetings**
   The next meeting is July 19, 2022.

10. **Adjournment**
    The meeting was adjourned at 5:14 PM by consensus (moved Kessel, seconded T Harrington)

Respectfully Submitted,
Ken Feathers, Secretary