

Wallingford Planning & Zoning Commission
Regular Meeting
Monday, January 13, 2025
7:00 p.m.

Robert F. Parisi Council Chambers – Town Hall
Town Hall – 45 South Main Street

RECEIVED FOR RECORD 1-21-25
AT 10:31am AND RECEIVED BY
Kristen Parze TOWN CLERK

MINUTES

Chairman Seichter called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.

Roll Call: Present: James Seichter, Chair; J.P. Venoit, Vice Chair; Stephen Allinson, Secretary; James Fitzsimmons, Regular Member, Bryan Rivard, Alternate; David Parent, Alternate; Joseph Sanders, Alternate; and Kevin Pagini, Town Planner.

Consideration of Minutes – December 9, 2024, Regular Meeting

Commissioner Venoit: Motion to approve the Minutes of Monday, December 9, 2024, Meeting of the Wallingford Planning and Zoning Commission as submitted.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons: Second

Vote: Unanimous to approve.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Text Amendment – Section 4.7 – Downtown Apartment (DA) District - Continuation #904-24

Commissioner Allinson noted the additional correspondence. Correspondence included a document titled Alternate Proposal to Section 4.7; an overlay map of the districts affected by the alternate proposal and a copy of pages 13 – 16 of House Bill 5474.

Chairman Seichter noted that the purpose of the proposed text amendment is to increase opportunities for residential development.

Mr. Pagini summarized the first proposal to extend the Downtown Apartment District to allow multifamily dwelling units on a small portion of parcels on South Cherry Street and Ward Street. It would provide density bonuses for affordable housing. The second proposal is more aggressive. It would allow multifamily dwellings in more districts by right. He referred to House Bill 5474 effective October 1, 2024, which gives the Town points for allowing multifamily dwellings and affordable as of right. He suggested changing the term to Middle Housing instead of Multifamily and stated that he would ask the Corporation Counsel to explain the House Bill. He listed the districts that would be affected. He noted that there is still a minimum of 25,000 sq. ft. per property and a height maximum of 30 ft. He suggested getting rid of the units per acre language due to the bulk restrictions.

Chairman Seichter asked for feedback from the Commission on which proposal to consider. The first expands the downtown apartment district by 8 or 9 parcels. The second is more aggressive but has greater benefits for the Town. He stated that there would be no recommendation tonight as there may be unintended consequences.

Commissioner Rivard suggested looking at the proposals as two steps. The first is okay with a small impact. He agreed that the Commission should look for something more comprehensive. He suggested that the second proposal be step two after more discussion.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons agreed with the two-step process. He is in favor of further expanding the downtown apartment overlay district first and then looking at the other proposal. He suggested thinking about the parking requirements too. We don't want parking requirements to stop development.

Commissioner Allinson agreed with the two-step process. He noted that downtown is a focus for affordable housing and we need to make that work first.

Commissioner Sanders concurred. He stated that we will learn more during the first step.

Mr. Pagini reviewed the discussion at the last meeting. He added that the language for Market Rate was not changed. The Site Plan approval for affordable units has been added with a minimum lot size of 15,000 sq. ft. He suggested discussing a lower square footage for the parcels. The properties would still have to comply with building codes and Bulk requirements. The density bonuses have been removed. He suggested bulk restriction easement language instead of units per acre. The unit per acre calculation is confusing. Regarding minimum floor area, he stated that he suspects the building code is 400 sq. ft. He stated that he is in favor of removing the units per acre and giving developers a bonus. But this proposal only affects 9 parcels.

Commissioner Rivard asked for the pros and cons of removing the Units per acre language. Mr. Pagini replied that it is required in other districts due to the height allowed. In this district the maximum height is 30 ft. Commissioner Rivard concurred with removing the language.

Mr. Pagini added that if it is removed, an incentive for developers is needed to build affordable housing. He suggested easing the bulk restrictions. He suggested using the language in the alternate proposal, paragraph C2: "a. The Commission may approve bulk requirements to be reduced or enlarged (height only) by up to 20% as site conditions allow, for affordable housing developments." And "b. The Commission may approve further bulk requirement bonuses for projects that exceed the 30% minimum requirement for affordable units as site conditions allow on a per-application basis." He added that the height restriction is 30 ft. in this area. He explained that the bulk standards table is in 5.1 B and 5.1 C and includes setbacks, height, etc. This proposal would only affect the downtown portion of the district including Judd Square and corner of Ward and South Cherry Streets. The district would go across the street. He added that there is no setback for the train tracks and that the Commission can look at other areas.

Chairman Seichter stated that this could provide for additional development on the Judd Square property.

Commissioner Allinson referred to section C 2b in the alternate proposal and asked if that meant we could do whatever we wanted. Mr. Pagini replied yes, but don't expect to get rid of 100% of setbacks. If it is not appropriate, we can get rid of it. Commissioner Allinson suggested thinking about the bonus beyond this overlay and not setting guardrails. We need to think about that. Mr. Pagini stated that it gives developers an incentive to do more. Commissioner Allinson suggested coming up with some sort of tier to be more flexible. Mr. Pagini suggested capping the requirement at certain levels of affordability.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Richard Partesano, 303 Highland Avenue, stated that he is a strong advocate for affordable housing and a member of an ad hoc working group called the Housing Working Group of Wallingford. He stated that to have a strong, vibrant community, we need housing for the workforce. He agreed with a comment made by Commissioner Sanders at an earlier meeting that we should go beyond the minimum requirements. We need to be creative. This proposal is a way of doing that. He noted that there is a strong link between economic development and affordable housing. He noted that affordable housing should be part of the Town's POCD.

Chairmen Seichter noted that the initial discussions on updating the POCD have started. It is due in 2026. He confirmed that all meetings will be open to the public.

Judah Lopez, 49 Academy Street, encouraged Commission members to attend the Community Conversations at the Library. She shared her story of finding housing in Wallingford. She appreciates this proposal being discussed. She encouraged town citizens to think about what it means to have neighbors who might be different from you.

Kristen Butts, 30 Deme Road, stated that she is a realtor and stated that the American dream of homeownership is often unreachable. We need to be creative and work together to increase the supply of housing. Currently, we have unintended multigenerational living which results in zoning, health, and safety violations. People of all ages are struggling to stay in town. We need to pool our knowledge and resources.

Bob Wiedenmann, 1443 Durham Road stated that he is part of the housing conversation group. He is passionate about affordable housing and stated that this is a good starting point. We tend to focus only on the 30% of affordable units, but more important is the other 70% built at moderate pricing. Under 8-30g, that is a trade-off to get the additional density. He suggested expanding beyond the proposed small area. It doesn't mean every building will become multifamily but will help developers find underused properties. He agreed to get something done now but then considered going beyond those 9

properties. Chairman Seichter noted that most of the properties Mr. Wiedenmann mentions are in the second proposal. Mr. Wiedenmann added that there may be other boundaries to look at. He suggested reducing the minimum lot size to 10,000 sq. ft. None of the R6 lots will be able to use this regulation. He also suggested that the parking requirements may be too strict. He stated that the market will dictate the parking need. Tenants ask about parking before committing to a unit. Mr. Wiedenmann acknowledged that the industry can't build enough housing to meet the need.

Chairman Seichter agreed that parking is always an issue. We need to make sure that adequate parking is available so cars aren't parked on the front lawn. He stated that the Commission has been very supportive of affordable housing yet applications are not coming in. He suggested expanding the downtown apartment district as a first step. Chairman Seichter noted that the second application involves a lot of properties. We need to look at it some more and avoid any unintended consequences. He suggested acting on the Downtown Apartment District next month. For the alternate proposal, the Commission needs time to consider it. There was consensus to proceed.

Mr. Pagini stated that he would leave the Downtown Apartment Overlay District as it is and tweak the language. He will prepare a separate alternative proposal as a separate application. He suggested adding a tiered bulk requirement up to 40%. Chairman Seichter suggested putting the proposal on paper for the Commission to consider. Mr. Pagini also suggested decreasing the lot size for the Special Permit for market-rate housing. It currently is 25,000 sq. ft. and not many lots in the district are that size. Commissioner Seichter asked for suggestions to be discussed at the next meeting.

Mr. Pagini added that there will be a survey on the town website to collect input for the POCD.

Commissioner Allinson referred to the 30 – 40-year deed restriction for affordable housing and asked if we could ask the Corporation Counsel if there is a creative way to include a permanent deed restriction. Maybe we can offer incentives in exchange. Chairman Seichter noted that he has always wanted that but this is what the legislators came up with. The Corporation Counsel has said that we can ask for more. Commissioner Allinson noted that we will eventually run out of land for new buildings. Chairman Seichter stated that the need for housing will not go away.

Hearing no further public comment, Chairman Seichter called for a motion to close the public hearing.

Commissioner Venoit: Motion to continue the public hearing for application #904-24 Text Amendment – Section 4.7 – Downtown Apartment (DA) District to the February meeting.

**Commissioner Fitzsimmons: second
Vote: Unanimous**

REPORTS OF OFFICERS AND STAFF

2. Administrative Approvals – noted as approved

- a. 47 Jamestown Circle – Stairs #811-24
 - b. 361 N. Colony Street – Hogan #310-24
 - c. 32 Liney Hall Lane – Hass #812-24
 - d. 25 Gregory Road – Schuler #225-24
 - e. 173 Church Street – United Concrete #226-24
 - f. 69 North Plains Highway – United Concrete #227-24
3. ZBA December Decisions – no comment
 4. ZBA Notice of January 21, 2025 – no comment

Mr. Pagini reported that the Annual Report will be available next month.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Venoit: Motion to Adjourn the Wallingford Planning and Zoning Commission for Monday, January 13, 2025, at 8:20 p.m.

**Commissioner Fitzsimmons: Second
Vote: Unanimous**

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl-Ann Tubby
Recording Secretary