

ORANGE ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MAY 3, 2022 MEETING

Unapproved Minutes

The Town Plan and Zoning Commission held a meeting on Tuesday, May 3, 2022, at 7:00 p.m., lower level, Orange Town Hall, 617 Orange Center Road, Orange, Connecticut.

Oscar Parente, Esq., Chairman
Judy Smith, Vice-Chairman
Paul Kaplan, Esq., Secretary
Tom Torrenti, P.E.
Kevin Cornell, Esq., P.E.

Jack Demirjian, Zoning Enforcement Officer
Tamara Trantales, Administrative Assistant
Robin Gengaro, Recording Secretary

ORANGE ZONING COMMISSION
TOWN HALL OFFICE
617 ORANGE CENTER ROAD
ORANGE, CT 06477
2022 MAY -9 PM 2:26

Chairman Parente welcomed everyone to the meeting. Those seated at the table introduced themselves for the record. Chairman Parente stated that Commissioner Kevin Cornell is joining the meeting remotely.

Review of the Minutes from the April 19, 2022 meeting.

A motion was made by Paul Kaplan and seconded by Judy Smith to accept and approve the Minutes from the April 19, 2022 meeting, as written. The motion carried with the vote recorded as follows: Kaplan, aye; Smith, aye; Torrenti, aye; Cornell, aye; Parente, aye. The vote was recorded as 5-0 to accept and approve the motion.

There were no additional comments.

Old Business - To review the revisions on the Affordable Housing Plan draft that was discussed at the April 5 and April 19, 2022 meetings.

Zoning Enforcement Officer Jack Demirjian stated that the Southern Connecticut Regional Council of Government (SCRCOG) incorporated the comments and revisions from this commission into the town's Affordable Housing Plan. ZEO Demirjian noted that language from the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) has also been incorporated. Discussion ensued regarding projects which have been approved but have not been constructed yet. Commissioner Smith suggested adding a footnote to explain. Discussion continued. Commissioner Torrenti read a portion of the POCD into the record. ZEO Demirjian stated that he will email SCRCOG explaining that the commission would like elderly accessory apartments included. He noted that the next meeting is the last one prior to the deadline.

There were no additional comments.

New Business - To review the amended language regarding outdoor dining standards in accordance with PA 21-2, Section 182 (b).

ZEO Demirjian read the definition of schools into the record. He stated that this language will provide coverage for schools in town, daycare, primary schools, etc. ZEO Demirjian will send this to the Regional Planning Agencies.

There were no additional comments.

Report of the Zoning Enforcement Officer

ZEO Demirjian stated that the buildings at the Firelite Plaza have been demolished. He noted that the buildings at Beecher Walk are all framed.

There were no additional comments.

PUBLIC HEARINGS: 7:00 p.m. – (1)

Chairman Parente stated that he needed to recuse himself from this application. Vice-Chairman Judy Smith presided over the rest of the meeting.

Commissioner Kaplan read the legal notice into the record.

PETITION TO AMEND THE ORANGE ZONING REGULATIONS – Article I §383-14, Article VIII §383-66 & §383-67, Article XIV §383-141 & §383-143.4 and Article XVIII §383-174. Submitted by Noble Energy Real Estate Holdings, LLC. To amend the Orange Zoning Regulations to define and allow “Electric Vehicle Showrooms” and “Community Travel Centers” as special uses in the LI-2 District, along with parameters for location and eligibility of these new uses.

John Knuff, Esq., 147 Broad Street, Milford, is representing the applicant. He stated that this proposal is in the LI-2 zone.

Attorney Knuff stated that they were here last year for a similar project. The only interest which has been shown for this area is for hotels. A brief discussion ensued. Attorney Knuff distributed information regarding the proposal. He noted that the applicant believes in Orange and his Community Travel Center. Attorney Knuff stated that this would enhance the gateway to Orange.

Michael Frisbee is the founder, owner, and operator of Noble Energy. He presented a brief history of how he developed his own brand. He stated that he controls all on his property and that he would be a good community partner for the Town of Orange.

Kevin Solli, Solli Engineering, Monroe, CT, displayed renderings and floor plans. He stated that this is the future of transportation. The proposed location, 88 Marsh Hill Road, is right off I-95. Mr. Solli stated that this is not a traditional gas station or rest stop. There would be a full electric vehicle charging station with canopy as well as a canopy for gasoline sales. There would be a Community Travel Center with many amenities beneficial to patrons, with a drive-thru window.

Mr. Solli explained that there would be an electric vehicle showroom and service center. Several cars for display and test drives would be on site instead of an inventory of cars. Patrons would order directly from the dealer. He clarified that tonight’s proposal is only for the text amendment.

Attorney Knuff stated that the design of the building reflects high end customers. He noted that here would not be any high-speed diesel fuel. A brief discussion ensued. Mr. Frisbee expressed his intent to support this project for the next 25 to 30 years as electric vehicle use increases.

He will own the showroom and service center. Car dealers will lease from Mr. Frisbee. A brief discussion ensued regarding Mr. Frisbee's other locations.

Commissioner Cornell stated that if this is the future, he believes the commission should still consider whether it wants to have a retail, commercial, transportation-oriented use in our light industrial district at the interchange. He noted that it has not been allowed before. Discussion ensued. Attorney Knuff stated that the commission is acting legislatively. They would not be setting a precedent. Discussion ensued. Mr. Solli noted that according to the POCD, this is where the commission wants to see additional development opportunities.

Vice-Chairman Smith asked for comments from the public

Annemarie Sliby, Orange Economic Development Corp., expressed support of this proposal. She stated that this is an upscale project, the type of business the Orange Economic Development Corp. wants in town to encourage people to visit Orange. Ms. Sliby stated that it is in a good location, right off I-95. She noted that this project would push Orange into the future.

ZEO Demirjian read a letter from George Finley into the record. Mr. Finley is opposed to this proposal, mainly because he does not support retail in the LI-2 zone.

A motion was made by Paul Kaplan and seconded by Tom Torrenti to close the public hearing. The motion carried with the vote recorded as follows: Kaplan, aye; Torrenti, aye; Cornell, aye; Smith, aye. The vote was recorded as 4-0 to accept and approve the motion.

Commissioner Cornell stated that he would like to visit an existing facility prior to deciding on this project. Vice-Chairman Smith concurred, stating that she would like to take time to review this proposal before the next meeting, scheduled for May 17, 2022. She added that this is a unique project. She believes it is a great idea for the future of transportation. Commissioner Kaplan noted that it is an attractive project with some locations already existing.

There were no additional comments.

A motion was made by Paul Kaplan and seconded by Tom Torrenti to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried with the vote recorded as follows: Kaplan, aye; Torrenti, aye; Cornell, aye; Smith, aye. The vote was recorded as 4-0 to accept and approve the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tamara Trantales,
Administrative Assistant