

ORANGE ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 1, 2022 MEETING

Approved Minutes

The Town Plan and Zoning Commission held a meeting on Tuesday, November 1, 2022, at 7:00 p.m., lower level, Orange Town Hall, 617 Orange Center Road, Orange, Connecticut.

Oscar Parente, Esq., Chairman
Paul Kaplan, Esq., Secretary
Kevin Cornell, Esq., P.E.
Tom Torrenti, P.E.

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

Chairman Parente welcomed everyone to the meeting. He asked those seated at the table to introduce themselves for the record. Chairman Parente noted that Commissioner Smith would not be in attendance this evening.

Review of the Minutes from the October 18, 2022 meeting.

A motion was made by Paul Kaplan and seconded by Tom Torrenti to accept and approve the Minutes from the October 18, 2022 meeting, as amended. The motion carried with the vote recorded as follows: Kaplan, aye; Torrenti, aye; Cornell, aye; Parente, aye. The vote was recorded as 4-0 to accept and approve the motion.

There were no additional comments.

Old Business

Commissioner Cornell asked Zoning Enforcement Officer Jack Demirjian if he had an update on the appeal filed by the winery. ZEO Demirjian stated that he has not heard any updates yet. A brief discussion ensued.

Chairman Parente asked ZEO Demirjian about the mandatory training for commissioners. ZEO Demirjian stated that the 4-hour training must be completed by the end of 2023. A brief discussion ensued. ZEO Demirjian stated that he would be out of the office next week for the first part of his CAZEO training. A brief discussion ensued.

There were no additional comments.

New Business

ZEO Demirjian stated that a traffic consulting business, WSP USA, has been retained to perform traffic studies for 175 Boston Post Road and 88 Marsh Hill Road.

Chairman Parente asked ZEO Demirjian what the status is for the project with a proposed swimming pool in the Christmas Tree Plaza. ZEO Demirjian stated that he would look into it.

ZEO Demirjian stated that the facility at 197 Indian River Road would be looking for a Certificate of Occupancy soon.

There were no additional comments.

Report of the Zoning Enforcement Officer

ZEO Demirjian stated that he has received several calls about ground mounted solar panels. Residents would like to install them, yet ground mounted solar panels are not outlined in the zoning regulations. A brief discussion ensued. Chairman Parente suggested that ZEO Demirjian investigate how other towns handle ground mounted solar panels.

There were no additional comments.

PUBLIC HEARINGS: 7:00 p.m. – (2)

Commissioner Kaplan read the legal notice into the record.

PETITION TO AMEND THE ORANGE ZONING REGULATIONS – Article VIII §383-66 & Article XVIII §383-174. Submitted by Montar Group, LLC. To allow Self Storage Facilities in the Light Industrial 2 District by special use permit.

John Knuff, Esq, 147 North Broad Street, Milford, stated that he is representing the Montar Group. The proposal is to amend the zoning regulations to allow self-storage facilities in the Light Industrial 2 District (LI-2). Attorney Knuff stated that self-storage facilities are safe, clean, and modern. He said that people are downsizing, and they need a place to store some of their belongings.

Attorney Knuff praised the commission for the work they have done to make the LI-2 zone successful. He stated that most of the business in LI-2 are on large parcels. The property the applicant wants to use is a remnant parcel. Attorney Knuff briefly explained. Attorney Knuff read a portion of the proposal into the record.

Chairman Parente asked for a reference to Marsh Hill Road in the proposed regulations. Attorney Knuff agreed to add it to the proposed regulations. Discussion ensued regarding landscaping. Attorney Knuff stated that there would be a main lobby and hallways. He distributed a preliminary site plan. He noted that there would not be a huge parking demand. He expressed his belief that this facility would not impact anyone. A brief discussion ensued. Attorney Knuff stated that this proposal consists of two (2) parcels on 16 and 22 Salem Lane.

Dan Moore, Vice-President of Development explained that there would be a keypad for secure entry to the facility. Mr. Moore explained the process of how self-storage would work in this location. A brief discussion ensued. Commissioner Kaplan asked how many units there would be. Mr. Moore stated that there would be approximately 800-1000 units and one main lobby. Discussion ensued regarding loading spaces.

Attorney Knuff stated that he does not think this facility would be visible from I-95. A brief discussion ensued. He stated that the applicant would provide more information to reflect the commission's comments at the next meeting.

Chairman Parente asked for public input. There was none. After a brief discussion, the Commission agreed to keep the public hearing open. This item will appear on the next agenda.

There were no additional comments.

APPLICATION FOR SPECIAL PERMIT OR USE - Submitted by Gezim Zeko. For property known as 374 Grassy Hill Road. To repurpose and enlarge a pre-existing non-conforming barn structure.

Commissioner Tom Torrenti stated that he must recuse himself from this application due to a conflict of interest.

Jeff Gordon, Codespoti and Associates, 263 Boston Post Road, Orange, stated that this parcel of land is part of a farm from 1872. The owner, Gezim Zeko, has renovated the farmhouse. Now he wants to do a major renovation of the barn, enlarging the 3-story structure. His plans are to add an open deck and a staircase. Mr. Gordon stated that there would not be any bedrooms or living space. There would be a fitness room, workshop, garage, and music conservatory in the barn.

Commissioner Kaplan asked if the barn would have water. Commissioner Cornell noted that they are proposing to add two (2) bathrooms. He asked if the existing barn is hooked up to the septic system. Mr. Gordon replied affirmatively. It was noted that there is not a bathroom in the barn currently. Discussion ensued. Commissioner Cornell expressed his concern that the presence of two (2) bathrooms could be contemplated as use as a dwelling. Chairman Parente noted that the commission has not approved an accessory structure with a bathroom. Discussion continued. Chairman Parente stated that the commission must be careful that they are not creating a second dwelling. Discussion continued.

Mr. Zeko demonstrated on the plan where the existing septic system is located. Commissioner Cornell asked ZEO Demirjian to confirm with the Health Department. Chairman Parente noted that the map should be revised.

Chairman Parente asked the public if they had any input. There were no public comments.

ZEO Demirjian stated that there is a permit for repair of the septic system for the barn. He confirmed that it was completed in June of this year.

Chairman Parente stated that the barn is a large building, and the size is non-conforming. Discussion ensued. ZEO Demirjian stated that the proposal must meet the health and building codes regarding bathrooms. Discussion continued. Chairman Parente asked for a notation on the map stating that the accessory structure cannot be used as a dwelling. Discussion ensued regarding expansions on non-conforming structures.

Commissioner Cornell stated that he is generally reluctant to expand existing non-conforming structures. He noted that the expansion is a small, covered stair tower to access the building. There would also be a deck which would not be visible to neighbors.

A motion was made by Paul Kaplan and seconded by Kevin Cornell to close the public hearing. The motion carried with the vote recorded as follows: Kaplan, aye; Cornell, aye; Parente, aye. The vote was recorded as 3-0 to accept and approve the motion.

A motion was made by Paul Kaplan and seconded by Kevin Cornell to accept and approve the application for Special Permit for 374 Grassy Hill Road, to repurpose and enlarge a pre-existing barn structure, subject to the condition that the accessory structure does not become living space. The motion carried with the vote recorded as follows: Kaplan, aye; Cornell, aye; Parente, aye. The vote was recorded as 3-0 to accept and approve the motion.

There were no additional comments.

A motion was made by Paul Kaplan and seconded by Kevin Cornell to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried with the vote recorded as follows: Kaplan, aye; Cornell, aye; Parente, aye. The vote was recorded as 3-0 to accept and approve the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Tamara Trantales,
Administrative Assistant