

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

The Lyme Planning & Zoning Commission held a meeting on September 11, 2017 at 7:30 p.m. at the Lyme Town Hall, 480 Hamburg Road, Lyme, CT, 06371.

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Tiffany Chairman, Ross Byrne, Phyllis Ross, Ann Rich, Hunter Ward, Kelvin Tyler, Bernie Gigliotti ZEO, and Patsy Turner Secretary.

Regular Meeting

Old Business

Continue discussion of regulation changes in support of farming and the setting of a timeline for moving this effort forward.

Present at the meeting were subcommittee members Fritz Gahagan, Baylee Drown, and Janice Ehle-Meyer.

Gahagan: The commission members' comments from last month have been incorporated in the document before us tonight. The sub-committee has met to work on the draft. Agriculture: The idea is to increase the waiver requirements, site plan review, and special permit for agricultural activities. Protecting the character of the neighborhood is important and zoning regulations are in place to provide certainty for the applicant and the surrounding neighborhood. There can be different levels of review depending on the size of the property. Sections 11.2.2 and Section 11.2.3 have the information in the existing regulations. Section 10.3 can also be used and requires a permit. Smaller lots in the RU40 district may be where there should be a different level of review, which are mostly on Rogers Lake. Permits protect the investment in the soil and the land; permits run with the land.

P. Ross: In the Lyme Plan of Conservation and Development there is language that says the Town of Lyme want to preserve and promote agriculture.

Gahagan: Farm Stand-Sale of produce from a farm and southeastern Connecticut. Adequate off street parking will be required. Zoning is about public safety. Signs having to do with a farm stand are limited to 2 per lot. Seasonal Farm Market- The definitions of farm market- seasonal (800 sq. ft.) and farm market-permanent were discussed. The display area dictates the number of parking spaces. The word produce in definitions produce should be changed to product. Off street parking required with a setback from the street line. For permanent farm market there should be a limit for acreage; a farmer which has a smaller farm could apply for a special permit. A Farmer Market will be located in an existing structure on the farm; following with the character of the neighborhood (architectural harmony with the surrounding area).

P. Ross: Natural barrier is important from the road and neighbors.

Rich: The community of Lyme is changing and having more of a need for organic farming. Small farms should have the ability to flourish and grow.

Gahagan: Any activity on a farm can be viewed by the commission on a preliminary basis, before property is purchased so the farmer knows what the Town's zoning regulations allow or limit.

P. Ross: There is not a huge difference between a seasonal farm market and permanent farm market; traffic and parking will be similar.

Gahagan: A permanent farm market will be open up to six days a week and need permanent structures so that there would not be set-up and break-down of the market every day.

Drown: A permanent structure allows electricity and refrigeration/storage. Most CSA farms have two to four days which their customers can pick up per week.

Gahagan: Recreational activities need to be reviewed by the commission because of the unknown; lot size and numbers of cars (vehicle) dictate the regulatory need. Processing /distribution which could be allowed under Section 8.1 of the current regulations, the number of employees dictate a special permit review. Processing should support local farming. In the near future a farm can have a farm to table restaurant.

P. Ross: The primary of the produce being processed must originate on the farm.

A discussion continued between the commission members about what type of activities help farms stay viable.

Gahagan: Agricultural Employees- if the employees are doing farming activities (growing of crops, producing milk or raising cattle) there are no limitations. Housing (single family, no more than 1200 sq. ft.) for full time workers, farms need housing; the housing can only be used for full time agric. employees, the permit could be attached to land records.

Drown: Part time employees should be allowed to live on site also; off season the employees work 10 hours a week.

The discussion continued about housing. Language can be developed better to fit in this section. Health code and building code need to be met.

Ward: If a building is constructed for farm employees and the property is no longer farmed what happens to the structure?

R. Byrne: The structure has to be tied to the farming.

P. Ross: The trend with farming is to have smaller sized farms.

Gahagan: It is important to have the ability to permit some of these farming activities.

Drown: The town sanitarian has the state regulations that have to do with on farm housing and dormitories. Copies of the document will be given to the subcommittee.

Gigliotti: The current regulations for lot coverage will limit structures and/or hoop houses.

Gahagan: Nursery-retail sales would require special permit. Saw Mill-there is less than 3 employees it is a non-issue, anything over the allowed number will need a site plan review. Animals-The problem with farm animals is the inability to keep them confined. Issuance of a permit under Section 10.3 should require provision for proper confinement of animals. The raising of animals on a small acreage farm will require review.

Gigliotti: There is a stable ordinance already part of our regulations.

Gahagan: What is the commission's input on buffers between new subdivision and existing farms?

Gigliotti: Buffers between farms and neighbors should be part of the new subdivision regulations, open space Section 5.7.

Gahagan: Hoop houses- Lot coverage for buildings will regulate the number of hoop houses, 8% of 2 acres would be 8000 square feet of hoop house.

Drown: One high tunnel hoop house is 3000 square feet.

Tiffany: The issue with hoop houses is the need for screening.

Gahagan: What amount of lot coverage for hoop houses does the commission want to regulate? Would 4500 square foot of coverage require site plan review or special permit?

The commission continued to discuss of hoop houses in more detail on larger lots.

Drown: The screening of a hoop house defeats the purpose because the shading from screening will limit the amount of sunlight.

Gahagan: The issue with hoop houses is the public view (street scape).

P. Ross: Gigliotti has the ability to waive a site plan review by seeing the plan before it comes before this commission, the hoop houses should have adequate screening.

Gahagan: If the hoop houses are not being used in an extending time period (6 months) for farm use then the structure should be removed or taken down.

Gahagan: The information and feedback will be incorporated in the document before the commission and the impact from the changes to the document will be reviewed.

Tiffany: The hard work on this document is appreciated.

Gigliotti handed a document of regulation sections that need changes in connection with our farming efforts.

NEW BUSINESS N/A

APPROVAL OF OUTSTANDING MINUTES

A motion was entertained to approve the minutes of the August 2017 Meeting.

R. Byrne moved the motion and A. Rich seconded the approval; the minutes were passed.

Adjournment

The Planning and Zoning Commission meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patsy Turner, Secretary