

Woodstock Planning & Zoning Commission

MONTHLY BUSINESS MEETING

Thursday, November 16, 2023

7:30 PM

WOODSTOCK TOWN HALL, MEETING ROOM 1 & VIRTUAL via Zoom

The state statute currently allows for in person meetings unless quorum or more requests virtual meetings. Because of virtual attendance, this meeting is being recorded. This procedure has been reviewed and approved by Town Attorney Richard Roberts.

This meeting can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/BIHo0S2gV90>

1. Call to Order- Chairman Jeffrey Marcotte called meeting to order at 7:36 pm

- a. Roll Call- Noted for record: Quorum

Members Present- Jeffrey Marcotte (Chair), Joe Polulech, Dean Gould, Mark Blackmer, Joseph Adiletta, Syd Blodgett, Timothy Young, David Morse

Members Present via Zoom - None

Members Absent- Nancy Fraser, Jeffrey Gordon, Dwight Ryniewicz, Doug Porter

Others Present- Delia Fey (Town Planner), Cameron James (Assistant Planner), John Day Jr., Ken Rappaport, Pete Parent, Norm Thibault, Linda Auger, Laura and Ray Curley, Trish & Gary Renaud, Recording Secretary Amy Monahan and others. Public attendance via Zoom: Emilie Hebert, Gianna Ormstead, Rania Banks and others.

- b. Designation of Alternates: Dean Gould was seated

- c. Pledge of Allegiance: Jeffrey Marcotte led the Pledge of Allegiance

2. Chair's Report

- a. Thank you to staff and commissioners for all the work at meetings and for what you do between meetings. Thank you to the Townspeople for participating in this important process.
- b. Happy Thanksgiving to all in advance.

3. Citizens' Comments

- a. None

4. Meeting Minutes

- a. October 19, 2023

- b. November 2, 2023

- i. David Morse made a ***Motion** to approve the October 19, 2023 Monthly Business Meeting and November 2, 2023 Meeting Minutes as presented. ***Seconded** by Joe Adiletta. ***The motion passed** with 3 abstentions (Blackmer, Gould & Morse).

5. Public Hearing

- a. #659-09-23 Woodstock Inn Associates, c/o Robert Reger, 94 Plaine Hill Rd – 3-lot re-subdivision (map 5781 block 50 lot 04B)
 - i. Jeff Marcotte resumed the public hearing #659-09-23 Woodstock Inn Associates, c/o Robert Reger, 94 Plaine Hill Rd – 3-lot re-subdivision (map 5781 block 50 lot 04B) at 7:45 pm. This hearing was advertised in Villager Newspaper on 10/6/23 and 10/14/23 as required by statute.
 - ii. Pete Parent briefly reviewed the proposal to break off two (2) lots on the South side of the property with traditional site design as there have been no changes. The IWWA has now approved the application.

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- iii. Joe Adiletta asked confirmation that the changes requested were made to the drawing plans. Pete confirmed the changes have been made.
- iv. Delia Fey inquired to see that Pete Parent had addressed comments of the Design Professional review. Pete Parent confirmed.
- v. Joe Polulech re-stated the decision to not connect to the public sewer goes against the affordable housing work of the commission. Delia Fey noted that the proposed units are not intended to be affordable housing.
- vi. Joe Adiletta made a ***Motion** to close public hearing #659-09-23 Woodstock Inn Associates, c/o Robert Reger, 94 Plaine Hill Rd – 3-lot re-subdivision (map 5781 block 50 lot 04B). ***Seconded by Mark Blackmer. *The motion passed unanimously.**
- b. #SP660-10-23 Woodstock Sustainable Farms, Kenneth Rapoport, 211 Pulpit Rock Rd (map 7278 block 32 lot 25, 25-1 & 25-3) – event & wedding facility promoting agritourism
 - i. Jeffrey Marcotte opened the public hearing #SP660-10-23 Woodstock Sustainable Farms, Kenneth Rapoport, 211 Pulpit Rock Rd (map 7278 block 32 lot 25, 25-1 & 25-3) – event & wedding facility promoting agritourism at 7:55 pm. This hearing was advertised on 11/03/23 and 11/10/23 as required by statute.
 - ii. Norm Thibault of Killingly Engineering Associates is representing the applicant. He noted that the sign was posted in at property advertising this hearing and 500 foot abutters were notified as required.
 - iii. Norm Thibault reviewed the properties owned by Mr. Rappaport that are included in the application. The property addressed in this application is a 28.8-acre parcel currently used for agricultural purposes. The access is from Pulpit Rock Road- a town designated scenic road that is narrow and winding. All traffic would be directed in via Mehan Rd. The driveway to the facility is gravel and all activities would be 1500 feet from the road at an increased elevation of approximately 150 feet and be well screened from public road. The driveway is wide enough for two-way traffic and buses as well. There is an existing gravel parking area and parking can be supported on the side of the driveway in most areas. ADA parking is available on site.
 - iv. The purpose of the application is agritourism and education. Concerns brought up seem to be access and traffic related. Weddings will be held on site only to raise funds to support agritourism and educational purposes and be limited to 6-8 weddings per year. Other events planned are dinners and stargazing. Portable restrooms and on-site catering will be used at events.
 - v. There have been larger events of over 200 people held on this property in the past. People have been successfully bussed in for some events reducing traffic.
 - vi. Regenerative Farm Tours, school tours, seasonal farm events, Chicken BBQ, Biodiversity events with Wyndham Land Trust, school sponsored functions, up to 8 weddings per year, small private events (hearth dinners) and star gazing are the proposed activities.
 - vii. Ken Rappaport stated that regenerative agriculture is his prime focus. This year, his operation raised 8,000 pasture raised chickens, 125 pigs and 100 sheep. He has received grant funding to start Azuluna Farm which aims to regenerate agriculture and food quality to impact health. A video outlining the Azuluna Farm Concept was played. One goal that Ken Rappaport has is to grow 200 new farms in the New England area using the hub and spoke model.
 - viii. Ken Rappaport previously brought this concept to the Planning & Zoning Commission and was asked what else he would like to do on site. That is the reason he is here to obtain a special permit. He wants to be able to hold events to help with funding the educational work of the Farm. He noted that he has lived in town for about 30 years and held many events on that site over the years with no problems.

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- ix. Ken Rappaport distributed a letter that anonymously was sent to residents and reviewed the concerns noted in that letter. Ken also distributes a letter from Wyndham Land Trust stating that proposed operations would not impact the protected land which Norm Thibault read for the record.
- x. Joe Adiletta asked clarification of the farm enterprises that are in the proposal. Ken Rappaport noted that farm enterprises are spoke farms that would home one type of animal and would be located all around the region (not all in Woodstock).
- xi. Joe Adiletta counted 35-43 different events in the proposal. Ken Rappaport noted that they would not all take place annually or at all. He wanted to list all of the options for the special permit. Norm Thibault added that the proposal is to be able to do all of the things listed without returning to the commission but not plan to do all of them on a regular basis or even at all. Norm noted that he has permitted other event venues and successfully addressed concerns raised by Woodstock residents in those other event venues.
- xii. Syd Blodgett asked if numbered limits would be an option in order to be able to grow adequately for the town and ensure that future owners do not abuse the permissions granted to current owner. Ken Rappaport noted that he is willing to set limits and that the events are not his primary focus of farming that he wants to focus on at the farm.
- xiii. Joe Polulech clarified that the road is gravel and narrow and asked if the road has frost concerns. Ken Rappaport noted that people would not be coming to the farm when animals are not active so most visits would be in warmer months. It was also noted that there have been no issues with feed trucks delivering to the farm.
- xiv. Delia Fay clarified that agricultural is a permitted use and he does not need permit for agricultural use of the land. This application is for the other uses on the property.
 - 1. Ken Rappaport asked if the educational farm tours are considered agricultural use. Ken noted that every farm has to be creative to make funds to support farming or there will be no farms.
- xv. Tim Young stated that after listening to Ken's presentation he has no concerns with what he plans to do at the site. But, going back to Syd's point, it becomes a concern to give a special permit without restrictions to ensure that future owners do not abuse the permission granted. He feels that putting caps on events to start with is a good way to move forward.
- xvi. Goth Evans has a letter to read into the record from the owners of 204 Calkins Rd which stated that noise is a concern as a neighbor of Ken Rappaport. The letter referenced a concern with Mr Rappaports dogs barking.
- xvii. On his own behalf, Goth Evans wanted assurance that proper notice of this hearing has been given. He considers himself an abutter and did not get notice. There are a number of people who cannot attend this meeting due to insufficient notice. His primary concern is pertaining to the weddings- specifically the noise generated at weddings with loud music. He noted that towns have had issues and had to limit number of events and hours of events around weddings. Goth Evans is against any wedding use on the property not only because of noise but also safety concerns.
- xviii. Norma Jena Loftus applauds Ken Rappaport for the great work that he does. She agrees with the statement that many neighbors are not able to attend and that there should be another public hearing to accommodate those people. She sees no connection between weddings and agritourism. She resists the weddings on this site and agrees with restrictions of events. She also is concerned with conditions of Pulpit Rock Rd and traffic impact on that scenic road. She finds it upsetting that a bus would be allowed on Pulpit Rock Rd. She feels this process is good and encourages giving the public hearing more time.

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1. Delia Fey clarified that the state regulates notices for public hearings. This hearing was publicized according to state statutes.
- xix. Gail Voorhees is concerned about increased traffic and impact on wetlands located on Pulpit Rock Rd and disagrees with closing traffic flow in one direction of Pulpit Rock Rd on the West end.
- xx. Peter Crystal also only found out about this application yesterday. He stated that he remembers Mr. Rappaport against a previous development due to the inability of the road to handle traffic. The road system has not changed, and Mr. Crystal is concerned about bus travel on the road. He also is concerned with Meehan Rd impact with traffic directed over that road to access the farm. It was noted that Meehan Rd has several children living on it and would not like to see increased traffic, specifically as speeding over that road is already a concern.
- xxi. Amy Eathier thanked Ken Rappaport for the work at his farm around nutrition in our country and education of children. She reiterated the public safety concerns of pulpit rock at 171, drinking at weddings, emergency vehicle being able to get to guests, scenic road impacts, noise for neighbors and holding weddings on the site. She also thanked Syd Blodgett & Tim Young for their consideration and asking for numbers to consider pertaining to this application.
- xxii. Jane Newal is concerned with farming put into ventures that are pursued in the application. She noted that regulations are already in place for education, camping and event venues. She noted that the commission needs to be consistent with decisions on farm properties. She is concerned with traffic safety and speeding on local roads and the lack of a traffic impact study with the application. She would like to see limits and safety precautions included with any approval.
 1. Delia Fey clarified that Devon Point farm never applied for a special permit to teach, and no permit was granted for that operation on a Woodstock Farm.
 2. Peter Crystal noted that the Devon Point property referenced above and stated the access to that property is different from pulpit rock road and would be more appropriate.
- xxiii. Goth Evans asked if the permit were granted with restrictions, how would those restrictions be monitored and enforced. Jeffrey Marcotte noted that question is valid and a topic that the commission is currently working out.
 1. Delia Fey noted that enforcement would be under the Zoning Enforcement Officer and there is a process in place for that.
- xxiv. Laura Curley noted that as an educator, what Ken Rappaport is trying to do is fantastic. Her only concern is the road and complications traversing that road over the years. She feels that people who are unfamiliar with the road may have issues traversing it and could be unsafe to the drivers.
- xxv. Joe Adiletta referenced camping/glamping and asked if that is a consideration. Ken Rappaport noted that it was a conversation that would have to be further defined. He has no vision of putting up yurts at this time.
 1. Joe Adiletta asked if more time to determine more details would be beneficial. Both Ken Rappaport and Norm Thibault agree that they would like to further discuss details of the application
- xxvi. Delia Fey read a letter from Doug Porter for the record. He has safety concerns with the Pulpit Rock Road and Route 171.
- xxvii. Timothy Young made a ***Motion** to continue the public hearing to December 21, 2023 at 7:45 pm ***Seconded** by Joe Adiletta. ***The motion passed unanimously.**

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6. New Business

- a. None

7. Old Business

- a. #659-09-23 Woodstock Inn Associates, c/o Robert Reger, 94 Plaine Hill Rd – 3-lot re-subdivision (map 5781 block 50 lot 04B)
 - i. David Morse made a ***Motion** to approve as presented with the written submission of IWWA approval, pending agreement from design professionals that they accept applicants' responses to questions raised and including bond amounts. ***Seconded** by Dean Gould. ***The Motion passed** with one opposed (Poluluch).
- b. #SP660-10-23 Woodstock Sustainable Farms, Kenneth Rapoport, 211 Pulpit Rock Rd (map 7278 block 32 lot 25, 25-1 & 25-3) – event & wedding facility promoting agritourism
 - i. Tabled to December 21, 2023 at 7:45 pm

8. Review of Home Occupation Permit Applications

- a. None

9. Non-Residential Zoning Permits

- a. None

10. Annual Meeting

- a. Election of Officers
 - i. Tabled until December 7, 2023
- b. 2024 Meeting Dates
 - i. July 4, 2024 is a scheduled PZ Meeting Date. The commission wishes to omit this meeting
 - ii. Mark Blackmer made a ***Motion** to schedule Planning Meetings on 1st Thursday of each month and Regular Business Meetings on 3rd Thursday of each month for the upcoming 2024 calendar year with exception of July 4, 2023. ***Seconded** by Joe Adiletta. ***The motion passed unanimously.**
- c. Bylaws Review
 - i. Tabled until December 7, 2023
- d. Schedule Annual Legal Training
 - i. Delia Fey will reach out to see if Town Attorney is available for planning meetings in March or April (preferably March)

11. Plan of Conservation & Development Update

- a. Delia has distributed information to the commission to review for next meeting.

12. ZEO Reports

- a. Office
- b. Permits
- c. Enforcement
 - i. The ZEO Report have been distributed to commission for review.

13. Budget Review & Bills

- a. Joe Adiletta made a ***Motion** to approve payment for invoice from Design Professionals. ***Seconded** by David Morse. ***The motion passed unanimously.**

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14. Citizens' Comments

- a. Laura Curley noted that a lake property (LBTD) application was denied for a build with 8' setback (as listed in LBTD deeds & covenants) by town official. Delia Fey noted current town regulations of 10' and confirmed that lake deeds cannot be less than allowable by town Zoning regulations.

15. Correspondence

- a. Land Use Commissioner Basic Training, sponsored by CLEAR & NECCOG Wednesday, 11/29/23 from 6:30 – 8pm, Putnam Municipal Complex 200 School Street, Putnam, CT 06260 (NOTE: This fulfills 1.5 hrs of required training)
- b. Land Use Commissioner Training IN-PERSON Opportunity on 12/9/23 (all-day) at: UCONN Middlesex County Extension Center, 1066 Saybrook Rd, Haddam, CT 06438 (NOTE: This fulfills full 4 hrs of required training)
- c. Legislative Updates: Handouts have been distributed to the commissioners for the following-
 - i. Land Use Application Fees
 - ii. Special Taxing Districts Created Through the Statutory Process
 - iii. FOIA Response Deadline
 - iv. Affordable Housing Under CGS 8-30g
- d. The next Planning & Zoning Meeting will be on December 7, 2023 at 7:30 pm

16. Adjournment

- a. Timothy Young made a ***Motion** to adjourn. ***Seconded** by Mark Blackmer. ***The motion passed unanimously.** The meeting adjourned at 10:11 pm.

*Respectfully submitted by Amy Monahan, Recording Secretary. DISCLAIMER: These minutes have not yet been approved by the Planning & Zoning Commission. Please refer to next month's meeting for approval/amendments.