

**MINUTES OF BUSINESS MEETING
HELD BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
JANUARY 23, 2019**

ROLL CALL:

Members Present: Patrick Kennedy, Acting Chairman
Timothy Bergin, Acting Secretary
Jessica Scorso

Alternate Members Sitting: Charles Sabia
Julian Stoppelman

Alternates: Teresa Ike

Absent: Eric Prause, Chairman
Michael Stebe, Secretary

Also Present: Gary Anderson, Director of Planning
Matthew Bordeaux, Senior Planner
Nancy Martel, Recording Secretary

The Acting Chairman opened the Business Meeting at 8:48 P.M.

NEW BUSINESS:

LA IGLESIA DE DIOS, INC. – Request a special exception under Art. II, Sec. 6.02.04 for a place of worship use at 69 North Street and 65 North Street (a.k.a. 65-67 North Street). – Special Exception (2018-129)

MOTION: Mr. Bergin moved to approve the special exception under Art. II, Sec. 6.02.04 for a place of worship use at 69 North Street and 65 North Street (a.k.a. 65-67 North Street), with the modifications as specified in Staff memoranda from:

1. Matthew R. Bordeaux, Senior Planner, dated January 18, 2019; and
2. Jim Davis, Zoning Enforcement Officer, dated January 23, 2019.

Ms. Scorso seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

The reason for the approval is that the proposed activity meets the special exception criteria.

AMERCO REAL ESTATE COMPANY/MOSES EASON – Request a special exception per Art. II, Sec. 24.02.01 to allow self-storage and truck/trailer sharing uses at 440 Oakland Street. – Special Exception (2018-133)

MOTION: Mr. Bergin moved to approve the special exception under Art. II, Sec. 24.02.01 to allow self-storage and truck/trailer sharing uses at 440 Oakland Street, with the modifications as specified in Staff memoranda from:

1. Jim Davis, Zoning Enforcement Officer, dated January 16, 2019.

Mr. Sabia seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

The reason for the approval is that the proposed activity meets the special exception criteria.

TOWN OF MANCHESTER PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION – To revise Art. I, Sec. 2 (Definitions) to add definitions for Agri-Tourism and related terms, and to revise Art. II, Sec. 2 (Rural Residence Zones) to add Low-Impact Agri-Tourism as a permitted use and High-Impact Agri-Tourism as a special exception use. – Zoning Regulation Amendment (2018-131)

Mr. Stoppelman thanked the Staff and public for their contributions to this effort and noted a tremendous amount of progress.

Mr. Sabia questioned whether more information could be added in terms of low-impact and high-impact agri-tourism uses going forward.

Mr. Bordeaux responded that, depending on the Commission's decision, if additional definitions or a list of activities were to be proposed or determined to be necessary, the zoning regulations would have to be amended.

Mr. Sabia reiterated it would go through the same process.

Mr. Kennedy added that the regulations have been a work in progress and often things come up which prompt the Commission to take a look at the regulations. To address the concerns regarding high-impact agri-tourism, he stated that he was not concerned about it as it is a special exception. As a practical matter, an individual who may be in a gray area would, in an effort to save themselves time and money, come to the Commission informally to question whether the activity would be high-impact. Of course, he noted, it would not be binding. Mr. Kennedy reported it would be up to the Commission to construe the matter, and a court would look at the specific examples and determine whether the use is similar to the uses listed. The Commission has a great deal of discretion over the uses and he noted that any use would have to meet the special exception criteria. Technically, according to Mr. Kennedy, up to this point, the regulations have not been there, and individuals go to the Zoning Board of Appeals to interpret existing regulations. He acknowledged that some uses listed are items in the regulations.

Zoning Regulation Amendment (2018-131)

MOTION: Mr. Bergin moved to approve the zoning regulation amendment to revise Art. I, Sec. 2 (Definitions) to add definitions for Agri-Tourism and related terms, and to revise Art. II, Sec. 2 (Rural Residence Zones) to add Low-Impact Agri-Tourism as a permitted use and High-Impact Agri-Tourism as a special exception use. Mr. Stoppelman seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

The reason for the approval is that the proposed zoning regulation amendment is consistent with the Plan of Conservation and Development Growth Management Principle #1, Objective A3, which states: “Review the zoning regulations and consider regulation amendments that would protect and promote the economic viability of active or potential agricultural lands and protect both agricultural and residential uses when they are in proximity to each other. All State defined agricultural activity should be considered as well as accessory activity that would support economic viability.”

The zoning regulation amendment will become effective on February 8, 2019.

TOWN OF MANCHESTER – Mandatory referral for the sale of 208 North Elm Street. – Mandatory Referral (2019-004)

Mr. Gary Anderson, Director of Planning and Economic Development, introduced himself. Mr. Anderson explained that the topic at hand is an 8-24 referral for a property sale at 208 North Elm Street. As background, the property is residentially zoned, owned by the Town of Manchester, and managed by the Manchester Housing Authority, as it has been since construction in the 1980s. He explained that the property contains 20 units of affordable rental housing for seniors on about two acres in the Bowers neighborhood. In 2014, the Town made an assessment of the capital improvements that were needed at the property, considering what to do with the property in the future, and several hundred thousand dollars of capital improvements were identified.

Mr. Anderson displayed and described the site plan. The Town requested proposals for the purchase of the property a couple of years ago and was dissatisfied with the response. This year’s attempt elicited better responses, and Staff is making a strong recommendation to the Board of Directors that the Town sell the property to an experienced local housing management company who has done work in both development and management around town. Very importantly, he explained, the use of the property will not change. There will be no displacement of residents other than temporary moves to allow renovation of the units. Mr. Anderson reported the applicant has agreed to complete all the capital projects on the list created in 2014, which includes improvements to the common areas, landscaping, parking, sidewalks, and roof replacement along with energy efficiency work. He noted the proposal to replace the current electric heat with gas, which would provide significant cost savings, and energy efficiency measures.

The affordability of the properties would be guaranteed in the deed, Mr. Anderson explained; currently, the units are affordable and, though the original deed stated the units need to be “low cost housing,” there was no definition. He said that the company has agreed to put into the deed that they will be deed-restricted units to a certain level of affordability (80% of the median area income) as well as update their financial model to make it more sustainable over time. He explained that the rents have not changed over 30 years; there is a proposal to make a small increase in rent over time, which would be mitigated by the energy efficiency measures that would cut down on the utility bills within the units.

Mr. Anderson reported that the Commission is being asked to look at the Plan of Conservation and Development. He noted that this is considered a traditional suburban character area. The

development is multi-family mixed in with primarily single-family homes as well as duplex housing. Goal 9, in particular, is to preserve Manchester's existing housing stock. During the planning process and in the subsequent Goals and Objectives, there was discussion about the diversity of housing stock being a strength in Manchester and continuing that over time. Mr. Anderson identified the property as an example of a multi-family development that fits in with the neighborhood and meets objectives in terms of housing, the senior population, and providing housing that is accommodating to different stages of life and accessible to transit and public services.

The goal is to notify the residents in the next week, according to Mr. Anderson. This topic will be discussed at the Board of Directors meeting on February 5th, and the potential purchaser has been invited to the meeting to make a presentation and answer questions. He noted that residents will be asked to attend; there will also be other opportunities for residents to ask questions and make suggestions. Mr. Anderson reported that the final public hearing will be in March, after the Board of Directors' February meeting. Hopefully, soon after that will be a contract signing and closing between the Town attorney and the purchasers'. To remind the Commission, any purchase or sale of property in the State of Connecticut requires the Planning and Zoning Commission to make a recommendation to the Board of Directors on the sale, Mr. Anderson stated, to ensure that the potential sale is in keeping with the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Mr. Stoppelman noted that the property is between Henry Street and Hollister Street opposite Washington Street. He asked about the possibility of changing the type of heating.

Mr. Anderson responded that, in the application, the proposed purchasers stated they intend to convert to natural gas.

Ms. Scorso asked if there were more energy-efficiency ideas presented other than converting to gas. Mr. Anderson stated that gas was the primary idea. He reported that, as units become available and they are rehabbed, there could be a change-out of the windows and perhaps additional insulation. The units are one-story, which should be efficient, he explained. In addition, Mr. Anderson stated, new appliances would certainly be energy efficient.

Ms. Scorso asked if there was any talk of rehab to the apartments to provide handicapped access. Mr. Anderson informed Ms. Scorso that the property must be accessible. If a resident requests a shower instead of a tub, that would be accommodated.

Mr. Bergin asked if the proposal is a certainty; i.e., the RFP was selected and, if the sale goes forward, it will absolutely meet all criteria. Mr. Anderson responded that is what the applicant has agreed to do and will agree to do before the Board of Directors next week. For this reason, Staff is enthusiastically endorsing the sale to this entity.

Mr. Bergin stated that he is addressing the issue as a question of process. Without having any knowledge of the assessment conducted, he questioned what the Commission adds in addition to what the Staff has compiled.

Mr. Kennedy declared that the Commission has statutory jurisdiction.

Mr. Stoppelman reported that the Housing Authority has changed some of the windows already. He stated that they have been doing small maintenance items that do not require a large investment. A key element is that the property will be added to the tax rolls, according to Mr. Stoppelman.

Mr. Sabia asked what will happen to the residents as their units are renovated. Mr. Anderson imagined there would be the option of an individual moving to another unit. In his estimation, the vacant units would be renovated first and individuals would have the option of moving to one of the nicer units after it is rehabbed.

Mr. Sabia reiterated there would be the capability for residents to move to other units.

Mr. Stoppelman questioned whether there was a time limit on the renovations.

Mr. Anderson explained that the major capital improvements would be completed within the first two years, and they will be asking the Board of Directors for tax abatement during the period in which they are making the improvements. After that time, they are looking to put the property back on the tax rolls, at which time they would commence the interior work on the individual units.

Mandatory Referral (2019-004)

MOTION: Mr. Stoppelman moved to issue a favorable report regarding the sale of 208 North Elm Street. Ms. Scorso seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

The reason for issuing a favorable report is that maintaining the current use of the property as affordable rental housing for seniors is consistent with several stated goals of the Plan of Conservation and Development.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS:

- Administrative Approvals:
 - Highland Meeting Room, Inc. – Lot Line Revision (2018-123) – 127 and 133 Highland Street

Mr. Bordeaux reported that the owner is proposing a lot line revision on the plan before the Commission, as shown in Drawing V-1.02; the bold black line starting from the left of the lot and zig-zagging down to the front is the modified lot line. The need for the lot line revision, he explained, is to accommodate additional parking that will hopefully be reported on at the next meeting, for the proposed improvements of the Highland Meeting Room, which is a place of worship.

Mr. Anderson informed the Commission that the Planning Department is hoping to schedule a planning workshop on the North End, with the prospective date of March 25th. At this point, the

intent is to hold the meeting at Robertson, Whiton Library, or the Eighth District. He reported that Staff will be working on scheduling and will provide updates.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

January 7, 2019 – Public Hearing/Business Meeting

MOTION: Mr. Stoppelman moved to approve the minutes with the modification that a sentence on Page 9 of the Business Meeting minutes be revised to read, “Mr. Stoppelman commented that obviously the Zoning Enforcement Officer should be included in future discussions.” Mr. Bergin seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

RECEIPT OF NEW APPLICATIONS:

There were no new applications.

MOTION: Mr. Bergin moved to close the Business Meeting. Mr. Stoppelman seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

The Chairman closed the Business Meeting at 9:24 P.M.

I certify these minutes were adopted on the following date:

February 20, 2019
Date

Eric Prause, Chairman

NOTICE: A DIGITAL RECORDING OF THIS BUSINESS MEETING CAN BE HEARD IN THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT.