

**MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING
HELD BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
DECEMBER 7, 2020**

VIRTUAL MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM

ROLL CALL:

Members Present: Eric Prause, Chairman
Patrick Kennedy, Vice Chairman
Michael Stebe, Secretary
Jessica Scorso
Jessica Poland

Alternate Members: Julian Stoppelman
Teresa Ike
Bonnie Potocki

Also Present: Gary Anderson, Director of Planning
Megan Pilla, Senior Planner
David Laiuppa, Environmental
Planner/Wetlands Agent
Nancy Martel, Recording Secretary

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing at 7:00 P.M. The Secretary read the legal notice when the call was made.

TOWN OF MANCHESTER PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION – To revise the zoning regulations at Article II, Sections 1.00.02(e) and 9.14.04(a) to allow the Planning and Zoning Commission to waive or modify landscape/screening requirements for special exceptions for schools and places of worship. – Zoning Regulation Amendment (2020-074)

Megan Pilla, Senior Planner with the Town of Manchester Planning Department, introduced herself. The application is for proposed amendments to Article II, Section 1.00.02(e), General Requirements for Residential Zones; and Article II, Section 9.14.04(a), General Requirements for Business Zones. The two are nearly identical, and the sections are the Special Requirements for Schools and Places of Worship as special exceptions in any of these zones.

Ms. Pilla reported that there are landscaping and buffering requirements for schools and places of worship as special exceptions, with a minimum 8 ft. landscaped buffer requirement when adjacent to residential properties. The purpose of the amendments is for the Planning and Zoning Commission to have the option to waive or modify those requirements as necessary. Ms. Pilla read the amendment language. She reminded the Commission of several examples of the situation. The intent of the proposed amendment is to allow flexibility on the part of the Commission in cases where the site does not necessarily call for an 8 ft. landscaped buffer.

Ms. Potocki inquired whether it would be beneficial to add that the lots were already developed, and it could be a different scenario if it was a new lot created and not developed.

Ms. Pilla stated that she had given that thought and pointed out the verbiage she included that states, "...if existing foliage or natural conditions are sufficient to constitute a screen." She noted that she would be open to specifying that it is not for new construction if the Commission would prefer.

Mr. Stebe thought it may be a restriction the Commission may not want to consider. He stated that, technically, a place of worship cannot be added to Main Street in the Central Business District, but if somebody decided to rebuild the vacant lot from Great Harvest for a place of worship, they would be unable to put screening there. In his opinion, adding that the amendment is only for existing buildings is a restriction on the idea behind this.

Mr. Prause stated that, when contemplating regulations for places of worship, there is also a Federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act. He noted that there cannot be any regulations that would be burdensome for religious land use.

Ms. Scorso noted that she has no problem with the language and is in support of the amendment.

There were no members of the public to speak on the application.

MOTION: Mr. Kennedy moved to close the public hearing. Mr. Stebe seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

The public hearing was closed at 7:18 P.M

I certify these minutes were adopted on the following date:

January 4, 2021
Date

Eric Prause, Chairman

NOTICE: A DIGITAL RECORDING OF THIS PUBLIC HEARING CAN BE HEARD IN THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT.