

TOWN OF WASHINGTON
Bryan Memorial Town Hall
Post Office Box 383
Washington Depot, Connecticut 06794
Planning Commission Public Hearing
Planning Commission Regular Meeting

MINUTES

September 2, 2020

7:30 P.M. – Meeting via Zoom

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Hileman, Ms. Matteo, Mr. Rimsky, Mr. Mongar

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ms. Gager, Mr. Carey

STAFF PRESENT: Ms. White, Ms. Rill

PUBLIC PRESENT: Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Barnet, Ms. Gorra, Ms. Larsen

Chairman Hileman called the Public Hearing to order at 7:34pm.

He then seated himself, Mr. Rimsky, Ms. Matteo, and Mr. Mongar

PUBLIC HEARING:

Request of Lloyd, 231 Romford Road, for Scenic Road Designation – for Romford Road (31sec.):

Mr. Lloyd of 231 Romford Road summarized his application by stating that Romford Road meets all six of the Scenic Road Designation criteria. Romford Road is a four-mile stretch of partially unpaved road surrounded by stonewalls, trees, as well as two bridges that cover two separate streams; the Shepaug River, on the north end of Romford as well as the Bantam River.

Mr. Lloyd expressed his disappointment in the paving that took place of approximately 200 yards of roadway after he submitted his application and prior to this Public Hearing. For clarification, Chairman Hileman asked Mr. Lloyd if a portion of Romford Road that had not previously been paved, had been paved during this time. Mr. Lloyd confirmed.

Chairman Hileman opened the floor to any members of the public that wished to speak. With no public comments, he then asked the Commissioners if they had any questions.

Ms. Matteo stated that she had questions regarding the cost of maintaining an unpaved portion of the road in comparison to maintaining a paved portion. Chairman Hileman stated that in general, unpaved roads are more expensive to maintain and required a lot of attention. However, he

explained that cost was not the main deciding factor in deeming a road designated. Ms. White added that the public's safety would always be the priority over whether a road was designated scenic or not. Chairman Hileman went on to explain that the designation would not end road work from getting accomplished, however, there were more necessary steps in doing so, such as notifying the Town Clerk as well as the residents on that street, and Chairs of each board and commission.

Chairman Hileman asked Mr. Lloyd to comment on the traffic issues of Romford Road. Mr. Lloyd stated that the road in general is very lightly trafficked. However, he said that there are two times throughout the day that traffic picks up a bit, and that was due to pick-up and drop-off times and Rumsey Hall School.

MOTION: To close the Public Hearing for the Request of Lloyd, 231 Romford Road, for Scenic Road Designation – for the entirety of Romford Road. By Chairman Hileman, seconded by Ms. Matteo, passed 4-0 vote.

REGULAR MEETING:

Chairman Hileman called the Regular Meeting of the Washington Planning Commission to order at 7:50pm. He then seated himself, Mr. Rimsky, Ms. Matteo and Mr. Mongar.

Chairman Hileman then welcomed new member, Mr. Mongar to the Commission.

CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES (16min. 28sec.):

MOTION: To accept the July 1, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes as submitted, by Chairman Hileman, seconded by Mr. Rimsky, passed 4-0 vote.

PENDING APPLICATIONS (17min. 03sec.):

Request of Lloyd, 231 Romford Road, for Scenic Road Designation – for Romford Road.

Mr. Mongar stated that he was concerned with hearing that a piece of Romford Road was paved during this process. Mr. Rimsky explained that while road work and paving is planned for well in advance, that maybe this was something for the Commission to take into consideration, that perhaps the selectmen are notified as well in the future. Ms. Rill stated that she had notified the Board of Selectmen of the application, and that the Highway Department was also made aware of the application.

The Commission made note of the well-organized application of Mr. Lloyd and thanked him for his time.

MOTION: To approve the Request of Lloyd, 231 Romford Road, for Scenic Road Designation of the entirety Romford Road, by Chairman Hileman, seconded by Mr. Rimsky, passed 4-0 vote.

OTHER BUSINESS (24min. 34sec.):

Economic Development Committee Update:

Chairman Hileman informed the Commission that the Economic Development Committee would be meeting on Tuesday, September 8, 2020. He announced that Ms. Gorra was hired as Washington's new Community Development Coordinator, and welcomed her to the meeting. Ms. Gorra stated that she would be working closely with the Planning Commission in regard to the Plan of Conservation and Development, and stated she would definitely be in touch as time went on. The Commission thanked Ms. Gorra and congratulated her on her new position.

Sustainability Committee Update:

Chairman Hileman asked Ms. Matteo if anyone from the Committee had contacted her regarding becoming a member. Ms. Matteo stated that no one had contacted her as of yet, but she would keep the Commission informed when they do so.

POCD – 5-year Revision(s):

Chairman Hileman announced that the Commission's request that had been submitted regarding Section 3.2 of the Zoning Regulations to the Zoning Commission has been making some progress. Chairman Hileman stated that the Zoning Commission seemed supportive of the change and had asked their legal counsel to review the language of the Regulation. Ms. White asked Chairman Hileman to clarify whether or not a home located in the commercial district would abide by the less restrictive Zoning Regulation, how the side yard setbacks of the property would work and if the property would be divided. Chairman Hileman stated that he would have to re-read the Regulation once again, but his understanding of it was that if the property is divided by a district line, the property is governed by the more restrictive zone, but if you waive that restriction, the property would then be governed by the less restrictive zone. He explained that the property would not be divided in any way, and was unsure how that would be enforced.

The Commission was pleased that the Zoning Commission would be moving forward with the revision request.

Reopening Committee Update:

Mr. Rimsky informed the Commission that Dr. Braverman, a resident of Washington, has joined the Committee and has been helpful in giving medical advice and answering any questions or concerns the Committee may have.

Mr. Rimsky stated that the schools have and are re-opening, and that enrollment has increased in all area schools. He explained the Committee has been coming up with ways to reach out to new residents to let them know the town welcomes them and is here to help if needed.

Mr. Rimsky stated that the Committee is wanting to have another public testing site for residents in the near future, and the Committee is hoping that the fast-result testing will be available.

Ms. White informed the Commission that the Health Department recommended that rapid testing be done at the Visiting Nurses Association, because their results seemed more reliable than others. She suggested that the Commission take into consideration that town employees and volunteers should have access to this testing, because a week long wait for results can be difficult – especially when an office has to close down.

Mr. Rimsky agreed, stating that he would speak to First Selectman Brinton to see what could be done.

Mr. Rimsky stated that the next Reopening Committee meeting would be held on September 18, 2020.

COMMUNICATOINS (50min. 55sec.):

Chairman Hileman informed the Commission that First Selectman Brinton had sent an email out to all of the Boards and Commission Chairperson to get a sense of how each felt about meeting again in person. He stated that each Chair expressed that as long as things continue to go well, that they would be okay with meeting in person, but felt that a hybrid meeting was essential; meaning that there was also a Zoom meeting available for meetings.

Chairman Hileman was clear in stating that no decision has been made regarding this as of yet.

Mr. Rimsky expressed that he thought the conversation was too soon, explaining that he felt we should wait awhile to see what happens.

Chairman Hileman explained that all of the responding Chairs were cautious, and expressed the need for Zoom meeting to still be available for those that were not comfortable meeting in person just yet, and that no final decision has been made.

Mr. Mongar questioned if the town had the resources to hold a conference meeting that was not just limited to a webcam sitting on a desk.

Ms. White and Chairman Hileman stated that they had discussed this issue during budget meetings earlier this year, and there was no solution as of yet.

Ms. Gorra stated that there was definitely an interest in doing so, and that they were looking in to how to make it happen. She explained that the attendance numbers at various meetings has gone up, and felt that this was a great way to include residents that may travel often, or may be nervous to travel to Town Hall due to weather.

ADJOURNMENT (1hr. 49sec.):

MOTION: To adjourn the September 2, 2020 Washington Planning Commission Meeting at 8:36pm, by Ms. Matteo, seconded by Mr. Mongar, passed 4-0 vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tammy Rill
Land Use Clerk
September 8, 2020

*All documents on file in the Land Use Office

**Minutes subject to approval

***A recording of this meeting is available upon request