

**EAST HADDAM PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
MUNICIPAL OFFICE COMPLEX – 1 PLAINS ROAD – MEETING ROOM #1 & 2
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
September 10, 2024**

- **CALL TO ORDER** - Mr. Brownell called the meeting to order for the East Haddam Planning and Zoning Commission at 7:15 p.m.

- **ATTENDANCE**

PRESENT: Crary Brownell (Chairman), Jim Curtin (Vice Chairman), Bernard Gillis (Regular Member), Ed Gubbins (Regular Member), Susan Kinsman (Alternate Member), Toni Dumaine (Alternate Member).

ABSENT: Justin Anderson (Regular Member), Stephen Lohmeyer (Alternate Member).

Mr. Brownell asked that Ms. Kinsman fill in for Mr. Anderson.

- **MINUTES –August 27, 2024, accepted as submitted.**

- **BILLS – Halloran Sage \$120.00**

Mr. Curtin made a motion to pay the bill, seconded by Mr. Gubbins, and the vote passed unanimously.

- **ACKNOWLEDEMENT – PZC#24-19 - 6 Main Street (property location), The Goodspeed Opera House Foundation Inc. (applicant & property owner). Map 017, Lot 093. Proposed construction of an accessible ramp addition and parking lot rehabilitation on Lumberyard Road.**

Mr. Ventres briefed the commission members on the proposal, which includes constructing an accessible ramp and rehabilitating the parking lot. The renovation includes the installation of an island and lighting, and the plan includes a strip of pervious pavers at the south end to compensate for any lost parking. In addition, the parking lot will be updated to include accessible parking spaces. It was noted that the goal is to avoid increasing the impervious surface area, new pavement will be laid down, except at the south edges where pervious bricks will be used.

Also, the lighting issues in the parking lot will be addressed as follows:

- Improved Lighting Fixtures - The new lighting plan will likely incorporate energy-efficient LED lights, which provide better illumination and are more cost-effective in the long run.
- Strategic Placement - Lights will be strategically placed to cover dark spots and enhance visibility, making the parking lot safer and more navigable for visitors.

The commission discussed the lighting issues in the parking lot, noting the need for better lighting in the middle areas. The plan involves reclaiming and milling the existing asphalt

and using pervious bricks at the edges to manage water runoff. The current state of the parking lot was acknowledged as being in tough shape, necessitating the proposal for rehabilitation.

Mr. Ventres stated that the Inland Wetlands & Watercourse Commission will be inspecting the site on 9-11-2024.

Mr. Curtin made a motion to schedule a public hearing for September 24, 2024, seconded by Ms. Kinsman and the vote passed unanimously.

- **LAND USE ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

Economic Development Commission

The Economic Development Commission requested a review of open signs, including flashing and dynamic options. It was found that surrounding towns have not updated their regulations since 2011, but they all have open signs. Most available signs now come with flashing options, and LED signs are more common and cost effective than neon signs.

The EDC is considering the use of flashing and dynamic open signs, which are currently not permitted in the existing regulations. They also found that it is difficult to find open signs that do not come with flashing options, as most available signs include these features and they noted that most open signs are now LED rather than neon, which are more cost-effective and widely available, there is uncertainty about whether neon signs would be accepted under the current regulations, which primarily address older types of signage. The EDC is looking into how other towns handle open signs to inform potential updates to their own regulations.

The members agreed that the research on this will be discussed in a future meeting.

Tavern Update

Mr. Ventres explained that the tavern project at Society Hall on Main Street faced a major setback due to water supply issues. Despite efforts to resolve the problem, the owner decided to convert the planned tavern space into an additional Air B&B. The investment and logistical challenges, including structural renovations and parking concerns, led to this decision. The completed apartment and Air B&B are now operational, with steady income from rentals.

The tavern project ran into a significant water supply issue. Despite drilling a new well, the water supply was insufficient. The original plan included an apartment, three Air B&B and a tavern. Due to the water issue and other challenges, the decision was made

to convert the two bottom units into Air B&B's, instead of a tavern. The apartment and Air B&B's on the second floor are now completed and in use.

Purchase of Levita Restaurant

Mr. Curtin stated that Levita Restaurant has been purchased. The new owner intends to reopen it as a restaurant. He also considered another property across from the Country Store but found it required more work. Mr. Ventres mentioned that the main building, dating back to the 1840s, is structurally sound with proper bracing. However, the back part, which was once a pavilion with cedar poles, might need some attention.

Also, there was mention of a transition involving a nonprofit advocacy center, possibly sharing the space with the restaurant.

Cell Tower Topic

Mr. Ventres informed the commission members that there is a proposal for a 180-foot cell tower on East Haddam Colchester Turnpike. The proposed site is near the end of Falls Bashan Road, at the stop sign where a new driveway was put in a few years ago. A public hearing will be scheduled by the Selectmen for further discussion and presentation by the Siting Council.

- **ADJOURNMENT – Mr. Gubbins made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m. seconded by Mr. Curtin and the vote passed unanimously.**