EAST HADDAM PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

MUNICIPAL OFFICE COMPLEX – 1 PLAINS ROAD – MEETING ROOM #1 & 2
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

March 25, 2025

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), Richard Pettinelli (Regular Member), Ed Gubbins (Regular Member), Bernard Gillis (Regular Member), Deborah Langdon (Regular Member), Toni Dumaine (Regular Member), Susan Kinsman (Alternate Member), Mike Robidoux (EDC), David Merrick (EDC).

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Robert Collins

ABSENT: Stephen Lohmeyer (Alternate Member).

MINUTES
February 11, January - Correction: No vote was taken on sending a letter to the Siting council due to majority opinions against sending a letter.

BILLS
None

DISCUSSION

MOODUS MASTER PLAN
Mr. Robert Collins, a professional planner and project manager with SLR, introduced himself and his team, who have been developing a master plan for Moodus Center over the past six months.

Mr. Collins stated that the town plan will encourage mixed-use opportunities that blend residential, retail, and commercial spaces, to nurture the local economy and strengthen community connections, while prioritizing improvements to the pedestrian experience, embracing the natural environment, and enhancing the community's recreational character. This focus will ensure the Moodus Center becomes a vibrant village center that feels authentic and enduring within the existing community.

The overarching recommendation for Moodus Center is to transform the area into a charming, vibrant, and walkable village center, redevelopment of the commercial core area with mixed uses that provide opportunities for local businesses and housing. Improving walkability with more sidewalks, safer crosswalks, and shared-use trails as well.

Progress Update:

• Conducted a survey and open house in the fall to gather public input.
• Completed a site assessment, which is available on the project website.
• Developed a vision statement with theme areas based on feedback.

The presentation described the current state and desired future of Moodus Center explaining the statement themes, Village Center Character and Economic Development, Streetscape Character and Park, Recreation & Natural Environment Character.

• Establishing a Village Center character (physical and economic development).
• Enhancing streetscape character (safer pedestrian experience and connectivity).
• Addressing utility infrastructure limitations.

Moodus Center-Wide Recommendations:

• Village Center-wide: Overarching Moodus Center character.
• Define Village Center physical character based on public preferences.
• Update zoning regulations to better define subdistricts and address site development standards.
• Enhance land use to support desired businesses and economy.
• Integrate housing opportunities as appropriate.

Target Areas Recommendations

1. Moodus Center Redevelopment
- Rae Palmer Road Properties (10-16 Rae Palmer Road and 7 Rae Palmer Road) (Vacant Property).
- Nathan Hale Plaza and Adjacent Properties.
- Moodus Package Store Property.
- The Old Lumberyard Property.

2. Gateways
- West (Route 149 and Route 151).
- East – Falls Road at Great Hillwood Road.
- Center (Falls Road at William F. Palmer Road).
- Secondary South – Central (William F. Palmer Road).

- Secondary North – North Moodus Road.
- Secondary South-West – Plains Road at Municipal Offices.

3. Parks & Trails
- Moodus River Park.
- Moodus River Trail.
- Recreation Field Expansion and Trail/Municipal Office Complex.

4. Streetscape
- Falls Road, Plains Road/Town Street, William F. Palmer Road, North Moodus Road.

5. Housing
- Joe Williams Road and William F. Palmer Road.
- Zoning/Land Use/Housing
  - Amend the existing Moodus Center District regulations to support the development of a more cohesive village center character and targeted uses.

Moodus Center District boundaries to encompass the entire study area of this Master Plan.
Subdistrict Designations Proposed:
- Moodus Center Residential
- Moodus Center Commercial Core
- Moodus Center Commercial West (C3)
- Plains Road/Municipal
- Moodus Center Parkland

Permitted Uses
Update the Moodus Center District permitted uses to reflect Moodus Center's existing businesses and future targeted uses.

Housing Recommendations
- Promote middle-housing options within the Moodus Center Commercial Core and Moodus Center Residential Subdistricts to encourage a variety of housing options for infill and redevelopment opportunities.
- Reflective of current housing in the district and suggestions for future housing.
- Focus on evolving zoning regulations to create unique center districts.

Economic Development/Business Renewal
- Develop a targeted business strategy for Moodus Center. Identifying business types is most likely to attract more users to the village center as an impetus to redevelopment.

- Support Target Markets
- Enhance Existing Business
- Evaluating Tenant Preferences

Recommendations to celebrate and promote Moodus Center through expanded community events. Continue to explore public sewer and community septic systems for Moodus Center, explore creating a public water utility for Moodus Center. Integrate minimal impact development (LID) principles into the Moodus Center District (MDC) zoning regulations to promote sustainable development patterns and techniques. Encourage the use of renewable energy, including infrastructure, within Moodus Center, promote natural environment resilience from changing environmental conditions.

Target Areas Recommendations

Moodus Center Redevelopment

Moodus Center Redevelopment Sub-Area Recommendations

1. Rae Palmer Road Properties (10-16 Rae Palmer Road/Undeveloped Property at 7 Rae Palmer Road).

2. Nathan Hale Plaza (2 and 26 Falls Road) and Adjacent Properties (30 and 32 Falls Road) and (50 and 52 William F. Palmer Road).

3. Moodus Package Store Property (23 Falls Road).

4. The Old Lumberyard Property (25 Falls Road).

Gateways

Install features that visually communicate the arrival into a distinctive, established community or zone. Utilize similar or complimentary landscaping, lighting, color palette, and hardscape materials at each location.

Gateway – West (Merge of Routes 149 and 151)

Gateway – East (Falls Road at Great Hillwood Road)

Gateway – Center (Falls Road at William F. Palmer Road)

Gateway – Secondary South-Central (William F. Palmer Road)

Gateway – Secondary North (N. Moodus Road)

Gateway – Secondary South-West (Plains Road at Municipal Offices)

Parks and Trails
Create a space to connect to the Village Green across Falls Roads. Highlight river valley views and provide a walkable route/sidewalk linking the park space, Plains Road, and the Moodus Village commercial core area.

Proposed Moodus River Park

Proposed Moodus River Trail

Recreation Field Expansion and Trail/Municipal Office Complex

Trail Connections:

• Trails to connect senior housing to parks and other areas.

• Opportunities to connect existing trails to new developments.

Moodus Center Streetscape Recommendations
Incorporate posts with banners, install decorative and highly visible crosswalks, complete roadway and sidewalk improvements for Route 149 as proposed in the East Haddam Road Safety Audit, Install consistent streetscape treatments throughout the village center.

Housing Target Area
Provide additional housing for the Moodus Village Center based on availability of land and sewer disposal system capacities.

Next Steps:
• Review and discuss draft recommendations and target area plan map.

• Finalize the study based on feedback and discussions.

Beebe Road/Scenic Road

Issue Raised:
• The need for an "as-built" survey was highlighted, which has not yet been received.

• Gary from Public Works is working on creating the as-built using a telephone pole as a benchmark.

Scenic Road Status:
• Beebe Road is classified as a Scenic Road, which falls under the Planning and Zoning Commission's purview.

Guard Rail Concerns:

• Discussion about the potential installation of a guard rail.

• Concerns that a guard rail might narrow the road, creating safety issues, such as a one-lane road scenario.

Health and Safety:

• Emphasis on the health and safety implications of road modifications.

• Mention of similar situations, like a narrow bridge in Chester, requiring stop signs for one-way traffic.

Road Width and Design:

• The road width must remain within certain limits (15 or 12 feet).

• Historical measurements from 1997 were referenced to maintain the existing road width.

• The current design does not include a guard rail, which is seen as a design oversight.

Conclusion:

• The need for proper design and spacing to accommodate guard rails without compromising safety.

• The issue has been ongoing for a year, with no incidents reported yet, but concerns remain about potential future risks.

Home Occupation – Application PZC#25-03 – 29 Wickham Road (property location), Daniel Flack (applicant & property owner). Map 051, Lot 008. Home office.

Mr. Ventres stated that there will not be any customers going to the property and that there were no responses from the notification letter that the applicant mailed out to his abutting neighbors. The business is practicing private psychology via remote and is for office use only.

Mr. Pettinelli made a motion to approve Application PZC#25-03 – 29 Wickham Road (property location), Daniel Flack (applicant & property owner). Map 051, Lot 008. Home office, seconded by Mr. Gillis and the vote passed unanimously.

Land Use Administrator Reports

Mr. Ventres discussed Cease and Desist Orders and property issues in town. He explained that he issued five notices of violations for seasonal properties. Some orders were reissues of previous ones because buyers who paid cash did not get a title search.

Mr. Ventres explained that there are title search issues and that buyers who paid cash did not perform title searches, leading to surprises when cease and desist orders were discovered and cease and desist orders were already on file in land records.

Mr. Ventres stated that letters were sent out explaining changes in zoning regulations and that he believes that some properties might now comply with new criteria. He added that existing houses need to show a single code-compliant septic system, and that new buildings or subdivisions need to show both a primary and reserve septic system.

Mr. Ventres explained how cash transactions without proper inspections can lead to issues, some properties listed as seasonal were bought for year-round use, causing complications. He added that he is aware of a property owner that tried to register to vote but was denied due to the property being a seasonal cottage.

A brief discussion took place regarding the properties on Silas Holmes Road and their cleanup and development status.

ADJOURNMENT – Mr. Gillis made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m. seconded by Mr. Gubbins and the vote passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Magri