EAST HADDAM PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

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

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

April 08, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ATTENDANCE

PRESENT: Crary Brownell (Chairman), Jim Curtin (Vice Chairman), Ed Gubbins (Regular Member), Bernard Gillis (Regular Member), Deborah Langdon (Regular Member), Toni Dumaine (Regular Member), Susan Kinsman (Alternate Member),Richard Pettinelli (arrived @7:26 p.m.) (Regular Member).

ABSENT: Stephen Lohmeyer (Alternate Member).

Ms. Kinsman was seated for Mr. Pettinelli until he arrived @7:26 p.m.

3. MINUTES

Minutes of March 25, 2025: Correct format, minutes accepted.

4. BILLS

None

5. DISCUSSION

A. Moodus Master Plan – SLR Presentation

There was no SLR Presentation. The Commission reviewed the SLR draft recommendations for the Moodus Center Master Plan and Target Areas.

The Commission would like to see Moodus's historical architecture incorporated in the Master Plan. They requested architectural samples during the planning stages. Mr. Gillis suggested researching grant opportunities for upgrading facades.

Ms. Dumaine questioned if the town would be responsible for the road modifications. Mr. Ventres replied it would be the Department of Transportation's responsibility. He explained the plans would be submitted to the DOT, they would hire a subcontractor to complete the work and send the town a bill. Mr. Pettinelli explained that imprinted surfaces tend to wear out over time due to surface roughness and repeated exposure to heat and traffic. He noted that stamped brick is not ideal in areas like the Northeast because snowplows can easily damage it. Pavement imprints, which involve pressing a pattern into hot asphalt, also degrade as the asphalt reheats and softens with use. A more

durable solution is using concrete insets, where color is mixed directly into the concrete, making it much more resistant to wear and longer lasting.

Mr. Curtin brought up the idea of a traffic circle, noting that while it had not been mentioned earlier, it could be a valuable improvement. He acknowledged it would be a major undertaking that would require state involvement, but if done tastefully—with thoughtful landscaping, lighting, and design—it could really help define the intersection as a central point. He added that it would not involve a traffic light, which might make it more acceptable to residents, and there is plenty of space to work with. Although the state typically sticks to minimum sizing for these, it looks like it could fit well in that location and serve as a focal point for the area.

The Commission discussed elevator requirements for mixed-use buildings that include both residential and commercial spaces. The key point was that commercial areas, especially those on the second floor, typically require elevator access to meet ADA standards. In contrast, residential units on upper floors generally do not require elevators. There was also some discussion about past buildings with second-floor commercial use, which may have been constructed before current regulations took effect. Ultimately, it was agreed that compliance with building codes, including accessibility, would be the responsibility of the developer.

Mr. Gillis brought up landscaping around Moodus Pizza and questioned whether planting trees and adding center islands was the extent of what could be done. He suggested that the business has enough lawn space for outdoor seating, which they have not taken advantage of, and mentioned the possibility of applying for grants to help with beautification. He supported planting trees, improving navigation, and possibly implementing a “no left turn” restriction onto Route 149.

The Commission discussed various methods to slow down traffic as vehicles enter town. Suggestions included using rumble strips and special road striping. Rumble strips were noted as effective but often unpopular with nearby residents due to the noise they create. An example from New Haven was mentioned, where varying the spacing of road striping gave drivers the impression of speeding up, prompting them to slow down. While this technique worked temporarily—especially during transitions like the installation of new traffic lights—it tends to lose effectiveness over time as drivers grow used to it. The conversation emphasized the difficulty of implementing long-term traffic-calming measures that are both effective and acceptable to the community.

In response to questions about the potential for a public water system in Moodus, Mr. Ventres explained that there is already a public water system near the elementary school, which cost between $500,000 and $600,000 to install. He clarified that the senior housing has a public water system, but it is not the same type as the school's system. The school system required two wells for redundancy, one of which had issues due to bacteria contamination from the roof and pigeons, leading to its replacement. Mr. Ventres confirmed that there are no water quantity issues in Moodus. However, if a public water system were to be extended, it would require abandoning existing wells and septic systems within a 75-foot radius of each property.

The Commission discussed wastewater discharge considerations for potential low-pressure sewer systems in Moodus. It was noted that discharge requirements vary depending on the volume, and systems must meet nitrogen limits at the property line—often requiring a sand filter to reduce nitrogen levels. While these systems use small pumps and low-pressure lines, finding suitable soil for placement is key. A field near the top of the area was mentioned as a possible location due to its sandy soil, which is ideal for such systems. An example from Saybrook Point was shared, where a sand filter system was used because the area was too close to the water for traditional sewers. It was noted that despite decades of discussion, some communities have relied on centralized community systems rather than full sewer infrastructure.

In response to a question from Mr. Gillis about the definition of "cohesive" signage, Mr. Ventres explained that the idea, previously discussed with the Economic Development Commission (EDC), was to create a unified design for street and directional signs throughout the village. The goal would be to establish a consistent look—especially for street signs, intersection markers, and wayfinding signage—to reinforce a sense of place. He added that the signage could still meet legal standards but differ from the standard green street signs, helping to visually distinguish the village area.

Ms. Langdon followed up with SLR regarding several points from the recent presentation. She noted a suggestion about adding a patio near the Rae Palmer building to overlook the Moodus River, but after reviewing elevation maps, she determined that due to the steep grade, the only feasible option would be a rooftop patio on a three-story building—which would offer only a narrow view—making the idea impractical.

She also emphasized the need for targeted landscaping improvements, particularly around the gas station, which she described as an architectural eyesore. She suggested using landscaping to visually screen it, referencing an example from another town that successfully used plantings to conceal a similar structure.

Regarding site access, Ms. Langdon compared the layout of the Nathan Hale Plaza to the Saybrook Home Shopping Plaza, noting they have similar size, shape, and one-way in/one-way out traffic patterns. She used Google Maps and side-by-side comparisons to support her point, suggesting the Saybrook site could serve as a model for potential upgrades in Moodus, especially if grant funding becomes available.

Ms. Langdon supported the idea of making better use of the Moodus River frontage, especially if the Brownell Mill property changes ownership. She offered the example of a roundhouse restaurant in New York that transformed a riverside mill into a scenic dining destination with large windows overlooking a waterfall—sharing photos as a visual reference.

Mr. Brownell emphasized the importance of improving outreach for the upcoming event, noting that during the last one, there was a lack of public awareness. He shared that he had not realized it was their responsibility to ensure the town was informed. This time, he stressed the need for better communication, particularly through social media, to engage younger residents who stand to benefit the most. He suggested coordinating efforts to

spread the word more effectively and proposed aiming to have everything organized by late May.

Suggestions included installing an art piece or relocating the gazebo to the site—possibly elevating it slightly with steps for better visibility. Commissioners also discussed the idea of creating a memory wall featuring names of community members, as well as adding public restrooms to support trail users and enhance the area's usability. Chester was cited as an example of a town with well-designed public restrooms and small park features like gazebos, sometimes with seasonal amenities like coffee stands.

Other ideas included installing historical plaques around the gazebo to highlight local culture and history, creating a more educational and engaging experience. There was also support for a raised walkway or deck that could safely extend along the steep slope near the river, offering scenic views and making the area more accessible. This structure could connect to the Moodus River Trail and improve walkability, especially for those with mobility challenges. The goal was to blend functional improvements with elements that reflect the town's character and history, all while ensuring accessibility and safety.

B. Beebe Road/Scenic Road

Mr. Ventres informed the Commission that progress on the Beebe Road project was delayed due to the road foreman having left the position. The town is currently waiting on Public Works to move the project forward. In the meantime, Mr. Ventres provided the Commission with an as-built plan for review, which will help determine details such as the placement of guardrails between existing pipes. The as-built was requested specifically to clarify these design elements and support further planning.

6. HOME OCCUPATIONS

A. HOME OCCUPATION – Application PZC#25-04 – 44 Falls Bashan Road (property location), Max Floyd (applicant & property owner). Map 066, Lot 275. Home office for pest and wildlife control.

Mr. Ventres explained that the application was for a nuisance wildlife control business. The applicant handles situations involving animals like skunks or rabid raccoons. The operation is low volume, with no customer visits, signage, or significant traffic. It primarily involves a truck, some traps, and coordination by phone, with the individual simply loading equipment into the truck from the building.

The applicant is a licensed nuisance wildlife control operator who traps and removes animals like raccoons and skunks. His tools are stored in his truck unless there's bad weather, in which case they are moved to a garage. He does not use lethal chemicals—only basic bait like peanut butter and crackers. The animals are either relocated (when allowed) or humanely euthanized if required by law. Disposal is done properly, often through the town transfer station. The Commission noted that the work is difficult, often done in harsh conditions, and that few individuals are licensed or willing to perform this type of service.

Mr. Curtin made a motion to approve Application PZC#25-04 – 44 Falls Bashan Road (property location), Max Floyd (applicant & property owner). Map 066, Lot 275. Home office for pest and wildlife control; seconded by Mr. Gubbins and the vote passed unanimously.

7. LAND USE ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS

Mr. Ventres reported that several seasonal property owners who had made mistakes with conversions are now reaching out for guidance. He is advising them to follow proper procedures, including updated mapping and septic system evaluations. He emphasized that properties without heating, as listed on the assessor's card, cannot be considered year-round homes. With the upcoming completion of the water system near Lake Hayward, interest in year-round conversions is growing. Property owners are being encouraged to upgrade septic systems to meet 100% of public health code standards now, rather than opting for minimal repairs, to avoid future costs and complications when transitioning to full-time use. Public health code requirements were briefly reviewed.

8. **ADJOURNMENT –Mr. Gubbins made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m. seconded by Mr. Curtin and the vote passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,
E. Ruth Ziobron