

PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT
QUARTERLY REPORT: APRIL 1, 2007 – JUNE 30, 2007

The Planning and Zoning Commission met eight times this quarter. Three meetings were held in April, two in May and three in June. Three meetings are scheduled for July. The public hearing on the Hoyt Street Partners application was opened on June 12th and has been continued to July 10, 2007. At that meeting, the Commission will likely be deciding some of the zoning regulation amendments proposed at the public hearing on June 5th. They will also be meeting with the DAHAC on July 17th. Over the next two quarters, staff will continue to work on Aquifer Protection regulations, and establishing the Planning and Zoning Commission as the Aquifer Protection Agency within Darien.

Permits by type this quarter:

Business Site Plan: 4 approved; 1 withdrawn
Subdivisions: 1 approved
Coastal Site Plan Review: 4 granted; 2 withdrawn; 1 amendment granted
Flood Damage Prevention: 3 granted; 1 withdrawn; 1 amendment granted
Land Filling/Excavation: 5 approved; 1 withdrawn
Special Permit: 5 granted
Amendments to the Zoning Map: 1 withdrawn
Amendments to the Zoning Regulations: 1 denied; 1 withdrawn
Mandatory Referrals: 3 reports issued

Total Number of Projects*: 25 applications (including referrals) and one amendment

*Total number of projects does not equal number of permits, because some applications include multiple permits.

Also this quarter,

- Jeremy Ginsberg and Rich Jacobson attended the May 16th Board of Selectmen meeting to discuss flooding. This was an opportunity to inform residents of ongoing efforts.
- The P&Z Director and the Fire Marshal were the guest speakers at a “Learning Lunch” for Chamber of Commerce members on Friday May 18th Noon at the Cookhouse.
- The P&Z Director met with PZ&H Committee and the RTM in May to discuss the proposed new Manager—Community Development Services position.
- The P&Z Director and a number of Commission members met with the Charter Revision Commission on the night of Thursday May 31st.
- A public hearing was held on June 5 on Zoning Regulation amendments and proposed amendments to the 2006 Town Plan of Conservation & Development put forth by the Planning & Zoning Commission.
- P&Z Acting Chair Fred Conze and Jeremy Ginsberg met with Debbie Parnon and Tom Geary of DRI on June 21 to discuss their upcoming work on a downtown Master Plan.

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) met six times this quarter—twice each month. A total of 25 applications were processed—five in April, nine in May and eleven in June. Of those 25 applications processed, 12 were granted; 9 were denied; 2 were granted in part/denied in part; and 2 were withdrawn. Next quarter, there will be an increase in workload, as thirteen new applications have been submitted for the two July meetings. Vic Capellupo has been elected as the new Chairman (replacing Dick Sanford), and Gary Greene has been elected Vice-Chairman.

The Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) met six times this quarter—on April 4 and 11; on May 2 and 16; and on June 6 and 19. An extra meeting night was scheduled on June 19th for a public hearing on the Hoyt Street Partners proposal and some other matters. In all, 25 applications were processed. Of those, 24 were granted and one denied. Next quarter (probably in September), the EPC will be reviewing modifications to the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Map, reflecting additional information received since the last update.

Work continues in the EPC's role as the Flood and Erosion Control Board. Staff is now working with Town Counsel on Flood and Erosion Control Board regulations. Department staff also continues to follow-up on flood-related issues throughout the community.

The Architectural Review Board (ARB) met three times this period—once each month. A new member, Rita Gadsden, was recently appointed by the Board of Selectmen to fill a vacancy on this Board. In April, they approved the building design for an addition to the office building at 1500 Boston Post Road and additions and alterations to Ching's Kitchen. In May, they approved outdoor dining behind Ching's Kitchen; a replacement warming hut for the Wee Burn Country Club; a sign for Bead Boutique, a new business on Tokeneke Road; new signage for BMW of Darien; and proposed additions to Taste of Italy. In June, they approved a window sign and wall sign for Robek's, which will be going into the space formerly occupied by April 56 at 883 Boston Post Road; new awning and signs for Michael Joseph's catering; and new signs for Fairfield County Bank.

This quarter, 187 Zoning Permits were acted upon--66 in April, 59 in May, 62 in June. This is an increase of 32.6% over last quarter, and 15.6% over the same quarter in 2006. This quarter, there were seventeen applications approved for new residences (4 on vacant lots, 13 as "teardowns"). Ten applications were approved for swimming pools/spas, and one for signs. A Zoning Permit for interior renovations of 15 Chasmar's Pond Road was expedited so that filming could begin on that property soon thereafter.

Litigation

We are awaiting decision on two cases recently argued in Court: the Windels/Morley Lane case and the Rosztochy/Hyland case. The Planning and Zoning Commission held two Executive Sessions in May to discuss the possible resolution of another issue. Staff continues to work with Counsel on resolving a number of outstanding legal matters.

Personnel

Our summer intern started on May 22nd. Alison Ko is a freshman at Cornell University, and has been very involved in the office operations. She will be working on a variety of projects, both short and long-term. This includes copying for the general public thereby improving response time (providing improved service to the public); the update of the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Map; and working on State of Connecticut DEP wetlands form reporting. Next quarter, she will be assisting the Planning & Zoning Director on the Annual Report.

Since the Manager—Community Development Services position has been approved by the RTM for next fiscal year, it is expected that the job advertisements will be written and interviews held sometime over the next two quarters. It is hopeful to have someone hired before the end of the fall of 2007.