

PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT
QUARTERLY REPORT: JULY 1, 2002 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2002

The Planning and Zoning Commission met seven times this period—four times in July and three in September. Those meetings included a public hearing held on September 10th regarding the proposed rezoning of a portion of Noroton Bay. This was the fourth public hearing held on that matter this year.

Permits by type this quarter:

Flood Damage Prevention: 5 approved; 2 withdrawn; 1 amendment approved

Coastal Site Plan Review: 5 approved; 2 withdrawn; 1 amendment approved

Land Filling/Excavation: 5 approved; 2 withdrawn

Special Permit: 4 approved; 2 denied; 3 amendments approved

Subdivision: 2 approved; 1 amendment approved

Business Site Plan: 3 approved; 1 denied

Mandatory Referral: 1 approved

Total* (total does not add up, due to applications which include multiple permits): 22

Three of the applications involve “teardowns”—razing an existing residence and constructing a new residence (on Seagate Road, Cross Road and Five Mile River Road).

Significant applications approved this quarter include the request of Youth Options to move from Cherry Lawn Park to basement offices within Town Hall; an addition to Wheeler Real Estate on Boston Post Road; the placement of telecommunication antennas on the Chestnut Street water tank and inside the Tower Drive water tank enclosure; allowing the Senior Men’s Association to meet weekly at the DCA rather than at the YMCA; and the establishment of a new fitness center at 72 Heights Road.

In October, the Commission expects to make a final decision regarding the environmental remediation on the AvalonBay property. In addition, deliberations will begin on the proposed rezoning of a portion of Noroton Bay. A decision on that matter is expected in mid-October or early November. Discussions regarding the process of updating of the 1995 Town Plan of Development will also commence in the next few months. This will be a three-year project, with the goal being the adoption of a new Town Plan sometime in 2005.

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) met three times this quarter to process 18 applications. Of those, ten were granted, three denied, and five withdrawn. October will be an active month, with two public hearing dates already scheduled with very full agendas. The first of those meetings will include a joint public hearing with the EPC on an application of mutual interest. Thus far this year, the ZBA has processed 73 applications. This is an increase over last year at this time, which is noteworthy, as 2001 was the busiest year in the history of the ZBA.

The Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) met five times this period to act upon 33 applications. This was the most meetings they have had in a quarter since October-December 2000, and the most applications ever acted upon in one quarter. Of the applications processed, there were 29 granted; two granted in part/denied in part; two withdrawn, and three amendments approved. In the upcoming period, there is a special meeting scheduled with Town Counsel to discuss methods available to address wetlands violations.

The Architectural Review Board (ARB) met three times to process six applications. Of those, they reviewed signage for a new nail salon to be established next to Orvis, and approved a new wall sign for the relocated Vavala's Deli on Heights Road.

A total of 128 Zoning Permits were approved this period—a decrease of 16% over last quarter. Of those, three were for new residences and three for new swimming pools. In the next few months, we expect that the first zoning permits will be submitted for the new Darien High School.

Significant progress is being made in the area of GIS. Maps continue to be provided to the Tax Assessor's office for review and eventual replacement of the existing hand-drawn maps. In the upcoming quarter, work will begin on what has become the annual updating of the Town's Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Map. This map will reflect new information received by the Department regarding wetland locations over the past year.

The final steps are being coordinated on the installation of a public-access GIS terminal in the Planning and Zoning Office. This terminal will be used by applicants to assist them in determine property owners within 100 feet of their property for notification purposes for the local land use boards. We expect to be working with the Police Department on map requests.

Last month's quarterly report noted the \$900 saved by producing Tax Assessor's Maps using GIS. In the past three months, \$150 in revenue was generated by using GIS to respond to data requests by the general public.