

PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT
QUARTERLY REPORT: OCTOBER 1, 2002 – DECEMBER 31, 2002

The Planning and Zoning Commission met 9 times this quarter. They met five times in October, with two of those meetings dealing exclusively with the proposed rezoning of a portion of Noroton Bay. At one meeting each in November and December the issue was discussed. In the next few months, the Commission will be holding two public hearings on this proposed rezoning. It will be the fifth and sixth public hearings on this matter in a 13-month period.

Permits by type this quarter:

Flood Damage Prevention: 5 approved; 2 amendments approved

Coastal Site Plan Review: 6 approved; 2 amendments approved

Land Filling/Excavation: 5 approved

Special Permit: 3 withdrawn

Business Site Plan: 1 approved; 2 withdrawn

Total* (total does not add up, due to applications which include multiple permits): 16

Most significantly this quarter, the Commission approved the environmental remediation of the AvalonBay property, allowing AvalonBay to obtain Zoning and Building Permits and commence construction of the project. Of the nineteen applications that required a public hearing, only two of those hearings needed to be continued to allow the applicants to submit additional information.

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) met five times this period to process 26 applications. Of those, fourteen were granted; eight were denied; two granted in part/denied in part; one granted in part/withdrawn in part; and one interpretation made that a property was a legal non-conforming building lot. A total of 99 applications were processed this calendar year.

The Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) met four times this quarter to process 24 applications. Of those, seventeen were granted; three granted in part/denied in part; one denied; two withdrawn; and one where no action was required. A total of 99 applications were processed this calendar year. This is the second-most in the history of the EPC, second only to last year's 102 applications. A new Town Wetlands map was adopted, and became effective on December 5, 2002. This map reflects changes to over 60 properties, and has become an annual project of the EPC. In November, three EPC members and the four professional staff in the P&Z Department attended a very informative day-long session regarding wetlands and conservation issues. One EPC meeting this quarter was dedicated solely to meeting with Town Counsel to discuss enforcement issues.

The Town also won a recent appeal of an EPC decision. In his decision, the judge specifically praised the EPC and EPC staff, noting, "The EPC resolution conditionally approving the [applicant's] application EPC 56-00 is in itself a model of clarity and careful preparation. More importantly, the resolution evinces the patience, thoroughness, and informed common sense of the EPC members and staff." It is very rare for a judge to go out of his way to praise the Department and staff on their work. The Department and the EPC obviously take great pride in this.

The Architectural Review Board (ARB) met two times this quarter, to process four applications. This includes a wall sign for the new fitness center on Heights Road.

The first Zoning Permits were issued for AvalonBay's project to be called Avalon Darien. A total of 25 apartment buildings are planned for the project, and Zoning Permits were issued for 11 of

those buildings, which include 85 of the 189 apartment units. Permits were also issued for eight other buildings in the project—seven garages and the clubhouse/leasing office. It is expected that the remainder of the project will be granted zoning permits in January. The total number of zoning permits issued this fourth quarter was the highest its been for any fourth quarter except one in the past five years--126. This is partially due to the 19 AvalonBay permits issued. The 126 permits include ten swimming pools and 11 new residences (nine teardowns and two residences constructed on vacant lots)—*excluding* the AvalonBay permits. A substantial amount of time was also spent reviewing the Zoning Permit for the new Darien High School, which was approved in December.

GIS was used in the creation of the new Town Wetlands map. By performing this work in-house, rather than hiring a consultant, a total of \$8,640 was saved. We expect that map sales will also generate some revenue. The map has been put onto the Town of Darien web site. GIS work was done for the Police Department and bus routing work done for the Board of Education. GIS continues to be used to assist the Planning and Zoning Commission in understanding the ramifications of a possible rezoning of a portion of Noroton Bay.