

**TOWN OF SOMERS  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
P.O. BOX 308  
SOMERS, CONNECTICUT 06071**

**PLANNING MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2009**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Karl Walton called the regular meeting to order at 7:03 pm. Members Cliff Bordeaux, Greg Genlot, Joe Iadarola, Karl Walton and Alternate Scott Sutter (seated for Brad Pellissier) were present and constituted a quorum. Town Planner, Patrice Carson was also present.

**II. OLD BUSINESS**

- a. **OTHER** – There was no other Old Business.

**III. NEW BUSINESS**

- a. **ZONING REFERRAL: SITE PLAN APPLICATION FOR CHANGE OF USE TO BUSINESS, 138 MAIN STREET, REDMOND**

Ms. Carson explained that this is a Zoning referral for a business at 138 Main Street. Currently, the property is zoned for commercial use but has only been approved for residential use. Mr. Redmond has provided the required statement of purpose but not the floor plan and his paperwork still needs to be reviewed by the ZEO. The paperwork should be ready for the next meeting.

- b. **8-24 REFERRAL: SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENT OF TOWN PROPERTY, GRAVELING, RENOVATION & EXPANSION OF SOMERS RECREATIONAL FIELD PARK FIELD(S), FIELD ROAD, TOWN OF SOMERS**

Town Engineer Bob Cafarelli had previously shown the Commission a plan to remove sand and gravel at the Field Road site and to use the cleared area to create a new sports field. Troy LaMontagne, Vice Chairman of the Recreation Commission, addressed the Commission regarding the need for the field. He explained that the plan is to build the field to address the significant recreation program growth and the resulting over-utilized fields. He provided justification based on current and projected usage data, state population projections, state enrollment projections and actual Town school enrollment, professional guidelines for field turf sustainability and Public Works Departments and Town sports associations assessments.

There are 5 sports associations in Town: soccer, lacrosse, football, baseball and softball. Mr. LaMontagne provided the current number of players in these sports and their rate of growth over the last years. Somers school enrollment has exceeded the State projections for 2007, 2008 and 2009 by 1-2%. However, this increase does not explain the huge increase in sports participation in Town. Mr. LaMontagne explained that many children are playing multiple sports and many sports associations are playing multiple seasons.

Guidelines from the National Park & Recreation Association state that for every 1,000 in population a town should have about 10 acres of recreational space. According to these figures, Somers should have about 85 acres for recreation, but according to Mike Provencher who maintains the fields the actual number is about 40-45 acres.

Mr. LaMontagne cited a usage study which found that about 64 annual events on a field allows maintenance of sustainable turf. Exceeding 79 annual events makes the turf unsustainable. Currently Somers sports fields have about 140 events annually and this is degrading the turf more each year. Mr. LaMontagne provided a spreadsheet giving detailed data for usage of all Somers sports fields. The Public Works assessment indicates excessive wear on most

fields. It was the consensus of the Commission that Mr. LaMontagne demonstrated a need for an additional sports field.

Mr. Cafarelli explained the details of the project. He surveyed the area and determined that there is approximately 77,000 cubic yards equaling about 100,000 tons of sand and gravel that can be removed. The existing slope is about 2 to 1 and the proposed slope will be 3 to 1 and will terminate about 6 feet from the property line. The contractor hired to complete the project will be required to hire a surveyor to determine the exact boundary of the property and to set marker pins. One contractor who has bid on the project has scales on his loaders to weigh each load of material.

The irrigation system for the existing fields will be expanded to cover the new field, resulting in less expense for a new irrigation system. The material would be processed on site and removed soon afterward so there will be no stockpiling on the site. The contractor will sign a contract to have the material removed within 2 years. Mr. Cafarelli pointed out that the material is suitable for septic system use and the demand for it is not dependent on the construction market.

Mr. Jacobs did an analysis of the sand/gravel and determined that it is worth \$15.00 a ton delivered. This report was provided to the Commission.

Five gravel excavation operations were asked to submit a bid on the complete job. Ms. Carson suggested that as a possible cost-saving measure, it might be advantageous to look at splitting the job, with one company doing the excavation and removal and another company or the Town building the field. In the past the Town has built other fields but according to Mr. Provencher the Town does not have the capability to build the field now. If the gravel were already removed, installation of the field would cost about \$20,000.

The Commission discussed requiring a performance bond as would be the case in any other sand/gravel operation. Ms. Carson suggested that requirements for the bond be the same as in the Zoning Regulations and a bond for the work should be required in case of default and should include a contingency. Mr. Cafarelli pointed out that the gravel has value and therefore there would be no problem finding someone else to do the work. The cost of the gravel will be important in calculating the cost of the bond.

The Commission expressed the need for fencing around the excavation site for the safety of the children at the recreation park. To prevent possible interruption of use to the existing fields another access road may be installed or one of the fields may be reduced in size. It was noted that the park road would not be able to support the tonnage of these excavation trucks. The commission felt that an alternate route should be found for the truck traffic. It may be possible to go through the neighboring Avery property if the owners agree. It was suggested that the hours of operation could be restricted for excavation and ingress and egress during low recreational park use times.

The Planning Commission also felt that the Town Attorney should be consulted on whether a town meeting is needed for either the substantial work on town property or approval of a substantial contract. Mr. Pinney does not feel that this proposed project needs to go to a Town meeting, but said that it could be included as part of an informational meeting. The Commission also noted that the Plan of Conservation & Development recommended that a study be conducted on the Town's needs for recreational land so a long-term plan can be devised and incorporated for budget and planning purposes.

*A motion was made by Mr. Genlot; seconded by Mr. Iadarola and unanimously voted to accept the 8-24 referral for substantial improvement of Town property including graveling, renovation and expansion of the Somers recreational park fields on Field Road and to recommend the same to the Board of Selectman for their approval and Town Meeting if necessary in accordance with the recommendation of the Town staff and Section 8-24 of the Connecticut General Statutes. The recommendation is conditioned upon conformance with the following: 1) that the gravel bank operate within the Town of Somers gravel bank regulations and under the earth removal products operational hours as per the Zoning Regulations with the exception of Saturdays - Saturdays may be used for maintenance of equipment but not for hauling in and out of the site; 2) the work area should be appropriately fenced to keep the operation clearly separate from any public activity; 3) the Planning Commission strongly recommends that an alternate entrance and exit route*

*be sought so that the road into the recreation fields is not used for a tonnage of vehicle it was not built to handle and especially for safety reasons keeping large trucks away from areas highly used by children and families for recreation and summer camp. Should an alternate route be gained, hauling on Saturdays would then be acceptable to the Planning Commission; 4) a bond should be required for this project - the bond estimate as required in the Zoning Regulations for earth removal operations should be submitted to the Town Engineer for his review and approval in accordance with the Zoning Regulations - the bond estimate should include completion of the project, including installation of irrigation and a 20% contingency. A percentage of the bond may be reduced as the work is completed pending approval by the Town Engineer of the site plan presented; 5) the cost of the gravel should be reviewed to assure that its full value is realized; 6) the Town attorney should be consulted as to whether a town meeting is required regarding the significant alteration to town property or for entering into a significant contract to complete the work. For the purpose of complying with Section 8-24 of the Connecticut General Statutes, this resolution along with the minutes of the Commission's meeting as to this matter shall constitute the Commission's report for this proposal to be duly recorded and transmitted to the Board of Selectman of the Town of Somers.*

**c. 2009/2010 BUDGET**

This year's proposed Commission budget is 1.6% less than last year's. Ms. Carson reported that she was asked for a 0% increase not including salaries and this budget is below that. The Commission reviewed the budget and asked about individual items.

*A motion was made by Mr. Bordeaux; seconded by Mr. Iadarola and unanimously voted to approve the budget and forward it to the CFO.*

**d. OTHER – There was no other New Business.**

**IV. DISCUSSION: PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT**

**a. PROPOSED OPEN SPACE SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS – PUBLIC MEETING & HEARING DATES**

On February 26, 2009 there will be a public informational meeting regarding the proposed regulations for open space subdivisions. The Zoning Commission will also attend this meeting.

In preparation for this meeting Ms. Carson has reviewed the open space subdivision regulations of other local Towns and created a spreadsheet to see how Somers compares. The State statutes enabling open space subdivisions require that a *minimum* of 30% open space be preserved, but that a Town may choose to increase this. Eighty-five percent of towns that have this type of subdivision require 50% of the land to be preserved as open space.

The Commission's decision to amend and create the open space subdivision regulations is based on recommendations made by the public in the Plan of Conservation & Development.

**V. STAFF/COMMISSIONER REPORTS – There were none.**

**VI. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION – There was none.**

**VII. CORRESPONDENCE AND BILLS**

Chairman Walton received an email regarding the Open Space Subdivision Regulations from Carol Pyne of the Historical Society. She said that she appreciates the inclusion of the Historical Society in the regulation and also that provision was made for review of features of historical significance.

The following bill was presented for payment:

Journal Inquirer .....January 8, 2009 Meeting ..... \$78.70

**VIII. MINUTES APPROVAL:** January 22, 2009

The minutes of the January 22, 2009 Planning Meeting are to be corrected as follows: Page 2, bulleted paragraph 8, change “when health codes allow” to “when Public Health Codes and Zoning Regulations can be met.”

*A motion was made by Mr. Sutter; seconded by Mr. Genlot and unanimously voted to approve the minutes as amended.*

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

*A motion was made by Mr. Bordeaux; seconded by Mr. Iadarola and unanimously voted to adjourn the February 12, 2009 meeting of the Planning Commission at 8:37pm.*

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Reed  
Recording Secretary

Bradley Pellissier  
Commission Secretary

***MINUTES ARE NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVAL AT A SUBSEQUENT MEETING***