

**CITY OF TORRINGTON
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
January 17, 2024**

Present: Greg Mele, Chair
Greg Perosino, Vice Chair
Donna Greco, Member
Donovan Riley, Member
Jim Bobinski, Member
Diane Carroll, Alternate
Starley Arias, Alternate
Tom Telman, Alternate

Also Present: Jeremy Leifert, AICP; City Planner

1. Call to Order:

Chair Greg Mele called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. Attendance is by Zoom or in-person at City Hall Auditorium, Room 218, 140 Main Street, Torrington, CT.

Instructions for Zoom are available online at:

www.torringtonct.org/zoom

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7959507035?pwd=MXAwcVIEenhIQUhtSXFzSGhYUnI0QT09>

1-646-558-8656

Meeting ID: 795-950-7035

Passcode: 907148

2. Attendance/Announcement:

Chair Mele announced present and serving in person this evening are Commissioners Jim Bobinski, Greg Perosino, Diane Carroll, Donovan Riley, Donna Greco and Greg Mele. Present and serving via zoom are Commissioners Starley Arias and Tom Telman. Also present is City Planner Jeremy Leifert.

3. Minutes for Approval:

a. December 13, 2023

MOTION by Ms. Carroll to approve the December 13, 2023 minutes, seconded by Mr. Perosino. Motion carried with Mr. Telman abstaining from voting.

b. December 20, 2023

c. December 27, 2023

MOTION by Mr. Perosino to table the December 20, 2023 and December 27, 2023 minutes for approval, seconded by Mr. Telman, unanimously approved.

4. **Public Hearings beginning at 7:00 p.m., January 17, 2024; City Hall Auditorium, Room 218, 140 Main Street, Torrington, CT**

- a. Proposed Change of Zoning Regulations
Applicant: ECAD, Educated Canines Assisting with Disabilities
Proposal: Amendment to Section 3.0 Uses, 3.1 Tables of Uses, Section 10.00 Service & Business related to animals, Subsection 10.20 Kennel. Kennel shall be permitted in the I and IP Zone by Special Exception.

Mr. Greg Mele opened the public hearing at 7:03 p.m. and stated serving this evening are Commissioners Jim Bobinski, Greg Perosino, Diane Carroll, Donovan Riley, Donna Greco, Starley Arias, Tom Telman, and Greg Mele. Also present is City Planner Jeremy Leifert.

Ms. Greco read the legal notice of publication in the Republican American.

Attorney David Sherwood appeared representing the applicant ECAD. He noted the Northwest Hills Council of Governments had no comments on this application. This is a common Industrial use across the State; West Hartford, East Lyne, Windsor and Cromwell all allow kennel uses in the Industrial zones. Most towns tend to put kennels in a low density residential zone, but that becomes a problem as they develop because dogs make noise. Industrial zones typically don't cause a problem.

Attorney Sherwood handed to Commissioners materials and brochures prepared by the applicant, and a map of the Torrington site they plan to occupy.

Mr. Leifert read his memo to the Commission dated January 17, 2024.

Ms. Carroll inquired about the dogs in the program. Carrie Picard, applicant, appeared and explained their breeding program. The dogs will receive approximately 1,500 hours of training over approximately 18 – 24 months. They will not initially train owner-owned dogs, this program is specifically for their ECAD dogs. Training programs will be mostly indoors, with an outdoor aspect. Often dogs will be fostered off site on the weekends. They use labs, goldens and lab/golden mixes. At peak they would have approximately 50 dogs. Currently the business operates at 149 Newfield Road, Winchester, CT. Further details were provided on business operations.

Dale Picard, 145 Newfield Road, Winchester, CT appeared and gave background details on their business, ECAD. They have 55 dogs in training at all times, and have 20 employees and hope to add ten more. Training and fundraising for the dogs was reviewed. They have placed over 400 service dogs thus far. There would be outdoor kennels and pen areas that are supervised, and not used at night. Eventually they would like to have 80 dogs in their program. Details of their training and dog abilities were explained by Ms. Picard.

Mr. Mele opened the public hearing to both zoom and in person comments in favor of the proposal. There were no comments.

Mr. Mele opened the public hearing to both zoom and in person comments in opposition to the proposal. There were no comments.

At 7:35 p.m. Mr. Mele declared the public hearing closed.

MOTION by Ms. Greco to APPROVE Proposed Change of Zoning Regulations

Applicant: ECAD, Educated Canines Assisting with Disabilities

Proposal: Amendment to Section 3.0 Uses, 3.1 Tables of Uses, Section 10.00 Service & Business related to animals, Subsection 10.20 Kennel. Kennel shall be permitted in the I and IP Zone by Special Exception

The effective date of the regulation change/amendment shall be the day after publication of the legal notice of decision in the local newspaper. Motion seconded by Mr. Perosino, unanimously carried.

b. Special Exception 23-06

Applicant: AJK, LLC

Location: 637 and 659 Winsted Road

Proposal: Renewal of existing earth excavation permit, Section 6.4
(public hearing will not be opened this evening)

Mr. Leifert noted the public hearing signs were not placed during the proper time frame, and the public hearing will not be opened this evening and a new public hearing date is needed.

MOTION by Mr. Perosino to set a public hearing for AJK, LLC of February 14, 2024, seconded by Ms. Greco, unanimously carried.

5. Public Hearings beginning at 7:00 p.m., February 14, 2024; City Hall Auditorium, Room 218, 140 Main Street, Torrington, CT

a. Special Exception 23-06

Applicant: AJK, LLC

Location: 637 and 659 Winsted Road

Proposal: Renewal of existing earth excavation permit, Section 6.4

b. Proposed Zoning Regulation Amendments –

Applicant: Planning and Zoning Commission

Modify Section 6.2, Automobile Establishments - Motor Vehicle Dealer, Vehicle Repairer, Junk Yards & Gasoline Sales to comply with statutory changes under CT Public Act 23-40 and Title 14 of CT General Statutes.

Public hearings to be opened on February 14, 2024.

6. Old Business:

a. Site Plan 1473

Applicant: Allied Engineering Assoc., Inc.
Location: 93 Main Street and Maiden Lane
Proposal: Renovation of Yankee Pedlar Inn and associated site work
(Lot #1 Building; Lot #9 Parking Lot)

Applicant George Johannesen of Allied Engineering Assoc., Inc. appeared via zoom. He has received comments from City Staff, and comments were addressed. They agree with Jeremy Leifert's comments in conclusion. Mr. Johannesen screen shared the site maps. Most of the work will be on the building interior. The rear parking lot will be graded, new drainage and landscaping will be installed. Site details and landscaping details were reviewed by Mr. Johannesen, as well as upgrades to the rear retaining wall.

Mr. Leifert read his memo to the Commission dated January 17, 2024.

MOTION by Ms. Greco to APPROVE Site Plan 1473

Applicant: Allied Engineering Assoc., Inc.
Location: 93 Main Street, and Maiden Lane
Proposal: Renovation of Yankee Pedlar Inn and associated site work
(Lot #1 Building; Lot #9 Parking Lot)

With the following conditions and recommendations:

1. The applicant shall update plans to reflect comments by Nate Nardi-Cyrus, Assistant Planner on November 22, 2023 regarding landscaping
2. The commission approves landscaping at less than five feet in width along Maiden Lane. The proposed landscaping constitutes a reduction in a pre-existing non-conformity as landscaping was previously absent.
3. Screening and odor control for the approved dumpster location shall be maintained at all times. Dumpster may be ordered to be relocated should persistent issues arise.
4. All old signage not intended for reuse on the property shall be removed
5. The applicant shall address remaining engineering comments as outlined in the City Engineer memo of November 27, 2023. Review and approval of the final plans by the City Engineer is required prior to filing of required mylars and issuance of zoning permits for construction.
6. The applicant shall follow the advice of the 2015 review of the Architectural Review Committee contained in this memo regarding building facade improvements and building address labelling.
7. The applicant shall resolve any issues regarding illicit stormwater connections per comments by Ed Tousey, WPCA Administrator, in a memo to the City Planner dated November 20, 2023 prior to issuance of Certificate of Occupancy.
8. Construction staging shall be installed along public sidewalks on Main Street and Maiden Lane per comments by both Fire Marshal Edward Bascetta and Building Official Kevin Gillette. Staging shall be installed before beginning any work on the site.
9. All fire escapes and external building access points shall be secured, repaired or removed and certified by City code officials to comply with building and fire codes prior to Certificate of Occupancy
10. In accordance with section 8.4.3 and 8.4.6 of the zoning regulations, the following shall be submitted to the City Planner:

- a. Two paper copies of the full approved plans including the engineer's stamp and chairman's signature box on sheets C-1, C-3 and C-6
 - b. One mylar copy of sheet C-3 – Proposed Site Layout Plan and C-6 – Proposed Site Landscaping Plan for filing with the City Clerk in accordance with section 8.4.3.P of the zoning regulations. Each mylar sheet shall bear a chairman's signature box, a copy of the approval letter from the commission, an engineers' seal and live ink stamp.
11. Mylar sheets shall be filed by the applicant with the City Clerk after the signature of the Chairman and prior to the approval of grading and zoning permits to begin construction.

Motion seconded by Mr. Perosino, unanimously carried.

7. New Business:

- a. Special Exception 23-09 and Site Plan 1482
Applicant: Jose Neftali Rodriguez
Location: 184 South Main Street
Proposal: Change of Use to Two Family Residence (former mixed use, retail use and apartment) Section 3.0, subsection 1.20
(set public hearing date)

MOTION by Mr. Perosino to set a public hearing date of February 14, 2024, seconded by Ms. Carroll, unanimously carried.

8. Correspondence:

- a. Zoning and Blight Violation update

Mr. Leifert noted the updates were distributed to Commission members, and they may call him or the Zoning Officers at any time for further details or updates.

- b. Discussion:
 1. Fire Department Sign Regulations

Mr. Leifert reviewed the Fire Department and perhaps Board of Education may want electronic messaging signage. This is not intended for all commercial operations, but for civic uses, weather, school events, fire department messages, etc. Mr. Mele said this would be for non-commercial uses, with no commercial content, such as sponsoring a civic event.

Mr. Leifert outlined his notes and past research on such signage.

2. Shelter Regulations

Mr. Leifert reviewed his research materials. An emergency response plan is imperative moving forward, as well as submission of floor plans with any applications.

Commission discussion followed. Mr. Leifert recommended some expert guidance, perhaps from a State of CT agency, and we may need to determine a regional need.

Mr. Arias explained how the 211 system refers people to a shelter, which may be determined by the person's access to a car for transportation to any available shelter which may not be in their immediate geographic area or home town.

Mr. Perosino emphasized that each town needs to take a responsibility for their share of the population that is in need of shelter. Mr. Leifert noted there needs to be enough beds so there are not people being taken out of tents in inclement weather. An objective person needs to review the numbers of beds needed per community.

It is important to have a structured system in place to address this problem per Mr. Perosino.

Mr. Leifert said a year round shelter is effectively a boarding house, which there are regulations in place for. Neutral reviews will be needed to provide numbers for the beds needed. Mr. Leifert will provide additional information to Commission members for their review.

3. Training

The second Commission meeting in February on the 28th was added as a training event for Commissioners. Ms. Jocelyn Ayer will cover affordable housing training per Mr. Leifert. On April 22, 2024 at the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting there will be a training session by zoom from the land use attorney who did the presentation at the Connecticut Bar Association event. Nate Nardi-Cyrus, Assistant City Planner is coordinating this one. Mr. Leifert will provided further details to Commission members.

9. **Adjournment:**

At 8:59 p.m., MOTION by Mr. Perosino to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Carroll, unanimously carried.