

**CITY OF TORRINGTON
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES
November 16, 2022**

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

Also Present: Jeremy Leifert, City Planner
Nate Nardi-Cyrus, Assistant City Planner

Not Present: Donna Greco, Member
Tom Telman, Alternate

1. Call to Order:

Chair Greg Mele called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Attendance is by Zoom or in-person at City Hall Auditorium, Room 218, 140 Main Street, Torrington, CT.

2. Attendance/Announcement:

Chair Greg Mele announced present and serving in person at City Hall this evening are Commissioners Greg Perosino, Jim Bobinski, Diane Carroll and Greg Mele. Commissioners present and serving via zoom this evening are Donovan Riley and Starley Arias. Jeremy Leifert, City Planner, was present via Zoom, and Nate Nardi-Cyrus, Assistant City Planner, was present in person at City Hall.

3. Minutes for Approval:

a. 10/26/22

MOTION by Mr. Perosino to table the 10/26/22 minutes, seconded by Ms. Carroll, unanimously carried.

4. Public Hearings beginning at 7:00 p.m., November 16, 2022 City Hall Auditorium, Room 218, 140 Main Street, Torrington, CT

a. *Hearing has been canceled for:*
Special Exception 22-08 and Site Plan 1425
Applicant: Alam Realty, Inc.
Location: 861 New Harwinton Road
Proposal: Sales of gasoline, new canopy, parking, landscaping, site work, signage

It was noted the public hearing is canceled this evening.

- b. Change of Zone Map and Site Plan 1426
 - Applicant: Patrik Jonsson
 - Location: 957 East Main Street
 - Proposal: Change Zone Map to AM Overlay (currently LB Local Business)
Adult Use Cannabis Retail Establishment

Chair Greg Mele opened the public hearing and announced present and serving are Commissioners Greg Perosino, Jim Bobinski, Diane Carroll, Donovan Riley, Starley Arias, and Greg Mele. Jeremy Leifert, City Planner, was present via Zoom, and Nate Nardi-Cyrus, Assistant City Planner, was present in person at City Hall.

Mr. Perosino read the legal notice of public hearing.

Patrik Jonsson, applicant, appeared and stated the public hearing sign was posted, and notices sent to abutting property owners.

Galen Semprebon PE of East-West Engineering appeared representing the applicant. He gave a detailed presentation and screen shared site plans and maps. In response to questions from Mr. Mele and Mr. Perosino, Mr. Semprebon provided details on property lines, pavement removal, easements, etc. The applicant will install a new sidewalk on East Main Street and install new landscaping. Entrance and exits to sites were discussed in detail.

Mr. Leifert reviewed Sgt. Dustin Baldis' comments regarding traffic.

Impervious surface and parking layout was discussed. Two spots in the parking lot are reserved for residents of the house on site. Mr. Jonsson is working on obtaining eight additional parking spaces from the nearby Hertz property for their employees. In response to questions from the Commission, Mr. Jonsson explained they have ten employees, and have complied with the required parking regulations for their use. Mr. Leifert noted the City's review does not factor in off-site parking.

Mr. Leifert reviewed his memo to the Commission dated November 16, 2022.

In response to questions from Mr. Bobinski, Mr. Jonsson explained how they will manage the number of customers entering and exiting their facility, approximately 250 per day. They will not hold the CT license to provide deliveries of their products.

Mr. Arias noted traffic at other similar facilities is extensive. He is concerned about the amount of traffic coming in and out of East Main Street.

Mr. Leifert noted there is the ability to use Yorkshire Street as an exit. The residential street exits out to a traffic light on East Main Street. Mr. Perosino and Mr. Mele noted the potential traffic on Yorkshire Street and Tioga Street, onto residential streets, the karate studio in the vicinity, pedestrian traffic of children and others in the area.

Mr. Leifert noted the regulations define a karate studio as a gym. Mr. Mele noted concerns regarding traffic and parking near a recreational facility, parking on residential Yorkshire Street, and the necessity of off-site employee parking right from the start.

Mr. Semprebon responded they have gone out of their way to ensure there is adequate parking for their use.

Mr. Jonsson reviewed their staffing levels. He reviewed his experiences opening 28 Puraleaf stores in another state.

Traffic concerns were expressed by Commission members. Mr. Semprebon noted the current use is a bus depot with approximately 15 buses on site.

Mr. Donovan inquired about the purpose of the 500' notation on the site plans. Mr. Leifert responded this gives an opportunity to note if such uses as a school etc. are in the area without a hard separation, but allow the chance to review nearby locations to make a decision on adoption of the overlay zone.

Parking and traffic issues further discussed at length.

Mr. Mele opened the hearing for public comments in favor of the proposal, there were none.

Mr. Mele opened the hearing for public comments in opposition to the proposal.

Kimberly Grustas appeared on behalf of the owners of 967 East Main Street. Ms. Grustas read a statement of opposition. Referring to her own research sources, she stated the site is unfit, reviewing other medical marijuana sites in Connecticut, none of which abuts residential areas, noting the higher number of parking spaces the other facilities have.

James Grustas appeared, he rents space at 977 East Main Street, and works twelve hours a day there since 1978. Their business trucks go out in the morning, and come back in the evening. They are good neighbors. He noted there are many pedestrians on Yorkshire Street, noting it is a residential area. Snow removal will be a problem at the proposed location, and they will lose spaces with snow plowing, parking will be an issue. A driving school is also across the street. Mr. Grustas noted the public hearing sign was laying on the ground most of the week.

Mario Longobucco, Realtor for the site, appeared in favor of the proposal. He noted the new Starbucks site nearby on East Main Street, which is a similar location to a residential street, and parking, as this proposal. Property owners have a right to develop their properties, all City staff and police staff have commented on this proposal. He disputed the parking site numbers and potential customer numbers noted by Ms. Grustas. The State of Connecticut wants recreational marijuana uses to be an economic driver, bringing people to local businesses.

Mr. Mele called for any additional opposition comments. John Grustas of 50 Prescott Street, Torrington, appeared in opposition. He noted Starbucks is not open yet, so that remains to be seen how it works. Other businesses in the area were noted, Skytop Plaza businesses, O'Reilly Auto Parts, etc. Yorkshire Street is a residential Street, and that should be considered.

Mike Boe of 19 Tioga Street, Torrington, appeared in opposition. He noted the side streets are zoned R10, which is residential. Mr. Boe stated the parking and travel on Yorkshire Street is already tight, and left hand turns onto East Main Street will be near impossible.

Storm drainage issues were briefly reviewed by the Commission.

Ms. Kimberly Grustas spoke, noting her visual observations of Starbucks and Still River operation on Winsted Road.

Mr. Perosino noted comments are often made that are not supported by facts, such as comments regarding crime. The Police Chief has spoken with Massachusetts Police Chiefs, and there are no crime issues surrounding similar uses in that State. The Still River site business has added approximately 200 customers.

Mr. Mele does not believe the Starbucks site is a similar comparison, as it is a drive thru service site, and there is stacking of cars on site for service. Mr. Perosino stated a large component is the residential use and the impact the proposal will have on residential areas. Mr. Mele concurred with Mr. Perosino. Mr. Mele's main concern is there is a lack of parking, residential uses nearby.

An unidentified speaker noted there are small kids in the vicinity, some at the karate school, waiting for rides in the area.

Mr. Riley inquired about customer volume during peak hours, and how many vehicles are expected. Mr. Jonsson responded the peak hours are Friday afternoon, evening, and all day Saturday, with a 50% increase of customers, to 40 per hour, a customer every minute and a half.

Mr. Jonsson stated some of the comments made this evening are just untrue. Other sites that were noted have other business uses at the same location. He has run many other similar sites as this proposal, some with less parking than the current proposal. As more sites are opened, there will be less traffic at each site. Much of the supposed facts presented tonight are just not true.

Ms. Carroll stated she has concerns about parking on Yorkshire Street.

Mr. Semprebon stated the karate studio is a recreational use, not a school. East Main Street is heavily trafficked and they have tried to balance the concerns of the neighbors. Further discussion on the Yorkshire Street exist vs. East Main Street exit followed. Mr. Semprebon stated this use is not a heavy traffic generator. There is no way to get around the heavy traffic on East Main Street. Mr. Semprebon thanked the Commission for their time.

Mr. Jonsson spoke about how deliveries are handled in other states, one vehicle in early in the day, then back out later in day.

Mr. James Grustas of 977 East Main Street spoke further regarding traffic concerns in the area.

Mike Boe of 19 Tioga Street spoke about the tractor trailer trucks and their deliveries to Subway and the much higher traffic in the area.

Mario Longobucco noted the many other local business uses in the area, and how many of them dump out onto Yorkshire Street, but now there appears to be a problem that this proposal will use Yorkshire Street.

No further comments.

At 9:34 p.m. Chair Mele declared the public hearing closed. There will be a decision at a future Commission meeting.

- c. Proposed Amendments to City of Torrington Zoning Regulations
 - Applicant: Torrington Planning and Zoning Commission
 - Proposal: Proposed Zoning Regulation Amendments – remove residential density caps in the Downtown District; Sections 3.1, 4.15 and 6.8

At 9:34 p.m. Chair Mele opened the public hearing and announced present and serving are Commissioners Greg Perosino, Jim Bobinski, Diane Carroll, Donovan Riley, Starley Arias, and Greg Mele. Jeremy Leifert, City Planner, was present via Zoom, and Nate Nardi-Cyrus, Assistant City Planner, was present in person at City Hall.

Mr. Perosino read the public hearing legal notice.

Mr. Leifert provided background information on this proposal. Discussion followed by Commission members and Mr. Leifert.

Mr. Mele opened the public hearing for public comments, in support of the proposal, and in opposition, there were no comments.

At 9:42 p.m. Mr. Mele declared the public hearing closed.

MOTION by Mr. Perosino to APPROVE Proposed Amendments to City of Torrington Zoning Regulations

- Applicant: Torrington Planning and Zoning Commission
- Proposal: Proposed Zoning Regulation Amendments – remove residential density caps in the Downtown District; Sections 3.1, 4.15 and 6.8

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 Ms. Carroll, unanimously carried.

5. **Public Hearings beginning at 7:00 p.m., December 21, 2022 City Hall Auditorium, Room 218, 140 Main Street, Torrington, CT**

- a. Proposed Amendments to City of Torrington Zoning Regulations
Applicant: Torrington Planning and Zoning Commission
Proposal: Proposed Zoning Regulations Amendments:
Special Events; Revise Section 3.1, 21.00 and add new Section 6.13
Special Events

MOTION by Ms. Carroll to table this public hearing until December 21, 2022, seconded by Mr. Perosino, unanimously carried.

6. **Old Business:**

None

7. **New Business:**

- a. Site Plan 1428
Applicant: The Charlotte Hungerford Hospital, Brian Ohler
Location: 1215 New Litchfield Street
Proposal: Site Plan modification to add 17 parking spaces

Tim Coon of J.R. Russo Associates appeared representing the applicant, also present is Brian Ohler of Charlotte Hungerford Hospital.

Mr. Coon screen shared his site maps and gave a presentation.

Mr. Leifert read his memo to the Commission dated November 16, 2022.

MOTION by Mr. Perosino to APPROVE Site Plan 1428
Applicant: The Charlotte Hungerford Hospital, Brian Ohler
Location: 1215 New Litchfield Street
Proposal: Site Plan modification to add 17 parking spaces
With the following conditions and recommendations:

1. The applicant shall follow comments of Nate Nardi-Cyrus, Assistant Planner outlined in his November 1, 2022 email to the City Planner
2. The applicant shall follow comments of Paul Kundzins, City Engineer outlined in his October 27, 2022 email to the City Planner
3. The applicant shall follow comments of Ed Tousey, WPCA Administrator, City Engineer outlined in his November 4, 2022 email to the City Planner. Changes to proposed landscaping and plantings shall be shown on the final filed plans.
4. Zoning permits are required prior to alteration or use of the site for the proposed use.
5. 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 approved plan including the engineer's stamp and chairman's signature box on the title page.

- b. One mylar copy of site 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.
- c. Mylar sheets shall be filed by the applicant with the City Clerk after the signature of the Chairman and prior to the approval of zoning permits to begin construction.

MOTION seconded by Ms. Carroll, unanimously carried.

- b. Special Exception 22-08 and Site Plan 1425
 Applicant: Alam Realty, Inc.
 Location: 861 New Harwinton Road
 Proposal: Sales of gasoline, new canopy, parking, landscaping, site work, signage (set public hearing date)

MOTION by Mr. Perosino to set a public hearing date of December 21, 2022, seconded by Ms. Carroll, unanimously carried.

- c. Special Exception 22-09 and Site Plan 1430
 Applicant: Lelah Campo
 Location: 232 Klug Hill Road
 Proposal: Recreational Vehicle (RV) Park for 92 sites and associated amenities - Section 1.90 Mobile Home Park and Recreational Vehicle Park (Set public hearing date)

MOTION by Mr. Perosino to set a public hearing date of December 21, 2022, seconded by Ms. Carroll, unanimously carried.

8. Correspondence:

- a. Zoning and Blight Violation update

Nate Nardi-Cyrus was present, there were no new updates to review.

- b. Reappointment of Architectural Review Committee Members

Mr. Leifert reviewed the dates and reappointments of members whose terms has expired. Mr. Bobinski representing Planning and Zoning Commission has completed his term and will not renew. There is one vacancy to be filled by a Planning and Zoning Commission member. Ms. Diane Carroll volunteered for this position, with a term expiration date of December 31, 2024.

MOTION by Mr. Perosino to reappoint the following Architectural Review Committee members:

Marc Trivella, Chair
Robert Mileti
John Sullivan
Alan Diulio
Paul Kundzins, City Engineer
Jeremy Leifert, City Planner

MOTION seconded by Ms. Carroll, unanimously carried.

c. Reappointment of Planning and Zoning Commission Members

Mr. Leifert reviewed the list of Planning and Zoning Commission Members and expiration dates. Tom Telman is up for reappointment, and Mr. Leifert will email him regarding this (Mr. Telman not present this evening).

Mr. Mele expressed his willingness to be reappointed for a new five year term.

d. Discussion – Torrington Affordable Housing Plan 2022 – 2027

Mr. Leifert briefly reviewed, this addition to the Plan of Conservation and Development will require a public hearing, and a 35 day notice needs to be given to the Northwest Council of Governments. A public hearing date will be set at the next Commission meeting in January.

9. Adjournment:

MOTION by Mr. Bobinski to adjourn at 10:03 p.m., seconded by Mr. Perosino, unanimously carried.