

Woodstock Planning and Zoning Regulation Review Subcommittee

November 3rd, 2016 Lower Level, Woodstock Town Hall

- I. Call to Order was at 7:32 PM by Chair J. Gordon.
- II. Roll Call: D. Porter, F. Rich, K. Ebbitt, T. Serrine, S. Blodgett, J. Adiletta, J. Gordon, D. Durst. J. Adiletta present at 7:41 PM. Planner D. Fey was away due to a family commitment.
- III. Chair's report: Note was made that the regular October monthly PZC meeting had to be cancelled due to a public notification glitch. At that meeting, Chair J. Gordon would have reminded the Commission that the Annual Meeting is scheduled for the regular November monthly meeting (11/17/2016) at which our leadership team for 2017 will be nominated and selected.
- IV. Minutes of October 6th, 2016 Subcommittee meeting were approved unanimously (D. Porter/D. Durst), with F. Rich, T. Serrine, S. Blodgett, and K. Ebbitt abstaining as the minutes were not able to be made available in advance of the meeting to review.
- V. Discussion- Subdivision Regulations:
 - Chair J. Gordon had emailed out a Nov 1st memo update of the activity of the Subcommittee to date regarding Subdivision Regs review.
 - Chair J. Gordon provided a memo, CLASSIFICATION OF SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS (11/2016), which provides talking points for the Commission's review of subdivisions based on the proposed number of lots.
 - Review of the current process, which was prior approved via a text amendment, has created a streamlined way to handle subdivision applications of up to but not including 4 lots, making the decision of whether a public hearing is needed for these small subdivisions to be determined by the Commission on a case-by-case basis. Larger number subdivisions require public hearing.
 - Some states, including Rhode Island, have created categories of subdivisions ("minor" subdivision), which have a shortened process for application requirements and reviews for smaller/less intensive subdivisions. The process has, in those states/communities, remained more involved for what are considered "major" subdivisions.
 - Communities in those areas have devised language that curtails the possibility of manipulating or subverting the Regs so as to create sequential "minor" subdivisions on the same parcel yet achieve in cumulative, piecemeal effect a "major" subdivision.

- Chair J. Gordon provided a memo, SUBDIVISION DESIGN OPTIONS (11/2016), which further provides talking points for the Commission’s review of subdivision designs.

Commission comments:

1. D. Porter and J. Gordon suggested examining different ways of calculating how much land is buildable on a parcel.
2. K. Ebbitt asked about the fact that all wetlands come off the calculations before the buildable acreage is determined.
3. S. Blodgett noted that the wetlands are not buildable by statute, but the commission could examine whether any of it could be apportioned as part of the open space requirement. A problem has consistently arisen when each parcel includes a segment of the wetlands, the property owner may, over time, use the designated wetlands inappropriately.
4. F. Rich noted that appraisers cannot accurately establish a value for a parcel if our regulations make it unclear whether a desirable (valuable) segment of the property, such as a hilltop, might go into the open space requirement or not.
6. J. Gordon noted that in his study of the matter, he sees some communities apportioning the calculation of open space to include the wetlands and other unbuildable space on a weighted basis; this appears to be difficult/tedious and probably an aspect that Woodstock may not want to implement since one wants to keep the regulations as easy to understand and to use as is possible.
7. J. Adiletta confirmed that if any of the possible changes were considered, the open space requirements would continue to be part of the Regs.
8. J. Gordon discussed about possibly using incentives (lot density bonuses) to guide conservation design applications instead of having the Regs use disincentives for how to guide residential land development, so that one maintain the good value of undeveloped land, which is important for land owners, and maintain good value of developed land, which is important for home owners.
9. D. Porter mentioned that lot density bonuses would need to be a enough number to be economically interesting to land developers.
10. J. Gordon mentioned about being creative with minimum lot sizes and curb cuts so as to be flexible to accommodate different subdivision designs, including conservation design, and any lot bonuses that might be offered.

Follow-up requested:

1. A copy of an example of a community’s regulations, which permits communities to consider “minor” and “major” subdivision applications.
2. Look at our own requirements for subdivision approval to determine if a streamlined list is feasible for smaller proposed subdivisions, such as, for example, creating a simple-format checklist for smaller subdivisions, streamlining the process for the property owner.
3. Review the implications for driveway cuts in our current regulations in that for a small subdivision, neither a common driveway nor a town road may be ideal.

4. Make it clear to the public, should we implement any of the above changes, that re-subdivisions, no matter the number of proposed lots, require a public hearing per C.G.S. (and thus our full list of requirements is in force).
5. Clarification: the “First split,” sometimes referred to as a “first cut” or “first lot off” of a parcel is measured from the date of the enactment of Woodstock’s subdivision regulations which occurred on August 31, 1965. Many property owners may not be aware of the “split” activity in the past but it can be traced in the land records in the town clerk’s office.

VI. Citizen comments: None

VII. Other: None

VIII. Agenda for next meeting: continue the above discussions and look toward making decisions, as applicable.

IX. Adjournment: (motion F. Rick/J. Adiletta) was at 9:18 PM

NOTE: THE DECEMBER MEETING MAY BE RESCHEDULED TO DECEMBER 8th, due to a scheduling conflict. This will be discussed at the regular November monthly meeting (11/17/16)

Submitted by PZC Chair, J. Gordon