

# WINDHAM PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

## REGULAR Meeting Minutes

July 28, 2016

**I) Call to Order-** The Windham Planning & Zoning Commission held its meeting on July 28, 2016 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room, Town Hall. Chair Paula Stahl called the meeting to order at 7:01 P.M. Members present: Paula Stahl, Chair, Jean Chaine, Vice-Chair, and Claire Lary. Edward Pelletier, Michael Graff, and Scott Lambeck were excused. Also present were Town Planner James Finger, and ZEO Matthew Vertefeuille.

### **II) Approval of Minutes**

a) The minutes of May 26, 2016 were approved. Motion by Claire Lary, seconded by Jean Chaine. The motion carried unanimously.

b) The minutes of June 23, 2016 were approved. Motion by Paula Stahl, seconded by Jean Chaine. The motion carried unanimously.

c) The minutes of July 14, 2016 were approved. Motion by Jean Chaine, seconded by Claire Lary. The motion carried unanimously.

### **III) Public Hearings**

a )**Willimantic Baptist Church, 1110 Main Street, Willimantic, CT** – Special Permit application for Church in accordance with Section 31A.3.2.

The Chair opened the Public Hearing. Pastor Douglas Meader said the Church is planning to move from its present location in Mansfield to 1110 Main Street, Willimantic, CT. The property is owned by Weison Huang. The building has been occupied by the Windham No-Freeze Shelter, as well as an adult book store in the past. The Church will be leasing approximately 3,000 square feet in the front of the building, while Mr. Huang will use the back of the building as a showroom for his Soapstone business.

Pastor Meader said the Church plans to hold services on Sunday and Bible Study during the week. It will also hold different church activities. He said services will average approximately 25 people, but could accommodate 50 to 75 people. Mr. Huang said Church services would not interfere with his business as they are held on Sundays and evenings and his business hours are during the day and not on Sundays.

Commissioner Jean Chaine asked why the building is divided with the Church up front and the Soapstone business in the back of the property as the front of the property is zoned commercial. Planner Finger said the Soapstone business includes cutting stone, polishing, etc. The back of the property is more appropriate for the business because it is adjacent to Mr. Huang's primary location. He added that the building has been vacant for 2 years. Commissioner Claire Lary asked if there is sufficient parking on the property. Mr. Huang said he owns the parking lot and his business doesn't require a lot of parking. Chair Stahl said there is sufficient room on the property for additional parking if needed. She indicated that per the regulations, the parking lot will need to be striped.

Chair Stahl then opened the hearing to public comments. There was no one in the audience to speak to the application, but a letter was received from Dr. Robert Dibble an adjoining property owner. ZEO Matt Vertefeuille read the letter into the record. He said a significant increase in exposure to liability would result from the use of his parking lot for the parking of vehicles, drop offs, and collection of persons, or

for any other use by persons attending, connected to, or acting on behalf of the Willimantic Baptist Church. He said it is his request, as a condition of approval for the referenced Permit that it be documented that the property at 1120 Main Street be regarded as “Off Limits” for use or activity by persons connected with the Church. ZEO Matt Vertefeuille said he spoke with Dr. Dibble and assured him that it is not the intent of the Church to use his parking lot.

Chair Stahl asked about signage, as she said Mr. Huang presently advertises his business by having a granite sign mounted on his delivery truck which is parked in this parking lot and portable signs are not permitted per the regulations. ZEO Matt Vertefeuille explained that the town has spoken to Mr. Huang many times that the portable sign isn't permitted. Mr. Huang stated that he needed the visibility on Main Street. Chair Stahl said a free-standing sign displaying granite could be placed on the property and would be very visible and would be in compliance with the Town's regulations on signage.

The Chair asked if anyone else had comments, and if the members had sufficient information to make a decision. The Chair closed the Public Hearing.

**b) Horizons, Inc., 103,107,127 7 153 Babcock Hill Road, South Windham, CT** – Modification of existing Special Permit for improvements to camp facility for people with developmental disabilities and proposed improvements to current operations.

A letter dated July 11, 2016 from Chris McNaboe, Chief Executive Officer for Horizons explained that Horizons currently has a master plan on file. She said they wish to modify that plan to include a 1240 square foot addition to the EEC building for ADA purposes, additional parking space and a driveway on the north 103 Babcock Hill Road parcel.

Wes Wentworth with Wentworth Civil Engineers, LLC said the five year master plan was approved in 2013. He said Horizons is now proposing modifications to that plan. They propose to build a 1200 square foot addition onto the EEC building (Education and Employment Center) for ADA purposes. They also wish to add additional parking on the North end of the property. They are proposing 45 to 50 additional parking spaces. Planner Finger said the addition is proposed because after the building was built, hallways and other areas are now blocked by wheelchairs and walkers. More space is in order to improve ADA compliance, he said.

Chair Stahl asked if there has been any change in activity to warrant the change in the parking lot. Ms. McNaboe said we are proposing this to be able to maintain our activity, although we do have a large turnover each year. In the past many staff were international and didn't have cars, that has changed as more workers are local and drive to and from work.

Commissioner Jean Chaine said when the master plan was developed in 2013 you stated you had approximately 150 clients and 175 staff members. Are we still at that level today, he asked. How do you handle the change if you exceed that level. Ms. McNaboe said we are still at the level of clients and staff. ZEO Matt Vertefeuille said over the years they have parked cars wherever they could. Ms. McNaboe said the camp doubles up on the parking. She said the new parking spaces will be used by summer staff. ZEO Matt Vertefeuille said the modification to parking will help take the pressure off the parking.

Chair Stahl opened the hearing to audience comments: 1) Darcy Church, Babcock Hill Road was concerned with traffic and speeding traffic. She said she is disabled and she cannot walk on the street. 2) Henry Dobrolet asked if the cabins will be insulated. ZEO Vertefeuille said yes because building code

requires it. Mr. Dobrolet said the present cabins are in bad shape. He said as far as camp, things have gotten a lot better on the hill since the master plan was approved; he thanked the Commission for that. He said complaints are addressed immediately. He added that over the years he has noticed vast improvements. 3) Cathy Marceau said the master plan does not take traffic, litter etc into consideration. She said speeders are out of control. She said there is 2-way traffic coming in and out of the camp and there are problems getting in and out. She said headlights from vehicles are bothersome because they shine in neighbor's homes. Chair Stahl pointed out that these issues were addressed when the five year master plan was approved. We are simply making modifications to that plan this evening. Ms. Marceau said perhaps zoning is the problem.

Wes Wentworth said the 2-lane driveway coming in and out of the camp on the northside was included in the master plan and there have been no changes to that. Commissioner Jean Chaine asked if it were possible to widen the driveway to a 25' width. Mr. Wentworth said that could be accommodated.

The Chair asked if anyone else had comments, and if the members had sufficient information to make a decision. As there was no further discussion the Chair closed the public hearing.

#### **IV) New Business**

a) **Willimantic Baptist Church, 1110 Main Street, Willimantic, CT** – Special Permit application for a Church in accordance with Section 31A.3.2. Paula Stahl moved to approve the application of the Willimantic Baptist Church with the condition that all signage on the property come into compliance with the Zoning Regulations. Jean Chaine seconded the motion and all voted unanimously to approve with conditions.

b) **Horizons Inc., 103,107, 127 and 153 Babcock Hill, South Windham, CT** – Modifications of existing Special Permits to Camp facility for people with developmental disabilities and proposed improvements to current operations. Jean Chaine moved to approve the request for modifications of the existing 5-year master plan for Horizons that will expire in 2018. Claire Lary seconded the motion, and all voted unanimously to approve.

c) **DeSiato Sand & Gravel, 64 Jordan Lane & 329R Beaver Hill Road, North Windham, CT** – seeking a Special Permit for the continuation of an existing earth excavation operation – Take receipt and schedule public hearing. The commission took receipt of the application and scheduled a public hearing for August 25, 2018.

**V) Other Business.** Town of Plan Conservation & Development - postponed discussion.

#### **VI) Report from Zoning Enforcement Officer**

ZEO Matt Vertefeuille reported that property on Valley Street opposite the Windham Court House has been purchased by Craig Gates and it is being renovated.

**VII) Routine Business.** Correspondence – No correspondence.

**VIII) Adjourned** The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted, Lillian Murray, Clerk