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TOWN OF NEWTOWN
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, August 5, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.
Council Chambers, Newtown Municipal Center
3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT 06470

Present: Don Mitchell, Barbara Manville, Roy Meadows, Corinne Cox, Dennis Bloom, Andrew Marone, Gregory Rich
Absent: David Rosen
Staff: George Benson, Director of Planning, Helen Fahey, Clerk

Mr. Mitchell called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Public Hearings

Application 21.19 by William and Jamal Aqeel, for a Special Exception Use located at 56 Church Hill Road, so as to permit the use of the property as a veterinary hospital, as demonstrated by supporting documents submitted to the Land Use Agency 7/20/21.

Matthew Aqeel, speaking on behalf of the applicants, explained that the only changes to the building would be cosmetic.

Mr. Mitchell wanted to make sure there would be adequate parking for the level of traffic.

Mr. Aqeel stated that traffic is generally low because most owners drop their pets off and come back for them so he said the parking would be sufficient.

Ms. Manville noted that there is a traffic light before entering the building. Mr. Mitchell also noted that the entrance to the building is not on Church Hill Road which helps with traffic.

Mr. Mitchell asked if there would be overnight stays.

Mr. Aqeel stated yes, if needed there would be but an employee would be there with the animal.

Mr. Mitchell asked how many employees they planned on hiring.

Mr. Aqeel said 3 for the first year with the long-term plan of 5 or 6 employees.

*These minutes are subject to the approval of the Commission.
Copies of applications and documents are on file at the Land Use Agency.*

Mr. Mitchell asked if there would be any outdoor facilities and Mr. Aqeel said that all business would operate inside.

Mr. Meadows asked what kinds of animals they planned on treating.

Mr. Aqeel stated they would be treating small, household animals like dogs, cats, birds etc.

Ms. Cox mentioned that there were 3 other clinics in town.

Mr. Benson said the staff had no issues with the application.

Mr. Rich asked about the disposal of medical waste and if the health department was involved.

Mr. Benson shared that disposal of medical waste is regulated by the state.

Mr. Mitchell invited public comment.

Dr. Megan DeLucia of Newtown Veterinary Specialists located on 52 Church Hill Road said they welcome another general practice in town but raised concerns with emergency patients rushing off the highway at night and pulling into the wrong driveway. She asked if there was any way to improve their signage to prevent this.

Mr. Benson said this can get discussed at a later time.

With no further comment Mr. Mitchell moved to close the public hearing. Ms. Cox seconded. All were in favor and the public hearing for Application 21.19 was closed at 7:10pm.

Mr. Mitchell read the following into record

BE IT RESOLVED that Application 21.19 by William and Jamal Aqeel, for a Special Exception Use located at 56 Church Hill Road, so as to permit the use of the property as a veterinary hospital, as demonstrated by supporting documents submitted to the Land Use Agency 7/20/21. IS HEREBY FOUND CONSISTENT WITH THE PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT AND THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, AND SHALL BE APPROVED.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the approval shall become effective August 28, 2021.

Mr. Meadows so moved. Mr. Bloom seconded.

The commission voted as follows:

Don Mitchell - AYE
Roy Meadows - AYE

Corinne Cox - AYE
Barbara Manville - AYE
Dennis Bloom – AYE

Referral

Referral from the Borough of Newtown Zoning Commission for proposed changes to the zoning regulations regarding Cannabis.

Mr. Benson explained the Borough feels the same way as the Planning and Zoning Commission did regarding prohibiting cannabis establishments.

Mr. Mitchell reiterated that this would take cannabis establishments and add it to prohibited uses in the Borough. Mr. Mitchell then asked the commission if they felt this regulation change was consistent with the Plan of Conservation and Development.

The commissioners discussed the details of the bill which led Mr. Benson to explain that we have to prohibit all cannabis establishments at this time until we have a better understanding of the bill. Mr. Benson said we want to do this for the Town and the Borough until we can make a more educated decision.

Mr. Mitchell said that the commission has already voted to prohibit cannabis establishments so he would assume the commission feels this referral is consistent with Plan of Conservation and Development.

The commissioners all agreed this was consistent.

Unfinished Business

Discussion of the Sandy Hook Memorial

Tara with Artemis Landscape Architects representing SWA described the plans for the memorial. She explained there would be a welcome wall with an Obama quote and sacred Sandy Hook soil at the entrance. Natural native plants, meadows and pathways allow you to interact with nature and take you to the water feature that displays a sacred Sycamore tree. The pathways will be packed gravel. Sight clearing will be done to remove dangerous trees and debris. The back ponds which offer visual interaction with guests, will also be cleaned up. Cameras mounted on poles will act for security. The safety fences were eliminated for cost reasons.

Ms. Cox asked if handicapped people would be able to visit.

Tara said the pathways have ADA accessible grades.

Ms. Cox asked why this location was chosen.

Mr. Benson said around 10-15 locations were considered and this was the best choice.

Mr. Bloom stated it was a good use of the property. Mr. Bloom wanted to make sure the back ponds were going to get cleaned up and Tara confirmed they would.

Mr. Meadows asked who would take care of the fountain, how it would be winterized and other questions about the mechanics of the fountain.

Tara said the fountain is automatic, controlled by auto circulation and a timer. The mechanics will be in a vault on the property and the town will check for maintenance once in a while. Tara explained a potable, environmentally safe additive would be in the water to prevent it from freezing. She will email the name of the additive among other details on the mechanics of the fountain to Mr. Benson.

Ms. Cox asked what would the hours of operation be.

Tara said the town gets to decide the hours but it will be closed by dusk.

Mr. Meadows asked Tara to explain the change from a Sycamore tree to a Bloodgood London Plane Tree.

Tara stated that there are two types of Sycamore trees: the American and the Asian. The Bloodgood London Plane Tree is a hybrid of both. American Sycamore trees are highly susceptible to Anthracnose Disease. Commercial growers do not recommend planting American Sycamores so the hybrid tree was chosen for its resilience to disease.

Mr. Meadows wanted to be sure that the families of the victims were aware of the change.

Tara said to my knowledge they know. We want to be sure that whatever tree gets planted will be healthy and sustainable.

With no further comments, the discussion of the memorial ended and no vote was taken.

Executive Session

Mr. Mitchell invited Mr. Benson, and Ms. Fahey to the Executive Session.

Mr. Mitchell moved to enter Executive Session regarding a legal matter between Hilario and the Town of Newtown. Ms. Cox seconded. All in favor. Executive session began at 7:48 pm.

Mr. Mitchell moved to exit Executive Session. Mr. Bloom seconded. All in favor. Executive Session ended at 8:27 pm.

No vote was taken.

Minutes

Ms. Cox made a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting of July 15, 2021. Mr. Meadows seconded. All were in favor and the minutes from the meeting of July 15, 2021 were approved.

Adjournment

Ms. Cox moved to adjourn, Ms. Manville seconded. All members were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Helen Fahey, Clerk*