

**SUFFIELD ZONING AND PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
September 16, 2013**

Present: Frank E. Bauchiero, Jr., Chairman
Chester Kuras, Vice Chairman
Ellie Binns
Charles Sheehan
Mark O’Hara, Alternate
Mark Winne, Alternate

Absent: Frank Ravenola, Secretary
John Murphy
Gina Pastula, Alternate

Also Present: Bill Hawkins, AICP, Town Planner
Jim Taylor, Zoning Enforcement Officer

The proceedings of this meeting were voice recorded.

I. ROLL CALL

Chairman Bauchiero called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and then asked Mr. Hawkins to take a silent roll call. In the absence of two regular members, Chairman Bauchiero appointed Mr. Winne and Mr. O’Hara as alternate voting members. For the record, Vice Chairman Kuras read aloud the legal notice published in the Hartford Courant on both September 5, 2013 and September 12, 2013.

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS

File #2013-11: Special permit request from Friends of the Farm at Hilltop (FOFAH) for a permanent farmstand located at Hilltop Farm, 1616 Mapleton Avenue; Map 82H, Block 53, Lot 4B-1.

File #2013-12: Special permit request from Friends of the Farm at Hilltop (FOFAH) for a winter farmers market located at Hilltop Farm, 1616 Mapleton Avenue; Map 82H, Block 53, Lot 4B-1.

Files were heard concurrently.

Janet Banks of FOFAH introduced the applications and explained the reason for the requests. Mrs. Banks stated that FOFAH now owns the 7.9 acre parcel containing most of the farm buildings and also leases the adjacent 79 acres of open space / farmland from the Town. Mrs. Banks explained that FOFAH wishes to continue and expand their winter farmers market so that local farmers can sell their goods when the farmers market on the Town Green ends. She further explained that the purpose of the farmstand is to sell ice cream as well as herbs, sunflowers, honey, berries, and other products that can be grown on the property or brought in from other area farms. Mrs. Banks stated that they are not trying to compete with local farmers but instead want to partner with them. She explained FOFAH is trying to create an income stream that will help support renovation of the buildings on the site.

Eileen Moncrief of FOFAH explained that they are not intending to compete with local farmers with the farm stand or farmers market. Instead, FOFAH views this as creating an opportunity for local farmers

and artisans to sell their goods at Hilltop Farm. She explained that the site has ample parking and there have not been any problems in the past.

With nothing further, Chairman Bauchiero asked Mr. Hawkins to read his report for the commission. After a brief discussion, Chairman Bauchiero opened the hearing to the public for those who had comments for or against the application. Those who wished to speak opposed to the applications were as follows;

- Betty Stroh, 1606 Mapleton Avenue – Had questions about where the ice cream was proposed to be sold, where the parking areas are proposed and hours of operation.
- Kathy Bielonko, 981 East Street North – Had questions about FOFAH’s intentions and whether or not they will start selling the same items as the Bielonko farm stand.

With nothing further, Chairman Bauchiero asked for a motion to close the hearing. Mr. Winne made a motion to close the public hearing for files #2013-11 & 2013-12, seconded by Mr. Kuras. Motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

File #2013-13: Request from Kathleen Mormino for a text amendment to three (3) sections of the Suffield Zoning Regulations. Add “Hobby Farm” definition to Section II – Definitions; Amend Section IV(B)-Use Table to add “Hobby Farm”; Amend Section IV (D)(2)(b)- Residential Zone, Permitted Uses to add “Hobby Farm”.

Kathy Mormino introduced herself to the Commission and explained that the slideshow is a series of pictures of her property and chickens. Mrs. Mormino explained how she got to the point of presenting the Commission with a text amendment application regarding hobby farms. She described how she became involved in backyard chicken keeping, her small business related to chickens, as well as her associated social media websites and blogs. Mrs. Mormino stated that she currently has approximately 30-40 chickens on her property.

Mr. Kuras asked how large her property is where she keeps the chickens. Mrs. Mormino stated that her property is 2.17 acres and they have leased an additional 3 acres from an abutting property owner. She stated that the reason for the text amendment application is because she wants the town to create a regulation to allow the keeping of chickens on properties less than five acres. Mrs. Mormino continued her presentation regarding the history of Suffield and its farming heritage. She described cities and towns across the country that have regulations pertaining to chickens and that Suffield should set the standard for backyard chicken keeping. She went on to explain the perceived benefits of backyard chicken keeping, how chickens are thought of as pets to many, and that hobby farms should be encouraged in Suffield. Discussion followed regarding what the applicant explained as being the “myths” of keeping chickens and how she felt they were not true based on research. Mrs. Mormino described the recommendations set forth in the document entitled “Guidance and Recommendations for Connecticut Municipal Zoning Regulations and Ordinances for Livestock” and how any regulation developed should follow the recommendations of the document.

Mr. Sheehan asked the applicant about her research on the impact hobby farms would have on property values. A brief discussion followed on how crafting a regulation that works for everyone should be explored.

Attorney Lingenfelter explained that State Statutes already speak to issues of enforcement when it comes to agricultural standards and norms, including backyard hobby farms. Discussion followed regarding enforcement of regulations and where that responsibility should lie if a regulation is adopted.

Mr. O'Hara stated that the Commission needs to look at this from a worst case scenario and worse case offender. He also pointed out that the proposed regulations addressed not only chickens but other animals as well. Attorney Lingenfelter explained that it was intended that the proposal opens up regulations for all animals. Discussion followed regarding having the regulations make sense for all people in town. With nothing further, Chairman Bauchiero opened up the public hearing for those who wished to speak opposed to the application. They were as follows;

- Ted Pohorylo, 450 South Stone Street
- Jeff Greer, 17 Michael Lane – Also submitted correspondence for the record.
- Deborah Solot-Pine, 60 Plantation Drive – Also submitted correspondence for the record.
- Beth D'Agata, 1448 North Grand Street – Also submitted correspondence for the record.
- Steve Nadolny, 3363 Phelps Road
- Carl Stursberg, 493 South Stone Street – Also submitted correspondence for the record.

With no further comments in opposition to the application, Chairman Bauchiero asked for those who wished to speak in favor of the application. They were as follows;

- Janet Banks, 9 Randall Drive
- John Smith, 1135 Halladay Avenue
- Justin Donnelly, 1321 Hill Street
- Tom Frenaye, 489 Warnertown Road
- Dianne Christian, 1715 Mapleton Avenue
- Ann Lewis, 639 North Grand Street
- Barbara Rogers, 871 North Grand Street
- Tom Mormino, 519 South Stone Street
- Linda Sheridan, 1515 North Grand Street
- Molly Drakely, 2075 Mountain Road
- Scott Lingenfelter, 141 South Stone Street
- Gerry Chase, 1221 North Grand Street
- Kathy Dunai, 1510 North Stone Street
- Lynn Blair, 917 East Street North
- Tracy Colsten, 489 Warnertown Road

After a brief discussion regarding the public comment and the need to work on a regulation to address hobby farms, Mr. Sheehan made a motion to continue the hearing for File #2013-13 to the October 21, 2013 regular meeting, Mr. Winne seconded. Motion passed unanimously 6-0-0.

III. NEW BUSINESS

File #63-2009B: Special permit renewal request for a sand and gravel pit located at Phelps Road; Map 5, Block 9, Lots 46A & 48. Mr. Sheehan made a motion to accept File #63-2009B and set the public hearing date for October 21, 2013; seconded by Mr. Winne. Motion carried unanimously 6-0-0.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

File #2013-11: Special permit request from Friends of the Farm at Hilltop (FOFAH) for a permanent farmstand located at Hilltop Farm, 1616 Mapleton Avenue; Map 82H, Block 53, Lot 4B-1. **File #2013-12:** Special permit request from Friends of the Farm at Hilltop (FOFAH) for a winter farmers market located at Hilltop Farm, 1616 Mapleton Avenue; Map 82H, Block 53, Lot 4B-1.

A discussion took place regarding whether Hilltop Farm is an active farm thereby meeting the main requirement for obtaining a special permit for a permanent farmstand. There was also a discussion regarding the products that could be sold at the farmstand and that they should be Massachusetts and Connecticut grown. Mr. O'Hara mentioned that the Commission has the ability to limit the size and scope of the operation based upon acreage and production. Further discussion was had regarding FOFAH's expressed intent to have local farms sell their goods at the proposed store in addition to what is grown on the property and that conditions limiting the scope of the operation may be too restrictive. With nothing further, Mr. Sheehan made a motion to approve files 2013-11 and 2013-12 subject to the conditions set forth in the Town Planners memorandum, Mr. Winne seconded. Motion carried 5-0-1 with Mrs. Binns abstaining.

V. REPORTS

Chairman – A brief discussion took place regarding regulations for backyard chickens and the need to contact other towns that have similar regulations to see how it is working for them. The Commission further discussed what they would like to see in a regulation addressing hobby farms.

Town Planner – Mr. Hawkins asked the Commission for their thoughts regarding in-law apartments, explaining how they are handled now and the regulations that were once in place for them. Brief discussion took place regarding the old regulations and staff was asked to get the old regulations to the Commission for further discussion in October.

VI. MINUTES

Mr. Sheehan made a motion to approve the August 19, 2013 regular meeting minutes as submitted, seconded by Mr. Winne. Motion carried unanimously 5-0-1 with Chairman Bauchiero abstaining.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Sheehan made a motion to adjourn at 9:45 p.m.; seconded by Mr. Winne. Motion carried unanimously 6-0-0.

Submitted,

Francis Ravenola, Secretary

cc: Assessor, Building Official, Conservation Commission, Economic Development Director, Selectmen, Town Clerk, Town Engineer, Zoning Enforcement Officer, Commission Counsel, File