

DRAFT MINUTES

Special Meeting
Zoning Commission and Design Review Team
Wednesday, May 15, 2013 at 6:30 p.m.
Library Community Center, Room F
40 Dyer Avenue
Canton, Connecticut

Call to order: Mr. Bondanza called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm

Roll Call: Zoning Present: David Bondanza, Phil Pane, Jonathan Thiesse, Keith August, William Sarmuk and John Huyghebaert. Absent: Daniel Barnhart;
Design Review Present: Gary Hath, Jim Harris, Frank Mairano, Tracey Brais and Mark Rubins.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Public comment was inadvertently passed over and moved to the end of the meeting.

1. Discussion of policies and procedures

Mr. Bondanza began the discussion by stating that he would like to see more clarity in the Design Review (DRT) process. He asked Mr. Pade to explain the process for the audience.

Mr. Pade noted that since the original members of the DRT were present he felt it would be a good idea if they gave some history on how the committee was developed.

Mr. Hath, DRT Chairman, explained that a committee studied the idea of DRT for about two years. This idea came from within the community and was based on displeasure with some of the architecture in town. The process would assist Zoning by advising on the design elements of various applications. The team is made up of professionals in the business. Zoning would have the right to chose whether or not to agree with the advice of the DRT. They felt that the process was very business friendly because it would give an applicant the opportunity to get input before money was spent on design.

Mr. Bondanza noted that there are members of the business community that have made it known (through the zoning rewrite process) that they do not think that the DRT has merit in the application process and would like to see it dissolved. There is a feeling that the process simply adds another layer to an already laborious process. Mr. Bondanza as if there is a document that outlines the standards. He would like to see clear, concise reasonable design guidelines developed. Mr. Hath noted that the group does have written guidelines.

Mr. Thiesse added to the discussion. He noted that there are several things the DRT should provide, such as a desired character, predictability, quicker application process and legal defensibility. However, he finds that many new developments don't fit the character, the guidelines are too vague, the process between DRT and zoning is cumbersome and the town attorney has stated that it is not legally defensible. Mr. Hath noted that the dilemma is that design is somewhat arbitrary. Mr. Thiesse agreed that it is

subjective, but he doesn't feel design should have so many specifics. It is important to allow flexibility.

Mr. Mairano read the goal of the DRT and reiterated that the group is advisory only. The intent was to facilitate the zoning process. Mr. Pane pointed out that it would be a good idea for DRT members to get developers to read through the zoning regulations. Mr. Thiesse noted that in the legal sense if DRT recommendations are to be usable, they must follow some design guidelines.

Mr. August and Mr. Rubin discussed building code and whether that would be an easier way to uphold standards. Mr. Rubins stated that code doesn't determine what a building will look like. Design is conceptual and shouldn't be stifled.

Mr. Bondanza noted that he often hears two things from the business community. One, the process is longer by having DRT review and two, that the Zoning Commission (ZC) often goes back over what was already presented to DRT. There was additional conversation about how the DRT see's their role in the Zoning process. Mr. Bondanza stated that he appreciates the value of DRT because character of the town is important to residents. Mr. Pade questioned whether there are certain applications that should not have to be reviewed by DRT. Mr. Pane stated that when applicants do not go through the DRT process they are at the peril of the ZC, most of who are not design professionals.

Mr. Bondanza noted that the public comment portion of the meeting had been overlooked and asked if there were members of the public that would like to comment.

Mr. Steve Roberto spoke. He was glad to see the two groups working together to make a better process. He spoke about small businesses, including his own. Although his business was slated to come through the DRT process he chose not to as the changes he was making were small and there was a good chance that the ZC would re-review the changes anyway.

Mr. Frank Zacchara spoke. He noted that no one can identify the character of the Town and feels that DRT takes away an applicants opportunity for individuality.

Mr. Arnold Goldman spoke. He disagrees with the DRT process and explained what happened when he came before the group with a business plan. He wonders why the Town must have the process at all if applicants do not have to follow the recommendations of the group.

There were no further comments from the public. Mr. Bondanza stated that the two groups need to continue having discussions in order to stream line the process. Mr. Thiesse feels it is important that the DRT look at each application with the Zoning regulations in mind. Mr. Hath responded that the group does urge applicants to strictly adhere to Zoning regulations.

The groups agreed to have more joint meetings.

2. Adjournment

Motion: by Mr. Bondanza to adjourn the meeting at 7:35 pm. **Vote:** All agreed.