

TOWN OF SCOTLAND PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION



Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 20, 2023 – 7:00 p.m.
Scotland Fire Department, 47 Brook Road, Scotland

1. Call to Order J. Jakubowski called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. Roll Call/Seating of Alternates

Members Present: B. Syme, R. Manning, M. Garrison, J. Jakubowski, R. Brautigam, G. Nelson, J. Troeger

Alternates Present: H. Bowers, S. Gadbois, D. George

Others Present: ZEO I. Kisluk

3. Additions/Changes to the Agenda: None

4. Approval of Minutes

A. Regular Meeting of November 15, 2023

I. Kisluk noted a correction to the title of the document, which should be labeled as minutes". M. Garrison added the P. Martin should be removed from the roll call as he was not present for the November 15th meeting.

R. Brautigam made a motion to approve the minutes. P. Martin seconded. Motion passed with four votes in favor and abstentions by B. Syme, J. Jakubowski, and J. Troeger.

5. Audience of Citizens: None

6. Public Hearing: None

7. New Business:

A. Election of Officers

R. Manning nominated B. Syme for the position of Chair. J. Jakubowski seconded.

R. Brautigam made a motion to approve the nomination of B. Syme as Chairperson of the Commission. M. Garrison seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Syme made a motion to nominate J. Jakubowski for the position of Vice Chair. R. Manning seconded.

B. Syme made a motion to approve the nomination of J. Jakubowski as Vice Chair. R. Brautigam seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Syme made a motion to nominate R. Manning for the position of Secretary. J. Jakubowski seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Informal Discussion: Special Permit application for a religious facility at 51 Palmer Road

Resident Jon Owen of 51 Palmer Road introduced himself to the Commission and provided Commission members with an overview of his long-term goal of creating a learning center and religious facility. He stated that he would one day like to develop the property into a residential community for dedicated academic scholars.

The institution is called Forrest of Wisdom. J. Owen stated he would like to create an environment where people can learn from traditional Buddhist teachings which are applicable to all people of various faiths and backgrounds. He described the project to the Commission as one that will have three phases. In first and most immediate phase, for which he will need a

Special Permit, he would like to convert the existing barn on his property to a meeting hall for religious use. He would like this space hold meetings for up to 70 people. He would also like to possibly have small retreat cabins for full-time meditation practice. He added that at this stage they have begun holding programming, holding religious meditation classes online and on-site.

J. Jakubowski asked about the existing Special Permit for the property and if J. Owen. J. Owen stated that if he can continue it he would like to. J. Jakubowski also asked if the temple would be open to the public for service regularly? J. Owen stated that the temple would be open to the public.

R. Manning asked if the intent through the three phases is to increase the number of full-time residents on site? J. Owen stated that is something he would like to pursue but that is his long-term goal which he believes is several years out. He stated that would not be a part of his first phase and that he would pursue additional permits for that later on.

J. Troeger asked if there would be any residential use for the Temple at this stage or if it would be used for assembly occupancy only. J. Owen stated that at this stage it would not be used residentially, though he would like it to potentially be able to house a library or kitchen facility on the ground floor. J. Troeger suggested that J. Owen should likely meet with the Town Building Official and Fire Marshall to discuss the code requirements to convert the barn to a Temple.

H. Bowers asked if there are any similar facilities in the location. J. Owen stated that there are no local facilities that are similar to his long term goals, but there are smaller facilities located in the state which are somewhat similar to his more immediate goals for the parcel. J. Owen stated that his facility will offer English language practice more predominately and will focus on serving the local community.

J. Jakubowski asked if any members of the public in attendance had questions about the project. Dan Syme asked if there is adequate space for parking. J. Owen said that he believes that will not be an issue, and stated he has had large private events on the parcel before. Wendy Sears asked if J. Owen foresees any other activities beyond worship as a part of his plans? J. Owen stated he would also like to create a sculpture garden which is available to the general public as well as education in the form of religious study, but he does not have plans for agricultural or business uses. D. George asked if there is any noise associated with the religious practice such as bells or calls to worship which might impact neighboring properties? J. Owen stated there would not be noise that would travel beyond the property.

J. Owen asked if the Commission had any specific advice as he progresses through the process? The Commission discussed the term place of worship as it is in the existing regulations and what they would like to see clearly detailed in an application. The Commission advised that potential building code requirements should be investigated to ensure that the project as discussed and applied for is feasible.

8. Old Business: None

9. Regulation Revisions (Discussion)

A. Article 3 revisions

B. PA 21-29 and PA 23-142

I. Kisluk provided the Commission with a copy of the currently proposed revisions and summarized the need for the regulation changes.

10. Sub-Committee Reports: None

11. Audience of Citizens: None

12. Administrative Reports

A. Enforcement Report

I. Kisluk stated that she has not received any new complaints since the last meeting. She stated that she has seen progress on the addition being constructed on the Kemp Road property but that she was not able to contact the owner prior to the meeting as a recent storm likely impacted power or phone lines in the area.

J. Jakubowski asked about the property on Indian Hollow. I. Kisluk stated that the Town of Windham had progressed with their enforcement action, and she had not received an update. She stated that the material on the property in Scotland is difficult to see as it is in the back of the property but that she had not received complaints or indication that more material has been moved to that location.

B. Commissioner Education

I. Kisluk stated that Commissioners who need to complete their training may do so through the training videos on the UCONN CLEAR website and requested that members email her the date and time of their training completion so that she may report compliance to the State.

13. Communication and Bills: None

14. Commission Open Discussion

R. Brautigam made a motion that the Board of Selectman issue a letter thanking Terrance Delaney and Peter Martin both for their 25 years of service on the Commission. B. Syme seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

15. Executive Session

16. Adjournment

R. Brautigam made a motion to adjourn at 7:52 p.m. R. Manning seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Isabelle Kisluk

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