

MINUTES - Zoning Commission Meeting, 4/17/13, 5:00 PM, Literacy Volunteers' Office

This is a workshop, continuing the discussions begun 3/13, defining the “downtown commercial zone”, and developing definitions for the other zones.

Committee members

present: Evelyn Celotti, Jeff Kelly, Kelly Ann King, Sandra Lovell, John Viestenz
absent: (none)

Others present: (none)

Discussions:

Jeff reported on some of the details in the Westport zoning laws. We agreed that our role is not to develop that level of detail, but to make recommendations to the Village on topics that should be considered in any future zoning laws. For example, earlier discussions pointed out the desirability of having some zoning restrictions on fences and/or night-time security lighting, in residential neighborhoods. We can make recommendations, but others will (later) develop the specifics (such as height of fencing or type of material, for example).

The lack of adequate parking on Convent Hill, at least on the east side, is probably an effective limitation on commercial development. The west side, however, could conceivably become more commercialized and less residential. The possibility of contacting homeowners and residents of Convent Hill was discussed, for obtaining their opinions regarding whether Convent Hill should be zoned Commercial (as the current Moratorium implies), or Residential, or a combination. It was pointed out that selecting just some residents or home owners, and not others, could lead to accusations of unfairness. No final decision was reached; for now, no specific letter to Convent Hill people is being planned.

It was agreed that it would be OK to ask specific people to attend the “Public Input” meeting, to insure that their opinions were part of the record. No names were mentioned, but more than one Committee member stated that they had been approached by people stating an opinion, and those are the people that we want to include in the first open (public comment) meeting, which will be scheduled for mid-May.

John will contact Trustee Staley to determine if public-comment meetings should be held at the Village Hall, or at the Town Court. And if at the Town Court, will the Village be making the arrangements or will the ZC make the arrangements directly with the Town. Regardless of the location, this meeting will be at 7 PM (rather than the 5 PM start we have been using for the workshop meetings).

We discussed “trailers”, and the suggestion that they be prohibited or limited within Residential areas. Although a “trailer” could probably not be specifically prohibited as long as it met current building codes, zoning restrictions on lot sizes could stop a residential lot or lots from being converted into a trailer park. For example, requiring a minimum lot size per “residence”: multiple homes,

whether site-built, pre-fab, or mobile, could not be erected on lots less than x square feet in size. This will be included in the “Residential” definition, for presentation and discussion.

Additional discussion was held on “keeping the neighborhood's character” and “protecting historic buildings”. Both topics were considered desirable traits, but no decisions were reached on how to include such within the zoning laws.

We also asked ourselves “Can we include maintenance requirements, such as the upkeep of porches, decks, fences, and sheds? Or is this already part of some other existing Law?”. We probably need to talk with the Code Enforcement Officer.

We (again) briefly discussed owner-occupied buildings that are partly residential and partly commercial (such as the barber shop), and agreed that any limitations on the conversion of ground-floor commercial space to residential would not apply. However, buildings that were previously residential, but are currently commercial (only) could not automatically be converted back to residential use. Such conversion is prohibited under the current Moratorium, and would be prohibited under the proposed zoning; the owner would need to apply (to the Zoning Board) for a variance.

Minor updates to the “Allowed” and “Not Allowed” lists for possible Zones have been posted, and are attached. These have not been fully discussed or reviewed (yet) by all Committee members.

Next Meeting:

The next “workshop“ meeting will be Wednesday, May 1, 5:00 PM, at the Literacy volunteers office. This is planned to be the last workshop meeting, before holding an open meeting for public testimony and comment.

ENCOURAGED or ALLOWED

NOT ALLOWED

IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS

“Lodging”, such as B&Bs, within residential areas IF the lot size is sufficient, and the parking sufficient for the tenants.

Professional offices.

“Home-based business” as long as hours are limited to normal daytime or early evening, parking is sufficient, there are no (or limited) truck deliveries or shipments.

Casino, night club, entertainment.

Industrial activities (noise, fumes, volume of truck traffic).

Need limitations on noise, fumes, lighting (how bright? all night?)

“Trailer Parks” or other housing with where multiple units are sited on lots less than __ feet x __ feet.

Mobile homes used as a residence, not mounted on a permanent foundation. Skirting and landscaping requirements should be listed.

[what is appropriate, and inappropriate, fencing? No “security” fencing in Residential areas? Limits to “temporary” fencing?]

ENCOURAGED or ALLOWED

NOT ALLOWED

IN COMMERCIAL – RETAIL AREAS

All retail activities.

Encourage 2nd hand shops,
book store, clothing,
and (of course !) hardware.

Professional offices and services

Existing residential remains residential,
or can be converted to commercial.

Same building can be a mix of
residential and commercial.

Existing ground-floor commercial space
cannot be converted to residential (except
if residential portion is occupied by the
owner).

Businesses that are defined as
“Industrial”
[definitions to be developed].

ENCOURAGED or ALLOWED

NOT ALLOWED

IN COMMERCIAL – INDUSTRIAL AREAS

Businesses that require on-site warehousing.

New construction of residential housing.

Businesses that are primarily serving clients via delivery, and not “over-the-counter” retail. (For example, fuel oil storage and delivery).

Businesses that generate “excessive” noise, fumes, or require frequent heavy truck traffic.