

**THE GLASTONBURY TOWN PLAN AND ZONING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2021**

The Glastonbury Town Plan and Zoning Commission with Jon Mullen, AICP, Planner, and Rebecca Augur, AICP, Director of Planning and Land Use Services, in attendance held a Regular Meeting at 7:00 P.M. in the Council Chambers of Town Hall at 2155 Main Street, with an option for attendance via Zoom video conferencing. The video was broadcast in real time and via a live video stream.

ROLL CALL

Commission Members Present

Mr. Robert Zanolungo, Jr., Chairman
Ms. Sharon Purtill, Vice Chairman
Mr. Michael Botelho, Secretary {participated via Zoom}
Mr. Raymond Hassett
Mr. Keith Shaw
Mr. Christopher Griffin
Ms. Laura Cahill, Alternate
Ms. Alice Sexton, Alternate

Commission Members Absent

Vacancy

Chairman Zanolungo called the meeting to order at 7:05 P.M.

REGULAR MEETING

1. Informal session for the purpose of hearing from citizens on Regular Meeting agenda or non-agenda *[visited after preliminary discussion on Item 4]*

Vice Chairman Purtill read an email received from **Roger Emerick of 580 Hopewell Road**. He stated that the character of Glastonbury has been destroyed. The Village District in discussion should encompass the entire town and town regulations should be rewritten so that landowners who are unable to develop their land would be granted a tax abatement.

The following comments were made in-person:

Heather Junias Veronica Southby of 136 Heritage Drive, has started an e-petition to prevent demolition of the former Gaines Hotel, which has been misnamed the Curtis Hotel. The area, which contains lots of great shops, is the Town's memory and future. She was outraged to read about the proposed demolition in the Glastonbury Citizen. She asked that the TPZ not demolish the charm and heart of Glastonbury. She then directed the public to sign her petition at change.org/saveglastonbury.

Tom Gullotta of 221 Keeney Street, Town Council Chairman, stated that the village district gives the TPZ an additional tool in their toolbox. The fact that there is no cogent design in the district should trouble them all. Over time, they can help create a beautiful, consistent facade in the area which moves away from the current neo-minimalism. It will not happen overnight. New England villages include a multitude of interesting and eye-catching structures. What they do not include is corporate-branded buildings, which they have begun seeing in town. He does not think that the residents of Glastonbury want to see any more of those.

Joseph Jaconetta of 236 Horizon Lane, is also the owner of a property on Main Street which is across from the proposed village district. All they ask for, as property owners, is clear guidelines. He referenced specific lines of Section 8-2J, the enabling statute for village districts, which he found either confusing, too vague, or simply not applicable. He pointed out that the current area is a hodgepodge of characteristics, devoid of patterns, with no local architectural motif in the Town Center. Therefore, the proposed regulations are totally devoid of the statute's criteria. He also asked why the Architectural Design Review Committee (ADRC) will be comprised of 7 members, and what would happen should they not get that many volunteers. While he wants to preserve historical structures in Town, he asked that they avoid making the same mistake twice.

Barbara Theurkauf of 2027 Main Street, lives in the Historic District. She believes that the Village District is a good, strategic tool which will allow buildings to evolve from what is there today towards what will become the guidelines.

Donna Hendrickson of 1751 Main Street, President of the Historical Society, stated that if they keep moving in the current direction of development, all of Glastonbury will lose its historic charm and character. It is their job as custodians to do everything to protect their historical properties.

Walter Cusson of 59 Addison Pond Road, supports the idea of more oversight with a village district. While still an improvement from the redevelopment of the 1970s, he has not been a fan of the Town's development over the last 5-10 years. He saw a proposal for a rendering of what is proposed on Main Street, and he thinks it is a monstrosity. He also believes that imposing three stories in the Town Center is too tall. He asked that the TPZ and Town Council look at lowering the building heights.

Jill Barry of 199 Cavan Lane, State Representative, has heard from many concerned residents about downtown development. She hopes that the TPZ takes into consideration those concerns about preserving the charm of their downtown.

Heather Junias Veronica Southby of 136 Heritage Drive, noted that she also owns two condominiums in the area proposed for a village district. She likes the idea of a village district, but she did not like it as it was proposed in the Citizen. The article was not specific enough and might be confusing to the populace who espouses a negative perspective on the matter. She believes that the polling in town is far more positive.

Marshall S. Berdan of 2015 Main Street, is a property owner in the proposed village district. He is very concerned about what has happened to this town. He and his wife distinctly chose not to

move to West Hartford because they did not like their corporatization. He lamented that Glastonbury could become East West Hartford. He agreed with Mr. Cusson that the Main Street project is a monstrosity, which will completely change the character of Glastonbury. While the language of the village district regulations needs tweaking, this is about their collective definition of livability. Glastonbury is not Lower Manhattan, and he asked that they not become West Hartford.

Corey Turner of 57 Fern Street, has seen this town grow over the last 40 years. The construction of the village district will not halt the proposed project on Hebron Avenue and Main Street. He has had experiences with village districts in his business, and more often than not, they are complicated, burdensome, and cause many issues. Very few of them have set guidelines, which makes it difficult for the property/business owner to know what to expect. There will be seven different opinions from the ADRC on what is relevant in this district, and then the TPZ will make the call. He noted that corporate branded buildings have been supported by many people in town. They must be cognizant of what they ask of business owners because, contrary to common belief, many are not big developers who leave once their projects are completed.

Ronald Gattinella of 277 Hebron Avenue, noted that his business, which opened four or five years ago, fits in with the community perfectly. He is also disappointed by some of the newer buildings on Main Street. Many of them need more bushes and shrubbery to cover up their utilities and to soften up the buildings a little. He supports the idea of the ADRC, which he hopes will look at all the proposals that are about to be presented to the town or on the docket.

Robert J. Hale of 832 Hopewell Road, believes that there needs to be clear standards, both for developers and property owners. He disagreed with Mr. Jaconetta's comment that the area is a hodgepodge. The consistent theme/motif is the scale, and Glastonbury is a town of smaller-scale buildings. However, the newer downtown buildings have gotten taller, denser, and closer to the road, which gives the town a claustrophobic feel. He noted that they can have orderly development which keeps the feel of the town. Katz's Hardware is a great model because they have expanded very tastefully and hide their utilities. CVS is a corporate building, but it conforms with Glastonbury. They should try to preserve the feeling of all the centuries of architecture in town, not just the 17th century.

Eric Twachtman of 122 Evergreen Lane, does not understand the sense of tearing down a part of town which has a lot of character, just for the sake of growth. While it might be legal, it is a crime to tear it down. It is part of Glastonbury's history, so he hopes that there is a way to save the area. He used to live in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which lost so much of its livability in such a short time. He asked that the same not happen to Glastonbury.

Steve Bielitz of 80 Newell Lane, is the Preservation Chair of the Historical Society, but is speaking as an individual. Attorney Alter was gracious to him in the past when he allowed him to dismantle a building to save it, instead of demolishing it. He is sorry that he is in opposition to him tonight regarding a monolithic development in the center of town. Good design is regional and reflects what the town already has. He noted that the Town needs the following: an architectural review board, new urbanism, and enhanced safety. Glastonbury has too much gridlock; its streets were not designed for 40,000 people. Development in the north end of town

was disastrous and thoughtless. He asked what kind of traffic studies have been conducted in the proposed development. He supports a village district which will preserve the heritage and enhance the regional quality here in Glastonbury.

Robert Laughlin, Executive Director of the Historical Society, stated that the Village District act was put in place in 1998, and he found a letter from 1999, where the Historical Society asked the Town to consider a village district. Therefore, the idea that this is rushed is inaccurate; they are not moving fast enough. Historic preservation is good for business, especially small businesses. He offered a meeting between the Historical Society and the TPZ to discuss how important a village district can be to the community of Glastonbury.

Mark Branse of 48 Birch Trail, stated that it would be hard to maintain a harmonious character with the lack of cogent design in the area currently. That is why a village district is needed. There needs to be more design guidelines for architectural review, and an update and improvement to the current standards. There are a lot of design periods represented in the center, which is how it is supposed to be, but there are unifying characteristics. He listed a few examples. He also noted that the CVS which was mentioned earlier had 13 prior designs before it was approved. He has designed four different village district regulations, and they are all working out in those towns. He urged the TPZ to proceed with a village district. He also asked that should the former Gaines/Curtis Hotel be demolished, that the developer be required to build an exact replica.

Robert Krieger from Katz Hardware at 2687 Main Street, wishes that the village district went all the way down to Route 3 because there will be future developments in the area. He called for more specific design guidelines so that when developers go in front of the Town, they know exactly what to present. There should not have been 13 prior renditions for the CVS. They should know what the Commission wants and requires from the get-go. If the ARDC can help with that, then the developers can be better served and the town can be better served; however, the language is vague, which is tough for a developer. If the town wants to develop something their way, then they can buy the land, develop it, then resell it. He also asked what is considered historic, as opposed to just an old building with no value.

Deb Carroll of 17 Green Briar, Town councilmember, stated that the primary feature of this area is a sense of place, not necessarily a particular architectural style or age. They must consider how many layers of design review need to be in place. For property owners, that needs to be very clear. They are trying to hold on to what it is that makes Glastonbury recognizable for the town that it is.

Larry Niland of 3271 Hebron Avenue, Town councilmember, stated that people move to Glastonbury for the schools and for the look/feel of the town. Anything they can do to help protect that is imperative, such as incorporating design standards. He agreed with Mr. Gullotta that this provides an additional tool to the Commission, and he urged them to support it.

Deborah Harrod of 211 Country Club Road, is a third generation Glastonbury resident who is very sad about what is happening to town. Two of her childhood classmates recently moved to Cheshire and East Haddam, which they state is how Glastonbury used to be. She was appalled

when she saw the developer's plans for the center of town, which will increase traffic and congestion. Bigger population is not always better because there is now crime in town. She hopes that the village concept will come about to help preserve what is left of this beautiful town.

Kurt Cavanaugh of 45 Johnny Cake Lane, Town councilmember, stated that the Council referred this action to the TPZ for a recommendation and comment. If the Commission thinks that the proposed village district area is a hodgepodge, then he would like to know which areas they believe should be included instead. He is very pleased with the enthusiasm that this discussion has generated within the public.

The following comments were made via Zoom:

Jake McChesney of 48 Mark Drive, Town councilmember, agreed with prior comments that this is a very important tool for TPZ to have in their toolbox. He is very concerned about how developers have been developing properties in town, which they do not have to live with. Residents will look at these buildings for 50 years or more. They must do everything possible to maintain the scope and character of what exists now.

Lesley Mroz of 121 Heywood Drive, shared that her husband grew up in Poland after WWII when the Nazis destroyed Warsaw's Historic Center. After the war, a national reconstruction campaign resulted in the meticulous restoration of the Old Town. Her husband remembers how school children contributed their pocket money to help rebuild it. In contrast, her English town, which was heavily bombed, replaced their destroyed buildings with bleak structures. She stated that there is a threat to the heart and soul of Glastonbury. She urged the Commission, the Council, and developers to avoid having future generations ask why they did not care enough to preserve the character and history of Glastonbury.

Shelly Strom of 222 William Street East Unit 117, stated that people misguidedly focus on the word "village" in village districts, but no one is proposing to turn the center into a 17th century village. She recently moved to Glastonbury after looking at a lot of towns in Connecticut. She chose Glastonbury for its walkability, historical aspect, and its livability. However, she can see how things have changed for the worse in town. While everything north of Katz's Hardware is probably too late to save, they need to try to preserve as much as possible. The designation of a Village District will help keep the center of Glastonbury livable.

Keith Sherman of 181 Salmon Brook Drive, spoke as both a resident and the owner of Cycling Concepts on Main Street. He moved to town three years ago because Glastonbury has a town center with a discernible look and feel that was more desirable to him than West Hartford's. He supports the village center characteristics. He opened a business in the Town Center because it is walkable and not very congested. If this village concept is not approved, then he fears that many businesses like his will have to leave because they will no longer be suitable. He warned that many styles of businesses will no longer be able to define the Town Center. He urged the Commission to protect the Town Center as a center and not let it become a downtown.

2. Acceptance of Minutes of the September 21, 2021 Regular Meeting

Motion by: Commissioner Hassett

Seconded by: Commissioner Shaw

Result: Minutes were accepted {5-1-0} with one abstention from Commissioner Purtill since she was not present at the meeting.

3. CONSENT CALENDAR

- a. Scheduling of Public Hearings for the Regular Meeting of October 19, 2021
 - i. Application of Cheryl Newton for a Section 4.11 Flood Zone Special Permit – 2-car garage replacement – 1917 Main Street - Residence A & Flood Zones

Motion by: Commissioner Purtill

Seconded by: Commissioner Shaw

Result: Consent calendar was approved unanimously {6-0-0}.

4. Discussion of Village District Regulations referral

Ms. Augur reviewed the PowerPoint that she shared during the last TPZ meeting for the public tonight. All the information and materials are available on the Town website. She explained that village districts are a zoning tool enabled by state law, which intend to protect the distinctive character of an area. They pay special attention to the design that is visible from public view. Village District regulations rely on a consultant who reviews the design standards. The POCD has several supporting policies that focus on achieving high-quality design within the center. While they do not mention village districts, they discuss design guidelines and zoning to enhance and maintain the character of the Town Center. The purpose and intent of the Town Center Zone is to allow for a compatible mix of uses at a density and scale that will enhance this area as a vital center for the Town.

Ms. Augur reviewed the draft map amendment, which shows that the Town Center Village District regulation is proposed as an overlay zone. It overlaps with the Main Street Historic District around Rankin Road and School Street. She then reviewed the actual draft language which reiterates the statutory enabling regulations. The objectives are that all new development within the zone will focus on reinforcing or complementing existing patterns of development. The ADRC shall develop Town Center Village District (TCVD) design guidelines for review by the TPZ and adoption by the Council. It reiterates the statutes on general design requirements and discourages, but cannot prevent, demolition/removal of structures.

The ADRC proposal is for a seven-member committee, consisting of three professionals: one architect, one landscape architect, and one planner. Procedurally, applications that would normally come to the TPZ would be referred to the ADRC first, who has 35 days to make a recommendation. They may request additional materials to assist in evaluating design details. They may also ask for resubmission of materials. The Commission can ask for input from other agencies beyond the ADRC. The procedure for the TPZ to apply or deny a project is similar to how they operate now, where they need to state their reasons for denial on the record. Ms. Augur

noted that, if this moves forward, some thought must be given to the review process. Possible changes could include the ADRC supplanting the Beautification Committee.

Vice Chairman Purtill views the ADRC as another layer of opportunity to have experts advise them. She also noted that it is an advisory board, so it will not usurp the TPZ's recommendations. She does not find the additional 35 days burdensome for the applicant. The creation of the Town Center Zone a few years ago created far more density than was originally intended or desired for that area. She welcomes an overlay zone to have more control over designs coming in because she is concerned about developers creating projects that are trendy in the current market but do not stand the test of time. Residents have to live with the consequences. She finds that the properties in question have something to preserve. Not every building has to be historic to save it. The Town Center has a sense of community, is pedestrian-friendly, and the buildings are not super high-rise. She believes that the outline is appropriate for a good village center. She envisions that there would be signs in the district to denote some sort of uniformity.

Commissioner Cahill thinks that a village district should have been pursued long ago. She noted that the Main Street application, which many in the public oppose, must adhere to the current regulations, which does not consist of a village district. The Commission must work within the parameters of what they have right now. She agreed with Commissioner Purtill that it is a good idea to have extra layers of experts advising them. She believes that the ADRC should be town-wide in Glastonbury (not just for the village district), for all kinds of commercial development in town.

Commissioner Hassett's biggest concern has always been process. He would like to hear from the people who are directly affected. Commissioner Shaw would also like to hear from the public. He read a prepared statement which listed his reservations about creating a village district. Many of the existing buildings that would fall within the village district are commercial businesses, which have grown, and do not fit the stated historical character of the Town Center. Business owners should not be limited in their ability to modernize to survive or keep up with the times. In addition, some businesses may close and leave. He would like to see Glastonbury continue to evolve with flexibility to serve and attract business owners and property owners.

Commissioner Griffin would also like to hear from the public. He supports the idea of having more professionals involved in the process, especially since most of the individuals on this commission are lawyers and none are designers/architects. However, he is concerned about how to set up regulations/guidelines over an area that looks like a hodgepodge of designs. What they seek to do is not only preserve but restore. He agreed with Commissioner Shaw that there need to be guidelines so that they can accommodate future structures. He also agrees with Commissioner Purtill that uniform signs will help enhance the look of the area.

Conceptually, Secretary Botelho has no issue with the establishment of a village district. Many details regarding design guidelines need to be fleshed out, which can happen once the discussion returns to the Commission from the Council. He is concerned that the ADRC would create redundancy with their current process, effectively supplanting the Plans Review Subcommittee. He disagrees with Commissioner Purtill regarding the scope of the district, believing that it

should be more narrowly defined. He would also like to hear from the property and business owners in the district. Establishment of a village district could improve the current process, but he does not want it to be an acknowledgement that past practices of the TPZ have been insufficient. They do their due diligence with respect to design review.

Chairman Zanolungo stated that nobody wants the Town Center to look like Lower Manhattan. He noted that this is not a public hearing, but they still seek public input and feedback.

The Commission returned to Item 1 of the agenda, to allow the public to comment on the matter.

Commissioners continued their discussion after hearing from the public:

Chairman Zanolungo asked how they arrived at the number of seven commissioners on the ADRC. Ms. Augur explained that the thought was to roll over some members from the Beautification Committee, in addition to including the three qualified professionals that the statute recommends. She clarified that the draft regulation enables the Town Manager to appoint a staff liaison, but the professionals will be volunteers, not town staff.

Commissioner Sexton is troubled by the lack of definition within the design guidelines. Vice Chairman Purtill answered that the design guidelines will come after the adoption of the district. Ms. Augur added that they could task the ADRC with reviewing special permit applications in all commercial districts, as well. In this sense, the ADRC would serve as a regulatory body in the Village District, and advisory throughout other parts of town. Commissioner Shaw asked if the ADRC will remove the responsibility of making findings of fact. Ms. Augur stated no, the Commission will still need to make findings that the applications follow their regulations.

Commissioner Hassett stated that the process tonight was very helpful. His big takeaway is that similar to a federal statute, the code of regulations has to be developed afterwards. The Plans Review subcommittee spends thousands of hours trying to achieve good designs that fit within the confines of their community. He agrees that it is time they update their guidelines, with the understanding that they still need tremendous input from the community. Property owners in the general area should be encouraged to help create the design that they would like to see from the ADRC.

Commissioner Griffin also found tonight's process helpful. He was concerned that one architectural style would be imposed in the area. He encourages the use of subdistricts if that is what is identified as needed. He asked what the protocol is, should the ADRC not be able to find seven qualified volunteers. Ms. Augur is not aware of any issues that have come up with that in the past, but the Town has the option of hiring a consultant. Commissioner Griffin asked if the 35-day review limit for the ADRC would be sufficient for larger scale projects. Ms. Augur stated that the 35-day limit is there to help the TPZ comply with their own statutory timeline. With a large-scale project, the TPZ should encourage developers to come forward informally.

Secretary Botelho asked if a public hearing is a necessary condition for the Town Council to approve the draft regulations. Ms. Augur replied yes. Secretary Botelho agrees that there should

be public input when the design guidelines are formulated and examined. Once established, they will provide more clarity for developers and property owners in the district. This is a good first step.

Commissioner Shaw thanked the public for speaking on this matter. He appreciated hearing from both the affected property owners, as well as members of the Town Council who provided clarity behind their thinking of what is necessary for these regulations. He was afraid of overregulating property owners and thought that they would be opposed to the creation of a village district. He was surprised to hear that the public is in favor of it and simply seeks more clarity. Thus, he has changed his mind, and he would like the process to proceed. He hopes that the Council will also take into consideration the comments that the public may have at future hearings and will allow them to participate in the development of any proposed regulations or guidelines.

Motion by: Vice Chairman Purtill

Seconded by: Commissioner Shaw

MOVED, that the Glastonbury Town Plan and Zoning Commission hereby provides a favorable recommendation, with comments to be written by staff and reviewed by the subcommittee.

Result: Motion was passed unanimously {6-0-0}.

5. Chairman's Report. *None*

6. Report from Community Development Staff *None*

Motion by: Commissioner Cahill

Seconded by: Commissioner Shaw

MOVED, that the Glastonbury Town Plan and Zoning Commission adjourns their regular meeting of October 5, 2021 at 9:44 P.M.

Result: Motion was passed unanimously {6-0-0}.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lilly Torosyan

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Recording Clerk