

**Town of Willington
Planning and Zoning Commission
February 6, 2024
Meeting Minutes**

A. Call to Order

W. Parsell called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

B. Roll Call/Seating of Alternates

Walter Parsell
Bob Shabot
Andy Marco
Doug Roberts
Rebecca Sinosky
Joe Hall
Michael Johansen (Alternate)

Also Present:

M. D'Amato- Zoning Agent
E. Delaney- Asst. Zoning Agent (via Zoom)

C. Applications for Receipt

- 1. PZ-24-1: Special Permit Renewal, Section 15 Excavation Sand and Gravel at 180 Tolland Tpk. Owner: Holt Mountain LLC.***
- 2. PZ-24-2: Special Permit Renewal, Section 15 Excavation Sand and Gravel at 171 Tolland Tpk. Owner: L. Becker***
- 3. PZ-24-3: Special Permit Renewal, Section 15 Excavation Sand and Gravel at 9 George Dr. Owner: L Becker***
- 4. PZ-24-4: Special Permit Renewal, Section 15 Excavation Sand and Gravel at 328 Ruby Rd. Owner: Ruby Assoc.***

D. Public Hearing

1. PZ-23-15: 0 Ruby Rd (MBL: 46 026-00) Special Permit Application to modify previously approved Special Permit (PZ-22-16) to increase building size, total number of parking spaces with additional site modifications. Applicant: P. Parent. Owner: Down East Green.

P. Parent introduced himself as a professional engineer with CHA Companies. CHA represents Down East Green, who is the owner of the property.

P. Parent began explained the proposal for the parcel, which is to create a drive-thru restaurant with more area for a future tenant, to be determined at a later date. He explained that phase 1 would be the 1600 square foot drive-thru and there would be space set aside for another 1000 square foot co-located tenant in the future. The parking lot has been designed to serve both uses. The applicant is also proposing additional parking to provide EV charging stations. The septic system is in the same location and the same size as it was for the previous approval. The drainage system collects the areas of the parking lot, discharging it into a hydrodynamic separator that goes into an underground detention system. That underground detention system then goes into an overflow into an existing created wetland on site. That created wetland is very well drained and is going to infiltrate almost all the storm volumes to 100 years or better. There is another small area to the North of the parking area that discharges into CT DOT's drainage system. The remainder of the property that is not developed as the restaurant and parking is going to be developed with a solar array. It is very similar to what was previously approved, some modifications to the arrangement and number of panels were made to get the new layout but the limits of it have not changed. Other than that, it is the same plan. P. Parent explained that because Willington does not have municipal water, they will need to have wells drilled. Those two locations are the same as the previously approved well sites by the Department of Public Health. We will need to go back through the process with them once the wells are drilled. It will start a three-phase process to get a public water system well approved. Step one being location approved, step two is actively drilling the well to prove the water, and then step three is have the well open for service. P. Parent asked if there were any questions. R. Sinosky asked if both the wells and septic were future and that they don't have to go any further.

P. Parent said yes.

W. Parsell asked what the previous approved size of the building was.

M. D'Amato said that the previously approved size was 2600 square feet.

W. Parsell asked what the new development number would be.

P. Parent said that the total developed number is 2600 square feet. They are look at 1600 square feet of space now and then 1000 square feet of additional co-located space in the future.

W. Parsell asked if they had potential tenant yet.

Phil Thompson of Down East Green said that they do not yet, but they do have a letter of intent from a major national beverage retailer negotiating terms on a build to suite lease for them. We do have a lease with Tesla to locate 16 electric vehicle fast chargers on site. Those are noted in the upper northern parking area. We will likely also locate a couple of other universal charges that will finance and build alongside of the Tesla chargers.

M. Johansen asked if you are looking to utilize 2600 square feet now for one drive-thru only establishment will only having 1000 square feet left over for a proposed second establishment is going to possibly detract your possibilities for a second person or is it going to be that someone wants to come in and now they can't fit due to the square footage.

P. Thompson explained the concepts that a second tenant would likely choose to be there would be the smaller format which seems to be increasingly popular with quick service restaurants and other tenants. So, it is a small footprint, but this is for primarily servicing the highway traffic. I do believe that it will be sufficient for a second tenant. It does limit it slightly, but I think it will be marketable enough for a second one.

W. Parsell asked if this restaurant would be drive-thru only as well or if there will be dine in.

P. Thompson explained this business will also be primarily drive-thru. They will have some indoor space.

W. Parsell asked if there will be provisions for people pulling off the highway.

P. Thompson said yes. The 1600 square feet is more than enough to cover the kitchen, service area, restrooms, and a small number in-store dining tenant spaces.

R. Sinosky asked how they are going to maintain the space around the solar panels and if they have looked into a green method for doing so.

P. Parent said yes, the intent currently is to have it be a grassy meadow that would be mowed occasionally to keep it down so the solar panel's function. One of the comments back from the Town Engineer was that they are looking for some method of erosion control. We will be discussing the details on that. A lot of times we use a crushed stone strip or a permanent grass mat like an erosion control blanket that doesn't degrade to prevent that erosion on the lower side of the panels.

R. Sinosky mentioned that some of the green methods that are being used would be reaching out to local farmers and allowing grazing space.

P. Thompson said it is pretty early in their implementation for that, but they certainly can look into it. It is certainly not feasible at the moment but there are more and more companies popping up that are doing that.

M. D'Amato asked the applicant to review the comments from the Town Engineer with the Commission.

P. Parent started with the first one that is a typo in the table on our plan, which should be 37000. Comment two is the main comment. We are taking quite a bit of additional area and discharging it into that existing onsite construction wetland. As indicated the wetland has no history of flooding, it is dry 99% of the time so I do think we have more than a sufficient infiltration capacity there. If we required, we could do an additional test pit to verify. Number three we just went over, it was the measures to prevent the erosion at the edge of the solar array. Four was just a note to add to the co-plan that there will be no stocking piling withing 100' of the wetland.

B. Shabot asked if there was any possibility of working with the State to take down some of trees towards the end of the exit.

P. Parent mentioned that they do have approval from CT DOT to clear of portion of the off-ramp area, which is shown on the plan.

B. Shabot asked if they will be lowering the bank.

P. Parent said yes, in addition to clearing, we are going to be re grading that shoulder to make it more level with the road itself.

W. Parsell asked if there were any more questions or comments.

B. Shabot asked what kind of trees they will be planting.

P. Parent they have not picked out the trees yet. They typically call out for native species.

B. Shabot made comment that some trees become lollipops and just get too large. He suggests that they choose columnar forms of oaks, maples, beach, etc.

W. Parsell opened the public hearing to questions or comments to the public.

Ralph Tulis of 47 Village Hill Rd, former owner of property commented that one advantage to this business is the traffic coming off the exit ramp. Taking a right off the highway this property is the first thing they will see and will be convenient for a lot of passenger cars. It also may help mitigate the tractor trailer backups that occur on Ruby Rd. He did have discussions before selling this property about clearing trees and doing grading exactly as suggested by the DOT.

R. Tulis asked about the well locations and if they could be pointed out on the map and expressed his support for the project.

P. Parent showed that they will be two small wells in the norther easter coordinates.

W. Parsell motioned to close the public hearing. B. Shabot seconded. All in favor.

E. New Business

1. PZ-23-15: 0 Ruby Rd (MBL: 46 026-00) Special Permit Application to modify previously approved Special Permit (PZ-22-16) to increase building size, total number of parking spaces with additional site modifications. Applicant: P. Parent. Owner: Down East Green.

M. D'Amato noted that because this is a modification of the previous approval and since they were trying to work with DOT and a tenant, there are some amendments required by the first permit that they did not yet execute in the revised plans because the almost immediately jumped into preparing this revision. The packet contains the original certificate with conditions which should be considered for inclusion for this approval as well. This way we can get it to be consistent between both applications. Then the revised plans would sort of reflect that and we can close out that approval with the plans that we have for this project which meet all the requirements of the previous conditions.

A. Marco motion to approve and to include all of the comments and conditions previously approved and incorporate the comments from the exhibit as well from Jacobson (Town Engineer). R. Sinoski seconded. All in favor.

F. Unfinished Business

None

G. Approval of Minutes:

12/19/2023 – Tabled to next meeting.

H. Correspondence

1. Mansfield PZC Referral

M. D'Amato stated that this is a copy of their high-density housing development moratorium. They adopted one in late 2023 and they are extending the moratorium and removing some of the exceptions. This is just a notification required by statue to let you know that they are doing this. This is because moratoriums are treated like text amendment, so they must refer them to CROCG and adjacent municipalities.

2. Tolland PZC Referral

M. D'Amato stated that these are amendments to their zoning regulations related to farm breweries. Lemek Farm has been doing some brewing and built a little tasting room and things have been going well. They are now trying to catch up to what the public is looking for. This will allow sale of alcoholic beverages manufactured withing 30 miles, to give them a little variation to offer more than what they have on site.

I. Public Participation (items not listed on the agenda)

None

J. Staff Report/Discussion

1. EDC Strategic Plan

M. D'Amato mentioned that the EDC has selected a consultant. So now we are getting ready to kick the Plan off later in February. As part of the process, they feel that the PZC is one of the most important bodies to be involved in the project. They are trying to figure out the best way to have this group involved in that. D'Amato mentioned that the best thing would be to find time and have PZC meet with the consultant. One of the components they are looking at is the evaluation of two or three legitimate development programs that consider public input as well as to consider location and market. They are trying to understand what the public and commission are interested in. The easiest thing to do would be to see if the consultant can attend one of the meetings already schedule because then we know at least most people will be available. Depending on the trajectory they may even have more of a public kickoff where they invite the town agencies to attend. If someone wanted to be a more formal representative, then that would be okay as well.

2. CROCG Regional Planning Commission Appointment

M. D'Amato explained that this came out about a month ago and has been on a previous agenda. Willington is part of CROCG, and they have a regional planning commission. Every year they solicit appointees from each member municipality to be a part of Commission. D'Amato asked if someone from the PZC is interested in being the Willington appointee. If someone is interested this commission would vote to designate them as the appointee.

W. Parsell asked when this needed to be done by.

M. D'Amato said this week but if no one is interested we won't lose anything other than not having someone participate. There are four meetings for the 2024 schedule.

3. FY 24-25 Budget

A. Marco recused himself from the discussion and left the room.

M. D'Amato mentioned that the deadline to submit the budget was very short this year so a budget had already tentatively been submitted due to the snow cancelation of a meeting. He indicated he wanted to go over what had been submitted and if there are any questions or issues, make amendments. The total budget based upon what was approved last fiscal year was \$157,238. This year we are requesting \$159,606. There are essentially two lines that we are including an increase. The permit system budget has typically come out of the building department budget. Because the Town contracts with the Town of Bolton for this and they do not have a formal presence at Town Hall, administration of that has come from the Land Use Department since D'Amato started working for the Town in 2018. Based upon that, it has not been included in the PZC budget. We also have the PZC advertising line, document preservation, (which was document scanning), office expenses and training as well. The other increase is a \$2,000.00 increase associated with LaserFiche which is our document management system. This system hosts all the scanned documents that you see on our GIS system. We went to the cloud-based version of Laserfiche a couple years ago to save money. This new license will provide a public portal so that people can access documents, and this will also make it available to other departments.

B. Shabot made a motion to endorse the budget as submitted for FY24-25. R. Sinoski seconded. All in favor.

K. Adjournment

W. Parsell adjourned the meeting at 8:23pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Evelyn Delaney - Assistant Land Use Agent