

PLANNING & ZONING REGULAR MEETING JANUARY 14, 2020
AGENDA ITEM: PUBLIC HEARING: SPECIAL PERMIT #250- WEST CORNWALL
DEVELOPMENT GROUP – 417 SHARON GOSHEN TURNPIKE
PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT OF HEARING AS REFERENCED IN MINUTES FILED

The public hearing was opened at 7:07PM. LUA Griswold Nelson read information on file into the record (with staff comments included.)

Representatives in attendance to represent the application: applicants John VanDoren and Jeff Morgan, principals of West Cornwall Development Group, Erik Tietz, site designer consultant and William Colby, Colby Engineering, Goshen.

John VanDoren addressed the background and concept behind the project. Jeff Morgan addressed mapping provided “Proposed Site Development Plan- West Cornwall Development Group LL, prepared by Colby Engineering, Goshen, (map on file dated 10/22/2019)) and “Septic System Design Plan West Cornwall Development Group LLC prepared by Colby Engineering (map on file dated 10/22/2019). Mr. Morgan addressed the phasing of the project and the plan to renovate the barn first based on cost. Mr. Morgan addressed the engineering plan prepared to address on-site septic. Mr. Morgan addressed the proposed parking plan and traffic design with access from Lower River Road and egress onto Sharon Goshen Turnpike, and areas proposed for outside seating and community gathering places. Mr. Morgan addressed the second phase regarding the renovation of the Pink House, noting remaining historic integrity with the structure itself but the impact of a fire as well as damage from neglect. Note was made that options for consideration for future uses in the Pink House including additional restaurant space, a bed and breakfast and options and retail space that would validate the cost to renovate. Mr. Morgan addressed some particulars of the proposed restaurant as a pizza pub with local craft beer and wine and the hours including morning to evening. It was stated that they (West Cornwall Development Group aka Mr. VanDoren and himself) would not be the proprietors.

The floor was opened to questions from the Commission included parking (Timell). In response to questions regarding signage (Timell), Griswold Nelson addressed the current regulations not supporting the signage that was proposed but that based on discussion, it offered the opportunity for the applicants to work with the Commission to make modifications to the sign regulations to address their particular needs. In response to questions regarding the septic (Gray), it was stated (Morgan) that final details of the septic and water were in process. Griswold Nelson addressed conversations with Cathy Weber from Torrington Area Health and that they agreed that the process could move forward based on the approvals being sought. Griswold Nelson requested that details of the site landscaping be addressed with note made by Mr. Morgan and Mr. VanDoren that they had contacted their neighbors and were working with them to incorporate their concerns and wishes. Griswold Nelson re-addressed parking, noting that while the site complied with the parking regulations for on-site parking, the recent amendments to parking regulations also allowed off-site “communal” parking in the village. As part of the hearing, there were comments from Mr. Colby and Mr. Tietz on the record from the audience.

The floor was opened to the public. Speakers recorded:

Dave Bain questioned particulars of the design that could be seen from his property (no address given - 419 Sharon Goshen Turnpike/kgn). Noting previous conversations with Mr. Bain, Mr. Morgan stated that Mr. Bain's concerns would be addressed.

Gordon Ridgway, First Selectman, addressed the history of the application and its relationship to the status of existing and future businesses in West Cornwall. Noting the timing for proposed community septic improvements, Mr. Ridgway spoke in support of the application, citing the need for businesses that could comply with current zoning regulations being an important part needed for the revitalization of West Cornwall now and in upcoming years. Mr. Ridgway spoke of the history of the area and the site and its impact on the neighborhood being consistent with the past history of the village.

Hector Prud'homme raised questions regarding the number of seats with clarification from Mr. Morgan as to numbers of patrons relating to the number of tables.

Libby Mitchell spoke in favor of the application and the applicants' efforts.

James (and Idella) Shepard (415 Sharon Goshen Turnpike/Pluto Properties- kgn) asked for clarification of proposed hours with Mr. Morgan stating that while final hours would be determined by the operator, it was expected that weekend hours would include breakfast, lunch and later evening hours to correspond with other surrounding local activities. Note was made by the chairman (Cutler) regarding the commission's jurisdiction on hours.

John Sanders (Rail Road Square- kgn) asked for clarification of number of days open with note made that his support related to his wife's concerns as to his pizza diet.

Janet Carlson (EDC chairman and Rail Road Square – kgn) spoke enthusiastically in favor of the application.

Commission member Bodwell asked for clarification as traffic patterns and concerns relating to entry and exit on the state road and parking.

Note was made by staff (kgn) that a narrative submitted as part of the application addressed many of the questions being raised and that the narrative would be posted on the website.

Richard Sears, Cornwall Bridge, spoke in favor of the application

Gordon Ridgway addressed community discussions during the installation of sidewalks regarding traffic and parking. Mr. Ridgway addressed his conversations with Joe Rose from Trinity Retreat (who could not be in attendance) and the activities being proposed in relation to the activities at the Trinity Retreat Center not being an issue.

Hearing no other questions from the audience, the public hearing was closed.