

PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT
QUARTERLY REPORT: JULY 1, 2005 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2005

The Planning and Zoning Commission met six times this quarter—three times in July and three times in September. Among the applications approved this period are: outdoor seating/dining in front of Upper Crust Bagels and the soon-to-be-opened Cosi; a rezoning of a portion of the Thorndal Circle Office Park; an indoor driving range and putting green at the Darien Golf Center; an addition to Vernal's Service Center; a new bank on the Carvel/Sandoval's Auto Center property, and a calendar of activities at the Ox Ridge Hunt Club.

Permits by type this quarter:

Flood Damage Prevention: 6 granted; 1 withdrawn, 1 amendment approved

Coastal Site Plan Review: 6 granted; 1 withdrawn, 1 amendment approved

Land Filling/Excavation: 7 approved

Special Permit: 1 granted

Business Site Plan: 6 granted; 1 withdrawn; 2 amendments approved; 1 amendment approved and 1 amendment withdrawn

Change of Zone Application: one granted in part/denied in part

Total Number of Projects*: 22 + 5 amendments

*Total number of projects does not equal number of permits, because some applications include multiple permits.

Various applications likely will be decided by the Commission in the upcoming October to December period, including: a four lot subdivision off Noroton Avenue; outdoor seating in front of the Sugar Bowl; a new Subway store in the space formerly occupied by Baskin-Robbins; and a new building next to the Darien Playhouse, replacing the former Vantage Travel building.

Work on the 2005 Town Plan of Conservation & Development continues. It is expected that the Commission will be preparing the final draft of the entire document in October, and referring it out for review. A public hearing will be scheduled for sometime after the State-required referral period.

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) met five times this quarter—twice in July and three times in September. In all, 21 applications were processed—13 were granted; five denied; two granted in part/denied in part; and one withdrawn. The number of applications processed this quarter is two less than the July-September period last year. Former Planning and Zoning Commission member Charles DeLuca was recently appointed to the ZBA, and he heard his first matters in September.

The Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) met four times this period. They acted upon 29 applications and two amendments—they approved 28 applications, one application was withdrawn, and two amendments approved. The approvals included dredging ponds on a number of properties on Birch Road, Salisbury Road, and Point O' Woods Road. The amount of permits issued this quarter is more than half of the year's total in 1999, and is almost the entire year's total from 1994-1995. (i.e. What was a year's worth of applications in 1994-1995, is a quarter's worth of applications in 2005-2006). Staff will soon begin working on an update to the Town's Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Map, with the expectation of a public hearing on the Map in December or January.

The Architectural Review Board (ARB) met two times this quarter—once in August and once in September. During this period, they approved eight applications for signs, awnings, and façade changes.

A total of 153 Zoning Permits were reviewed this quarter. Eleven of those were for new single-family residences and three for swimming pools. Of the 11 new houses, two were on vacant parcels, and nine were “teardowns”. It appears that the number of Zoning Permits issued for new single-family residences this calendar year will be at its highest level in over 10 years.

Other projects which required significant staff time:

- In July, staff completed the FEMA Biennial Report on Flood Matters covering Calendar Years 2003 and 2004.
- A proposal increasing applications fees to the local land use boards passed and took effect on July 3, 2005. It is expected that the fee increase will generate upwards of \$50,000 annually for the Town. These changes were filed with the Town Clerk and posted on the Town web site. The Department has already seen a substantial increase in the amount of fees collected.
- Updated the Town Wetlands Map in response to an approval by the EPC that took effect on August 1st.
- Updated the Zoning Map to change from DOR-1 to OB. That change took effect on August 14, 2005.
- Staff followed up on zoning enforcement relative to coastal violations on Five Mile River Road and Tokeneke Trail. Coordinated closely with DEP.
- Prepared bid specifications for a replacement plotter. The Director analyzed the bids, then ordered the replacement plotter. The Director himself then assembled the parts, rather than contracting that work out. This saved the Town over \$500. The plotter came in \$4,000+ below budget.
- The Planning and Zoning Director is preparing for his Continuing Education course to be held at Middlesex Middle School on October 5th.

Land Use Software

On July 18th and 19th, SME (subject matter expert) training was held in the IT training room in Town Hall. This gave employees an opportunity to experience the software first-hand and better understand how it works. The IT Department then loaded the software on various machines, which allowed Town staff to review the software at their leisure. From August 15-17, Blaine Castle of Municipal Software came to Darien to work closely with the SMEs in developing the Change Control Document. This document will be prepared by Blaine for Municipal Software’s software engineers, and will allow them to modify the CityView software to meet Darien’s specific needs. Staff will review the document in October, and final decisions will be made regarding the modifications to the software that will be incorporated into the final product.

In July and August, Planning and Zoning Department staff prepared a database of zoning violations that will eventually be imported into the new software system. This will allow staff to quickly and efficiently check on the status of violation(s) for any property.

Personnel

In an attempt to find a replacement for Nancy Sarner, staff has been working closely with the Human Resources Director on reviewing resumes. A job was posted in July for the new position of Environmental Protection Officer. Over 30 resumes were reviewed, and interviews were held in August and September. We are hopeful of having a replacement for Nancy sometime in October.