

PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT
QUARTERLY REPORT: OCTOBER 1, 2004 – DECEMBER 31, 2004

The Planning and Zoning Commission met five times this quarter.

Permits by type this quarter:

Business Site Plan: 3 granted

Coastal Site Plan Review: 1 granted; 3 withdrawn; 1 amendment granted

Flood Damage Prevention: 2 granted; 2 withdrawn; 1 amendment granted

Land Filling/Excavation: 5 approved; 1 withdrawn; 1 amendment granted

Special Permit: 5 granted; 1 amendment approved

Subdivision: 1 amendment approved; 1 amendment withdrawn

Total Number of Projects*: 17 applications and 3 amendments

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

The Commission continued to spend significant time preparing the 2005 Town Plan of Conservation & Development. The first draft of the Public Facilities and Services Chapter and Appendix were discussed at the November 23, 2004 meeting. In January, they expect to review a revised Timeline for Completion, and revised drafts of Chapters 1 (Vision), 2 (Demographics) and 8 (Public Facilities and Services). In February, a first draft of Chapter 9 (Land Use), and a revised draft of Chapter 3 (Historic Resources) will be discussed. The Commission is still on schedule to have a final draft of the entire Town Plan completed by late May 2005. Draft Chapters, Appendices, and the Timeline are put on the Darien web site for community review and comment.

Also this quarter, Department staff worked closely with the Building Department assisting Blum Shapiro Consulting in the preparation of a land use software Request for Proposals (RFP). The RFP was sent to nine vendors, and three vendors were selected for demonstrations. In mid-December, staff spent three full days meeting the three software vendors, and viewing product demonstrations. It is expected that a final decision on a software vendor will be made sometime in early January, with the possibility of new software up-and-running by the end of this fiscal year.

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) met four times this period. They acted upon 21 applications—nine were granted; four granted in part/denied in part; five denied; and three withdrawn. The number of applications submitted recently has necessitated the scheduling of two meetings in January 2005. The Board officially received the resignation of Chairman Ramsay Bell, who moved out of Darien. The ZBA expects to vote on a new Chairman in January.

The Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) also met four times this quarter. A total of 38 applications were processed—31 were granted; five amendments granted; and two applications withdrawn. In addition to processing applications, EPC staff prepared a Press release “Fall Cleanup Near Sensitive Areas”, which was published in both local newspapers and posted on the Town web site. The EPC also adopted an amended Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Map, effective November 7, 2004. This map reflects changes to 58 properties in Town. A first draft of new EPC Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations was prepared, and the EPC expects to review this draft at a January or early February meeting, with the expectation of having a public hearing on those revised Regulations in March or April. The last amendment to these Regulations was in 1997.

The Architectural Review Board (ARB) met once each in October, November, and December. They approved twelve applications, and one application was withdrawn. Among the twelve applications were requests for signage for four new businesses in Town.

A total of 146 Zoning Permits were acted upon this period. This includes 67 permits alone in November. The total number of permits approved is a 25+% increase over the same period last year. Fifteen permits this quarter were for new houses—two of those on vacant lots, and the remainder “teardowns”. A total of 612 Zoning Permits were issued in 2004.

Substantial GIS work was completed this quarter. This includes: concept mapping for Procaccini property, including the preparation of four conceptual maps and both printing hard copies and posting to the Darien web site. It is estimated that this in-house work saved the town over \$5,000 in outside consulting fees. In addition, two maps were prepared for an upcoming tabletop exercise.

GIS continues to be a valuable tool for mapping associated with the 2005 Town Plan. This quarter, a map of sewer properties and the location of existing and proposed sewer lines was prepared for the Plan, and shared with the Public Works Department and the Health Department. Snow plow route mapping was completed for the Public Works Department, and the GIS also provided a mailing list and mapping to assist with sidewalk shoveling notifications.

GIS was used to prepare a new Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Map (see above under EPC), saving money on the use of outside consultants, while providing more accurate mapping for use by the entire community. Other projects were also undertaken: assisted SWRPA and State DOT with projects; provided mapping of study areas for a potential Route 1 study; provided mapping & other GIS information to Tai Soo Kim Partners Architects for their work on the Tokeneke Elementary School; and provided mapping and property information to the Darien Land Trust for possible land acquisition