

**REDDING PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
December 13, 2022 - 7:30 P.M.
Town Hall Hearing Room
100 Hill Road – Redding, Connecticut**

Present: Daniel Barrett, Chairman, Regina O’Brien, Chuck Cilo, Steven Gagnon, Toby Welles

Absent: Roger VanAusdal, James E Bacon

Also Present: Julia Pemberton, First Selectman; Aimee Pardee, Land Use Director; applicants, members of the public.

Mr. Barrett called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m, and seated Toby Welles in place of Roger Van Ausdal who was absent.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Barrett approved the minutes of November 22, 2022 as emended by changing the word “AGENDA” to “MINUTES.”

Mr. Barrett approved the Site Walk minutes of November 29, 2022 as emended by replacing the name “Andre Cela” with “Adrian Cela.”

II. REGULATORY

1. Referral from Board of Selectmen. In accordance with CGS 8-24, referral of proposed improvements at The Redding Community Center, 33 – 37 Lonetown Road: expansion of tennis court facility to include new pickleball courts.

First Selectman Pemberton noted that the Board of Selectmen has now referred this matter to the Planning Commission and that although the Planning Commission has 35 days to consider the application, the contractor has noted a price increase will be likely as of January 1, 2023 and that it was advisable to move with all possible speed on this proposal. Rob Blick, from Parks and Recreation, discussed status of project. Further discussion ensued. Mr. Welles asked about sidewalks from the Community Center parking lot and Ms. Pemberton said that would have to be a separate project. Mr. Barrett scheduled a Site Walk at the Community Center for Saturday, December 17, 2022 at 9 a.m. Mr. Barrett then called a special meeting of the Planning Committee on Monday, December 19, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom conference to consider the proposal. Ms. Pardee said she would make the necessary arrangements for the meeting to happen. Ms.

Pemberton stated that the Board of Selectmen were ready to meet at any time once the Planning Commission approved said proposal.

2. Request for alteration to Scenic Road: 154 Umpawaug Road – Noemi & Stylianos Kakavelis. Request to construct pillars and a portion of a retaining wall, as begun, which lies within the road’s right-of-way as the project lies within 15 feet of the edge of the pavement.

Members of the Commission viewed the site on November 29, 2022. As requested, Mr. Cela, the contractor, and Mr. Kakavelis, the property owner, provided photographs of the project. Discussion ensued. Mr. Barrett said it was important that any alterations made would melt into the background and not be intrusive, fitting into the existing landscape and with the structures already there. Ms. O’Brien concurred by saying that the size and style of the structure be consistent with existing structures that line the road. Mr. Welles was concerned that not only was Umpawaug Road a town scenic road but was also an historic road dating back several centuries and that it was important that the character of the road and its surroundings be maintained. Concern was raised about the entry road apron. Mr. Barrett noted that the Planning Commission had no say about what was built on private property. With no further discussion, Mr. Welles moved that, and Ms. O’Brien seconded, that the application be approved. No members voted in the affirmative to approve the application so the application was denied. The Chairman requested that the applicants remove all encroachments from the town right of way within 30 days.

3. Referral from the Board of Selectmen: Discussion of proposed Tree Ordinance.

First Selectman Pemberton gave a summary of the town’s position. She noted that she had provided the commission with copies of a draft tree ordinance, as well as related materials including an older version of an ordinance. She stated that an ordinance is necessary for the town to have the ability to levy fines [against transgressors]. A tree warden has been hired by the town and his name is Charles Hyatt: he replaces Sean McNamara who is the ad hoc warden with regards to the relationship of the town with Eversource. It was wondered what policy the tree warden would or could follow in approving or denying requests for tree removal on town rights-of-way. That is the reason the town needs to craft an ordinance providing guidance to the warden and residents. The Tree Committee would advise the tree warden in the conduct of his or her duties. Mr. Welles offered to write a draft ordinance for consideration. Janice Rochstein, supported by Laurie Heiss, both from the Redding Tree Conservancy, reported on what other towns have done, in particular the towns of Ridgefield and Greenwich. Discussion will continue at the next regular meeting.

4. Request for Alteration to a Scenic Road: Request by Eversource to remove trees within the right-of-way along Cross Highway.

Representing Eversource were Samuel Berg, Sean Redding and Jenna Turner. Mr. Berg, the Eversource arborist, stated that Eversource had revised their tree removal plan from 211 trees to 124 trees. He noted that they were either diseased or posed a definite hazard to the integrity of the power lines, especially during extreme weather events. The

Commissioners were concerned about maintaining the character and esthetics of the road, and how losing the tree canopy would affect the scenic ambience. Several Cross Highway residents, including Garner Lester, Raymond D'Angelo, and Ed Staunton, voiced their concerns about the tree removal. Mr. Staunton also noted that a recent property survey indicated that trees on the list for removal are actually on private property.

It was agreed that Mr. Berg would mark the trees slated for removal assisted and consulted by Mr. Hyatt from the town. Laurie Heiss, also of Cross Highway, asked if the Redding Tree Conservancy could provide an additional arborist. The Commission concurred that it was acceptable for the Tree Conservancy to be involved. Discussion was tabled until such time as Eversource and Mr. Hyatt can report back to the Commission on their findings.

III. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT/DISCUSSION.

The Chairman had no comments under this agenda item.

Hearing no further discussion, Mr. Barrett adjourned the meeting at 9:19 p.m.

Submitted by,
Alexander Scott (Recording Secretary)