



# Town of Griswold



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**GRISWOLD PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION  
SPECIAL MEETING  
MINUTES**

**JANUARY 4, 2006**

**GRISWOLD TOWN HALL**

**I. SPECIAL MEETING (7:00 P.M.)**

**1. Call to order:**

Chairperson Gail Rooke-Norman called this Special Meeting of the Griswold Planning & Zoning Commission to order at 7:02 p.m.

**2. Roll Call:**

**Present:** Chairperson Gail Rooke-Norman, Members Philip Anthony, Clyde Seaman, Daniel DeGuire, Alternates Courtland Kinnie, Martin McKinney, John Schumaker, Town Planner Demian Sorrentino, ZEO Peter Zvingilas, Recording Secretary Donna Szall

**Absent:** Roland Harris

**3. Determination of Quorum:**

It was determined that there is a quorum for this meeting. D. DeGuire asked if all the new members have been sworn in. G. Rooke-Norman asked those new members if they were sworn in. It was determined that the new members were sworn in.

**4. Approval of Minutes:**

G. Rooke-Norman asked for a motion for approval of the minutes of the Special Meeting of November 30, 2005, the Public Hearings and Regular Meeting of December 12, 2005 and the Special Meeting of December 19, 2005. G. Rooke-Norman stated that all the minutes could be approved as a whole. P. Anthony made a motion to approve the minutes. D. DeGuire seconded the motion. G. Rooke-Norman asked for a vote. All were in favor. Motion was passed.

**5. Correspondence and Attachments:**

G. Rooke-Norman stated that there were several items of correspondence

**A.** SCCOG Newsletter, Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments, November/December 2005.

B. Letter dated 12/9/05 from the Town of North Stonington to Ellen DuPont, Town Clerk regarding a public hearing set for 2/2/06 for an application for a proposed Regulation Change.

G. Rooke-Norman asked D. Sorrentino if the Commission needed to take this item up as a separate matter. D. Sorrentino stated that he did not think so. He responded to this item in a letter dated 12/29/05 to Mr. Steinbrecker stating that it has no municipal impact.

C. Letter dated 12/9/05 from the Rhode Island Policy Council to F. Clyde Seaman regarding steps reached at the Borderlands meeting on November 29, 2005.

G. Rooke-Norman asked if the Rhode Island Policy Council sent information directly to D. Sorrentino when they have their meetings. D. Sorrentino state yes. There was discussion of this matter. G. Rooke-Norman asked C. Kinnie if he attended these meeting, and if would he update this Commission. He stated that he would try to attend the meetings as much as possible.

D. Growth Management Tools for Planning Commissioners produced by the Massachusetts Metropolitan District Commission.

E. Connecticut Wildlife, November/December 2005 from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division.

F. Letter dated 12/20/05 from Attorney Mark Branse regarding – General Zoning- Review of Draft Open Space Provisions, Subdivision Regulations, Section 5.5.

G. Rooke-Norman stated that Atty. Branse stated that there could be a threshold of more than 5 or more than 6 so that this Commission can create the open space requirement. This will be discussed later.

G. Letter dated 10/21/04 from the Connecticut Civil Liberties Union Foundation regarding Town of Griswold Political Sign Zoning Regulation and a letter dated 11/23/04 from Demian Sorrentino, Town Planner in response.

This item will be taken up later in the Agenda.

H. Letter dated 12/21/05 from Gene Lohrs, Chairman, Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments Regional Planning Commission regarding the proposed 10-lot subdivision on Geer Road and Potts Road.

This item will be taken up later in the Agenda.

## **6. Matters Presented for Consideration:**

A. Discussion and consideration of a comprehensive review of the Commercial Zoning Regulations within the Griswold Zoning Regulations.

G. Rooke-Norman stated that this item grew out of previous discussions to assess why the Town loses commercial development and why it was not successful. She stated that this Commission should set up an analysis structure on what does well in Griswold and what needs to be improved upon, what regulation changes should be considered to make Griswold more commercially friendly to the types of commercial development this Commission would like to see in the different commercial zones.

**B. Discussion and consideration of repeal of CTDOT approval letter from “Land Development Application Checklist and Certificate of Completeness.**

G. Rooke-Norman stated this item is to look at repealing the timing of the CTDOT approval letter in the check list. She stated that this Commission is not looking to repeal the requirement completely, just when this Commission will require the CTDOT approval letter in the application process to make it easier for the developers to put their packages together and to move at the pace at which they need to move. She asked D. Sorrentino to discuss this item further.

D. Sorrentino gave an overview of the reason for adopting the check list initially because of two commercial applications that had held up the Commission’s decision process. He stated that he had noticed a pre-approval letter from CTDOT with certain engineering requirements. D. Sorrentino stated that the Hotel/Restaurant project was told by CTDOT that it would take 9 months from now to meet certain CTDOT engineering requirements for pre-approval. M. McKinney asked if this Commission was speaking about commercial applications. D. Sorrentino stated that this requirement is on all land use applications. There was discussion of this matter including how this affects commercial applications and the CTDOT criteria to be met.

P. Anthony stated that this Commission can approve an application pending or conditional upon CTDOT approval rather than going through the lengthy process upfront. M. McKinney stated that commercial and residential applications should be divided. He stated that this prior CTDOT approval should slow down residential growth. He stated that it should be easier for a developer to bring commercial activity to the Town. C. Seaman stated that most commercial developers have developed some report with the CTDOT requirements. There was discussion of this matter of changing the requirements for commercial development and keeping the requirement for subdivision development.

G. Rooke-Norman stated that as a Town, this Commission must work with developers who wish to bring commercial development to the Town; and this Commission can make it easier by changing when this Commission requires the CTDOT approval letter but not eliminating the need for the requirement. There was discussion of this matter including residential applications need CTDOT approval with application submission.

P. Anthony asked if this was being done in other towns and suggested a review by the Town Attorney to determine the legality.. D. Sorrentino explained that this Commission is allowed to regulate check lists because State Statues and Town regulations do not regulate what is on the applications. There was discussion of this matter.

D. Sorrentino state that commercial applications are longer, more detailed, and usually are special exceptions. C. Seaman asked if commercial developers have complained about this requirement. D. Sorrentino stated that the one application that is a commercial application has complained since it has wetlands approval and cannot submit its application pending CTDOT approval. There was discussion of this matter.

G. Rooke-Norman asked for any further discussion on this matter. She asked for a motion.

P. Anthony made a motion to approve the changes on the Land Development check list as proposed which would be a CTDOT approval letter as long as the applicant has proof of application to CTDOT, this Commission will not hold up either approval or denial of the application strictly for commercial applications where as residential land development will stay as stated an approval letter is necessary for this Commission to consider either approving or denying said application. D. DeGuire seconded the motion. G. Rooke-Norman stated that the motion has been made and seconded to make revisions to the application check list differentiating treatment of CTDOT approval letter between commercial and residential applications. She asked for a vote. All were in favor. Motion was passed.

G. Rooke-Norman stated that Item 6 B was one of the specific items discussed that would help set up as structure for Item 6 A and asked the Commission for their input on setting up an analysis to better encourage commercial developers to consider Griswold.

G. Rooke-Norman referenced a handwritten list by D. Sorrentino and wanted to discuss an item on this list which would be to have D. Sorrentino research by the next meeting, for this Commission to understand the sewer fees for applicants in Griswold pay more for tie-in/buy-in fees as compared to Lisbon's fees which utilize the same sewer treatment facility. M. McKinney asked how far the sewer line runs on Rte 164. D. Sorrentino stated that it ran over I-395 and ended at the other side of the northbound exit. M. McKinney stated that realistically the sewer line should run down beyond the Stott property. D. Sorrentino stated that it should run to the golf course. M. McKinney asked where the waterline ran. D. Sorrentino stated that it ran to the corner of SR-630 and Rte 138. There was discussion of this matter.

D. Sorrentino stated that the water company should be convinced to extend the waterline on their own and it would be a capital outlay to bring in more customers. P. Anthony stated in being in regular contact with the Water Company, he stated that their response is they will go where they are wanted and that they want new customers. There was discussion of this matter.

G. Rooke-Norman appointed the task of contacting the water company to P. Anthony to inquire on what they require as a process to extend waterlines. P. Anthony stated that he will do so and will ask the water company to put their response in writing. There was further discussion of the high tie-in/buy-in fees of the public utilities.

Troy Chick, Preston Road addressed the Commission regarding waterline fees. G. Rooke-Norman asked him to make a quick comment as this is a workshop. He explained that he had an easement all set up for a waterline and that OSJ told him no because it would bring competition. He explained that many developers have walked away from his property because there was no waterline to his property location. G. Rooke-Norman asked if there was a State right-of-way that parallels the edge of the road and what would be needed to extend the line. T. Chick stated that it could be done through eminent domain. G. Rooke-Norman stated that this Commission did not want to discuss the issue of eminent domain.

P. Zvingilas stated that the cost to put it down the access road would cost more to get an easement from the State than it would to go down a private road. D. Sorrentino stated that 59 Jennifer Lane Associates have received Inland Wetlands approval and they have started the process with the State to put in the waterline and recommended that the town jump in to play a

role. There was discussion of this matter of putting in a waterline for the proposed area of Rte 164 and acquiring easements through the State.

C. Kinnie stated that it would work in favor of the water company to extend the line that would bring in more customers. P. Zvingilas stated that the water company wants the customer to pay for the line and give the line to the water company. There was lengthy discussion of this matter including the Jewett City Water Pollution Control Authority fees.

G. Rooke-Norman asked that M. McKinney work with P. Anthony to work with the water company to accelerate their review to encourage commercial growth for the town. G. Rooke-Norman stated that she would get information from the Jewett City Water Pollution Control Authority regarding their fees and review process. She asked if anyone from the Commission would work with her. There was discussion of this matter including only commercial tie-in/buy-ins for the sewer usage.

T. Giard stated that the IDC had met with the water company in the past. He stated that their stand was that they would spend no money for construction. G. Rooke-Norman stated that she understood what he was saying but that if applications sit on someone's desk for 6-8 weeks, she stated that this Commission should at least try to light a fire to get the process moving faster.

T. Giard stated that the IDC had met with the sewer authority in the past and the IDC had proposed a minimum of a 10-year pay off for the cost of tie-in, the sewer authority only wanted upfront money and were not interested in a pay-off over time. He stated that this Commission was faced with the cooperation or lack cooperation in this matter. There was further discussion of these matters of prohibitive water and sewer tie-in/buy-in fees including giving this problem more public visibility to encourage more cooperation to encourage commercial development. P. Zvingilas stated that he would look into the record for fees for Lisbon and Griswold.

G. Rooke-Norman asked if there were any other topics that this Commission should look to correct any potential disadvantages to make Griswold more attractive to commercial development. She stated that a suggestion was made to look at side yard and rear yard buffers for commercial zones since it may be limiting the commercial developer to certain site plans that may not utilize the real estate as well as could be utilized. There was discussion of this matter of reducing buffers for commercial zones and to change the regulations by waiving or reducing the requirement during the site plan review without going the ZBA.

P. Anthony suggested creating a brochure of Griswold to show developers what the Town has to offer. There was lengthy discussion of this matter that included the two interstate exits that are viable for development, the lack of infrastructure for development and tie-in/buy-in fees.

D. Sorrentino asked this Commission to consider tax incentives and a change to the Town ordinance for the tax assessor to waive a percentage over time. P. Anthony suggested that D. Sorrentino should look at other towns at such as New London, Danielson and Plainfield, as to how tax incentives work there as well as the State enterprise zone. There was discussion of this matter.

G. Rooke-Norman stated that this Commission and the IDC should work together to rejuvenate the effort for commercial development in Griswold. T. Giard stated that the IDC, about 15 years ago, had a tax break system set up through a Town Meeting approval. He gave a brief

history of this matter. He suggested in changing the town meeting approval vehicle of the ordinance. There was discussion of this matter.

T. Giard stated that the issue that developers have is that there is no water and sewer for properties that are available for development. He suggested getting tax break structures and getting water and sewer issues solved. There was discussion of this matter.

G. Rooke-Norman asked the Commission's feeling on the creation of forward motion to keep it moving. She stated that she did not think it could be done at a regular meeting. She would like to meet every month or every other month to work on this matter. M. McKinney stated that this Commission should wait until we have met with the sewer and water commission. G. Rooke-Norman stated that it should be a special meeting on a case by case basis. There was discussion of this matter including State requirements for the posting of agendas and notifications of regular and special meetings.

C. Discuss and work on the Griswold Plan of Conservation & Development update.

G. Rooke-Norman stated that this Item has been scheduled for a special meeting on January 17, 2006 at 7:00 p.m. She asked the members to go through the most recent draft and have all their comments and changes ready for that meeting. D. Sorrentino stated that he will have the most finalized draft for the next regular meeting on January 9, 2006. There was discussion of this matter.

## **7. Additional Business:**

There was no additional business.

## **8. Old Business**

A. Text Amendment to Zoning Regulations regarding Political Signs.

P. Zvingilas stated that he was in touch with Atty. Mike Zizka for information on this topic and he has not heard from him as yet. P. Zvingilas stated that this was on the agenda for January 9, 2006.

## **9. New Business:**

A. Appointment of two Commission members to SCRPA.

G. Rooke-Norman asked D. Sorrentino who the previous representatives were. D. Sorrentino stated that they were M. McKinney and A. Hatfield. G. Rooke-Norman asked if anyone on the Commission was available to serve with M. McKinney for these quarterly meeting. There was discussion of this matter. G. Rooke-Norman asked D. Sorrentino to advertise in the paper that this Commission is looking for taxpayers or other boards and commissions members to represent Griswold at SCRPA.

**B.** Discussion of current status of Griswold Self-Storage Facility.

D. Sorrentino explained that this was an administrative question regarding the lack of any site plans that have been approved for this item. He stated that Zoning Permit 02-03 is on the agenda as an amendment for Phase II for the January 9, 2006 regular meeting. There was discussion of this matter to include the addition in the regulations to the requirement of having signed Mylars for site plans.

**10. Reports from the Enforcement Officer:**

**11. Adjournment:**

G. Rooke-Norman stated that there was no other business to come before the Commission. She asked for a motion to adjourn. C. Seaman made a motion to adjourn. P. Anthony seconded the motion. All were in favor. This meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Donna M. Szall  
Recording Secretary