



TOWN OF LEDYARD

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Ledyard, CT 06339-1511

Legislation Details (With Text)

File #: 22-726 **Version:** 1 **Name:**
Type: General Discussion **Status:** Filed
File created: 11/3/2022 **In control:** Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee
On agenda: 3/6/2023 **Final action:** 3/6/2023
Title: Discussion regarding the appropriate mechanism to provide information to residents pertaining to the structure and operation of land use processes in the Town of Ledyard.

Attachments:

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
3/6/2023	1	Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee	Completed	
2/6/2023	1	Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee		
12/5/2022	1	Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee	Continue	
11/7/2022	1	Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee	Continue	

AGENDA REQUEST GENERAL DISCUSSION ITEM

Subject:

Discussion regarding the appropriate mechanism to provide information to residents pertaining to the structure and operation of land use processes in the Town of Ledyard.

Background:

LUPPW Cmt Meeting 10/3/2022: A resident addressed recent land use developments in town, such as the former Dow Chemical Site; the Liquor Store in the former Veterinarian Building on Route 12, the new Bark N' Brew, or the Dollar General Store going in next to the McDonalds.

The resident noted in attending the Planning & Zoning Meetings he realized that most people in town have no understanding of *Land Use Regulations, Land Use Statutes, how things were done, who had the authority, what the Mayor's role was, what the Town Council's role was, what was the role of the myriad of Land Use Commissions and Boards, and who had the final say.*

It was suggested that the town teach residents about *Land Use*.

Based on the resident's suggestion the LUPPW Committee agreed to discuss how to get information out to residents pertaining the process to address land use matters at their November 7, 2022 meeting.

Department Comment/Recommendation:

(type text here)

Meeting Action Detail:

Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee Meeting 03/06/2023:

File #: [22726](#) Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title: Discussion regarding the appropriate mechanism to provide information to residents pertaining to the structure and operation of land use processes in the Town of Ledyard.

Action: Remove from Agenda

Minute Note:

Councilor Paul noted that the Land Use Director Juliet Hodge attended the Community Relations Committee's February 15, 2023 meeting. He stated that Ms. Hodge would be working to prepare a presentation for an Informational Forum. He stated the Community Relations Committee would be providing some questions to Ms. Hodge to address during the presentation to pre-empt some general/common land use questions such as: "*what the process was to build a deck, put in a swimming pool, put on an addition*", etc. He went on to note that they would also like to include some FAQ about the approval process for commercial development as well. He stated as they did with the Public Works Informational Presentation, that they would like to post the Land Use Presentation video and FAQ Sheet on the town's website, the meeting portal, and that it could also be linked to social media pages. He stated the timeline would be mid to late-spring, noting that the Land Use Department was currently short-staffed.

The LUPPW Committee agreed by consensus to remove this item from their Agenda noting that the Community Relations Committee has taken the lead to provide Informational Presentations to the Community regarding the many programs and services the town offers, and about the operations, processes, and the workings of the town.

Action: Remove from Agenda

Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee Meeting 02/06/2023:

File #: [22726](#) Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title: Discussion regarding the appropriate mechanism to provide information to residents pertaining to the structure and operation of land use processes in the Town of Ledyard.

Action: Continued

Minute Note:

Councilor Paul stated the Community Relations Committee planned to work with Land Use Director Juliet Hodge to coordinate and schedule an Informational Presentation sometime around April/May, 2023. He noted that the Community Relations Committee was working to keep the Presentation on point/topic by developing a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) such as: (1) What was the process to obtain a permit to build a deck on my house, (2) What was the process to building a swimming pool; (3) What was the process to build a shed on their property; etc.

Councilor Rodriguez commented on the importance to have the Land Use Informational Presentation noting that residents had a lot of questions on things such as the Dollar Store in Gales Ferry or why the town had six liquor stores in town.

Councilor Paul addressed the importance to structure the Land Use Informational Presentation so that it would address the Land Use Processes, noting that the Land Use Decisions were based on the Zoning Regulations, state statutes and other governing documents. He stated as they did with the Public Works Department's Presentation that the video for Land Use Presentation could be posted on the town's website and on social media sites, such as facebook, etc. He went on to state by posting the video and Frequently Asked Questions on various sites that residents could be directed to watch the video or read the FAQ when they had questions. He stated the hope was that a lot of people would attend the Land Use Informational Presentation in person. However, he stated for those who could not attend, that the Presentation would be recorded and available after the meeting.

Action: Continued

Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee Meeting 01/09/2023:

File #: [22726](#) Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title: Discussion regarding the appropriate mechanism to provide information to residents pertaining to the structure and operation of land use processes in the Town of Ledyard.

Action: Continued

Minute Note:

Councilor Paul stated at the LUPPW Committee's October 3, 2022 meeting they heard comments from a resident regarding the Land Use process and the approval process. He went on to state that they also discussed the importance for residents to understand the complexities of Land Use noting that it involved Regulatory, State Statutes, the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), etc. He stated in response to the citizen's comments the LUPPW Committee began to discuss the appropriate mechanisms/platform to get this type of information out to residents.

Councilor Paul went on to state the Community Relations Committee planned to work with Land Use Director Juliet Hodge after the holidays to coordinate and schedule an Informational Presentation sometime around April/May, 2023. He stated at their December 21, 2022 meeting the Community Relations Committee planned to develop a list of questions and topics to keep the Presentation on point/topic.

Action: Continued

Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee Meeting 12/05/2022:

File #: 22726 Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title: Discussion regarding the appropriate mechanism to provide information to residents pertaining to the structure and operation of land use processes in the Town of Ledyard.

Action: Continued

Minute Note:

Councilor Paul stated at the LUPPW Committee's October 3, 2022 meeting they heard comments from a resident regarding the Land Use process and the approval process. He went on to state that they also discussed the importance for residents to understand the complexities of Land Use noting that it involved Regulatory, State Statutes, the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), etc., and they discussed a mechanism to get this type of information out to residents.

Councilor Paul went on to note the awesome Informational Presentation that Public Works/Town Engineer Steve Masalin provided at the Committee's November 16, 2022 meeting; and he stated the Community Relations Committee discussed doing something similar to assist the Land Use Departments get information out to residents. He stated as they did for the Public Works Presentation that they could post the meeting video on the town's website for residents to view at a later time or to revisit if they had subsequent questions. He also stated that the LUPPW Committee previously suggested the Land Use Departments draft a *Frequently Asked Questions* (FAQ) that could be posted on the town's website as well and shared on social media pages.

Councilor Paul stated the Community Relations Committee planned to work with Land Use Director Juliet Hodge after the holidays to coordinate and schedule an Informational Presentation sometime before May, 2023.

Councilor Rodriguez noted that the Parks & Recreation Informational Presentation that was held on April 11, 2022 was also excellent. She went on to comment that it was disappointing that the two Informational Presentations were not well attended.

Action: Continued

Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee Meeting 11/07/2022:

File #: [22726](#) Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title: Discussion regarding the appropriate mechanism to provide information to residents pertaining to the structure and operation of land use processes in the Town of Ledyard.

Action: Continued

Minute Note:

Chairman Dombrowski stated at the LUPPW Committee's October 3, 2022 they heard comments that residents were not sure how the land use process worked regarding permits; the approvals, and who decided what business could come into town. He stated the developments that were specifically mentioned was the Dollar General Store and the Cashman Project on Route 12, Gales Ferry. He stated because the Cashman Project has not submitted any Permit Applications to the town, that there was nothing for the town to comment on at this time. He also mentioned that residents have questioned why the town allowed a Dollar General Store and that they did not try to facilitate other stores such as a *Trader Joes* or a similar type of business.

Councilor Rodriguez stated that there was a misconception that residents think the Town Council has some authority regarding land use matters, which they do not. Chairman Dombrowski agreed, noting that per state statute that the Town Council has no authority regarding zoning matters.

Land Use Director Juliet Hodge stated she tries to answer questions as they come in. She noted that she recently attended the Ledyard Rotary Meeting to explain the land use process regarding the Cashman Development at the former Dow Chemical Property on Route 12, in Gales Ferry to try to get the word out to the community. She stated that she would be willing to attend other groups to answer questions as well.

Chairman Dombrowski stated in 2012 and again in 2019 Councilor McGrattan worked with former Library Director Gale Bradbury to facilitate a "*Know Your Town Program*" which invited residents to visit various Departments during the evening hours each week to become familiar with town staff and to learn about the functionality of each Department. He noted that the week the Land Use Department was featured that the resident turnout was low.

Councilor McGrattan agreed with Chairman Dombrowski's recollection of the "*Know Your Town Program*" and resident's interest/participation, noting that there were a number of programs that no residents attended at all.

Chairman Dombrowski stated as Councilor Rodriguez mentioned, land use matters were outside of the Town Councils purview. However, he stated that perhaps the Town Council could help the Land Use Commissions facilitate a discussion.

Councilor Paul suggested the Land Use Commissions hold an Informational Meeting that residents could attend, where the Commissions and town staff could provide an overview of the land use processes.

Land Use Director Juliet Hodge explained that the time for residents to provide input was during the drafting/update of the Zoning Regulations. She stated if an Application meets the Zoning Regulations that it must be approved regardless of people's opinions. She went on to explain during an Application Public Hearing the Planning & Zoning Commission was looking to receive facts as to whether the Application met or did not meet the Zoning Regulations, noting that all of the Commission's decisions were fact driven and were not subject to opinion. She stated if residents did not want franchise business such as the Dollar General Store that they could have included something in the recent Zoning Regulations Update pertaining to commercial businesses in the Design District. However, she stated the Planning & Zoning Commission received very little public input during the work sessions and public hearings to update the Zoning Regulations.

The LUPPW Committee discussed ways to provide information to residents pertaining to the structure and operations of the Town's Land Use process which included posting a *Frequently Asked Question* (FAQ) Sheet uploading short videos on the town's website which would answer land use questions and could be linked to social media pages.

The LUPPW Committee and Ms. Hodge also discussed the challenge to attract development noting that Developers look at the demographics and they also consider the limited access to I-95 and I-395, noting to the west was Thames River, to the east was the Groton Reservoir, to the south was the US Navy Subbase, the Commissary and Stop & Shop; and to the north was Montville and Norwich with shopping grocery and retail shopping available.

Action: Continued (Next Meeting 12/5/2022)