



Legislation Text

File #: 22-940, **Version:** 1

AGENDA REQUEST GENERAL DISCUSSION ITEM

Subject:

- Informational Presentation regarding the Land Use processes relative to the approval of applications, to help residents understand the complexities involved relative to Regulatory, the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), etc.

Background:

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.

The developments that were specifically mentioned was the Dollar General Store and the Cashman Project on Route 12, Gales Ferry. Residents questioned why the town would allow 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.

Because land use matters were outside of the Town Council's purview, the Committee discussed helping the Land Use Commissions facilitate a discussion by holding an Informational Meeting to help residents learn about the structure and operations of how the town's the Land Use processes worked.

Also, discussed was posting a *Frequently Asked Question (FAQ)* Sheet and uploading short videos on the town's website, which would answer land use questions and could be linked to other social media pages.

Department Comment/Recommendation:

(type text here)

Meeting Action Detail:

Community Relations Committee Meeting 03/15/2023:

File #: [22940](#) Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title:

Informational Presentation regarding the Land Use processes relative to the approval of applications, to help residents understand the complexities involved relative to Regulatory, the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), etc.

Action: Deferred

Minute Note:

Councilor Paul noted at the LUPPW Committee’s March 6, 2023 that the Committee agreed to move this initiative to the Community Relations Committee.

Councilor Paul went on to note at their February 15, 2023 meeting the Community Relations Committee discussed with Land Use Director Juliet Hodge scheduling an Informational Forum to present to residents the Land Use processes relative to the approval of applications, in an effort to help residents understand the complexities involved as they relate to Regulatory, State Statutes, and the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), etc.

Councilor Paul suggested the Committee defer this discussion until Ms. Hodge was able to work the Informational Forum into her schedule.

Action: Deferred

Community Relations Committee Meeting 02/15/2023:

File #: [22940](#) Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title:

Informational Presentation regarding the Land Use processes relative to the approval of applications, to help residents understand the complexities involved relative to Regulatory, the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), etc.

Action: Continued

Minute Note:

- **Land Use Processes** - The Community Relations Committee discussed with Land Use Director Juliet Hodge the scheduling an Informational Forum in April or May, 2023 to present to residents the Land Use processes relative to the approval of applications, in an effort to help residents understand the complexities involved as they relate to Regulatory, State Statutes, and the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), etc.

Councilor Paul noted that the Community Relations Committee has been discussing the format of the Informational Forum and that they would like to include a segment addressing *Frequently Asked Question* (FAQ) that would answer 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 the Community Relations Committee 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. Councilor Marshall noted by recording the Informational Forums that the Committee would be creating a video library that residents could view when they had questions.

The Committee and Land Use Director Juliet Hodge noted residents often ask questions such as why the town cannot attract a Trader Joes or Starbucks; or why they let the Dollar General Store open in Gales Ferry, noting the importance for residents to understand the land use process. They also discussed the limited availability of commercial property, low traffic count for marketing, proximity/location bordering the Thames River, etc.

The Group also discussed with Land Use Director Juliet Hodge the importance to publicize the Informational Forum and to ask people to submit questions in advance so that they can be addressed during the Informational Forum.

Councilor Paul suggested in preparation for the Land Use Informational Forum that they use the Community Forum to ask residents what land use questions they had.

The Committee agreed that they would like to provide the Land Use Informational Presentation in April or May, 2023.

The Committee thanked Land Use Director Juliet Hodge for attending tonight's meeting. Ms. Hodge left the meeting at 6:58 p.m.

Action: Continued

Community Relations Committee Meeting 01/18/2023:

File #: [22940](#) Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title:

Informational Presentation regarding the Land Use processes relative to the approval of applications, to help residents understand the complexities involved relative to Regulatory, the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), etc.

Action: Continued

Minute Note:

The Committee discussed the following topics for Informational Forums:

- Land Use Processes - Councilor Paul noted that the Land Use Department was currently short-staffed; and due to vacation schedules he has not had the opportunity to meet with Land Use Director Juliet Hodge to talk about the details of holding an Informational Forum to present to residents the Land Use processes relative to the approval of applications, to help residents understand the complexities involved relative to Regulatory, the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), etc.

Councilor Paul went onto state that the Community Relations Committee had also discussed including a *Frequently Asked Question* (FAQ) Sheet as part of the Presentation that would answer general land use questions, noting the FAQ Sheet could be posted on the town's website, the meeting portal, and be linked to social media pages.

The Committee agreed that they would like to provide the Land Use Informational Presentation in April or May, 2023.

Action: Continued

Community Relations Committee Meeting 12/21/2022:

File #: [22940](#) Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title:

Informational Presentation regarding the Land Use processes relative to the approval of applications, to help residents understand the complexities involved relative to Regulatory, the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), etc.

Action: Continued

Minute Note:

Councilor Paul stated based on some of the new developments in Gales Ferry such as the Dollar General Store and the Cashman Marine Dredging at the former Dow Chemical property, that residents have been questioning the Land Use process and approvals. He noted at their November 16, 2022 meeting the Community Relations Committee discussed working with the Land Use Departments to put together a presentation to help residents understand the Land Use processes relative to the approval of applications, etc. He noted the Informational Presentation that Public Works/Town Engineer Steve Masalin provided at the Committee's November 16, 2022 was awesome; and that it was unfortunate that it was not well attended. However, he stated the video was available on the town's website. He stated when residents raise questions regarding snowplowing or mailboxes and other Public Works matters that they could be directed to the video presentation on-line. He went on to state that the Committee could do something similar to assist the Land Use Departments get information to residents pertaining to the structure and operations of the Town's Land Use process.

The Community Relations Committee discussed the complexities of Land Use stating that it involved Regulatory, State Statutes, the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), etc., noting that Land Use matters were not discretionary; an Application either met the Regulations or it did not meet the Regulations.

Councilor Saums suggested that the Land Use Informational Presentation be focused on the structure, process, and operation and that they not get into addressing address specific developments such as Dollar General Store and the Cashman Marine Dredging at the former Dow Chemical property. He stated the Presentation should help residents understand the process to put an addition on their home, build a deck, put in a new driveway, subdivisions, as well the process for how commercial businesses, in general, were approved.

Councilor Paul stated the video of the Land Use Informational Presentation along with a *Frequently Asked Question* (FAQ) Sheet to answer general land use questions could be posted on the town's website, the meeting portal, and it could also be linked to social media pages. He noted that the Land Use Department was currently short-staffed; and therefore, he suggested waiting until the after the holidays to begin working with Land Use Director Juliet Hodge on this initiative. The Committee agreed that they would like to provide the Land Use Informational Presentation before May, 2023.

Action: Continued