

**Hartford Planning Commission
Community Meeting
Proposed QCR Zoning District
1/25/21
Draft Minutes**

Attendance: The following individuals attended a remote community meeting on Monday, January 25, 2021. Chair Bruce Riddle called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Bruce read the Act 92 open meeting script.

Planning Commission Members: Dillon Bianchi, Dennis Brown, Toby Dayman, Robin Adair Logan, John Reid, Dave Sherman and Chair Bruce Riddle.

Zoning Board of Adjustment Members: Tom Franklin.

Selectboard Liaisons: Zoning Board of Adjustment Liaison Emma Behrens,

Staff: Planning and Development Director Lori Hirshfield, Zoning Administrator Jo-Ann Ells and Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Members of the Public: David Izzo, Ann O’Haus, Brett Long, Adrienne Sass, Ken Sturm, Justin Dumoulin, Jonathan Duncan, Edward Rollins, T. Pitts and Richard ?.

Possible Zoning Change from Highway-Commercial (HC) to Quechee Commercial/Residential (QCR): Matt Osborn reported that during the 2019 Town Plan community forums, we heard strong support for mixed-use development in Hartford and to rethink strict segregation of uses. We have since heard from property owners interested in residential and mixed-use projects.

Matt noted that the Highway-Commercial district does not allow mixed-use development or residential uses. The Planning Commission and staff are considering adding residential and mixed-uses to the area currently zoned as Highway/Commercial (HC) in Quechee. The HC zoning district includes Route 4 at the junction of Waterman Hill Road. The HC district also includes the west side of Cross Street and West Gilson Avenue. The proposal includes changing the designation to “Quechee Commercial/Residential (QCR).” The QCR zoning district would make single-unit dwellings, two-unit dwellings, multi-unit dwellings and mixed-use (residential and commercial development) conditional uses. Other proposed changes include moving some permitted uses to the conditional use side or eliminating the use all together. Other changes include:

Moving from Permitted Use to Conditional Use

1. Hotel/Motel/Inn
2. Medical Clinic 10,000 square feet or more
3. Museum 10,000 square feet or more
4. Nursing Care Facility
5. Public Assembly Facility 10,000 square feet or more

Eliminating the following Uses

1. Hospital/Medical Center
2. Warehouse

Matt Osborn went through the Conditional Use Permit criteria. He clarified that if single-unit and two-unit dwellings are made a permitted use, Planning Commission approval would not be required. It would only require a zoning permit issued by the Zoning Administrator.

Bruce Riddle asked the Planning Commission if they had comments.

Dennis Brown stated that he would like to see single-unit, two-unit and multi-unit dwellings as a permitted use. Robin Adair Logan and Toby Dayman stated that they agree with Dennis.

Dave Sherman stated that he supports the proposal as presented. Dillon Bianchi and John Reid agreed.

Bruce Riddle asked the public for their feedback on the QCR proposal.

Adrienne Sass, a resident of 116 West Gilson Avenue stated that she doesn't think the current HC zoning is appropriate for the West Gilson area. She stated that she lives in a historic single-family residence. She is concerned that the proposal still has the same risk of uses. She added that an apartment building on West Gilson Avenue is not appealing to her.

David Izzo noted that there are residential uses in the current HC zoning district. He asked about their non-conforming status. Lori Hirshfield responded that they are considered legal non-conforming uses.

Brett Long asked what the impetus of the proposed changes. Matt Osborn responded that in 2007, the area was zoned Industrial Commercial (IC). With the 2007 Town Plan update, the Planning Commission and Town Plan Steering Committee felt the classification had many uses that were not appropriate to the area and changed it to Highway Commercial. With the 2019 Town Plan update, there was strong support for mixed-use development. Since then, we have received inquiries from several property owners about mixed-use and residential development.

Emma Behrens, Selectboard liaison to the Zoning Board of Adjustment, supports adding residential uses to the zoning district.

Ken Sturm asked if the Town has considered tax abatement to encourage residential development. Lori Hirshfield responded that in Vermont, tax stabilization is tied to commercial development and not residential development. She said staff can look into it further.

Lori Hirshfield noted that conditional uses are established since it recognizes that not all locations would work for certain uses.

Zoning Board of Adjustment member Tom Franklin stated that adding residential uses to the zoning district will add to the character of the area.

Ann O'Haus likes the idea of allowing single-unit and two-unit dwellings as a permitted use.

Edward Rollins of 220 West Gilson Avenue thinks the proposal makes sense. He noted that his property is currently split by the HC and R-3 zoning districts. He noted that his property was once a dairy farm. The large barn on the property is in excellent shape and he would like to see it used for an adaptive re-use. He would like to see the entire parcel located within the QCR zoning district.

David Izzo stated that he sees the area as more residential and urges the Planning Commission to look 20-30 years out from now.

At the conclusion of public comment, Bruce Riddle stated that the proposed QCR is a complex zoning district. He prefers keeping residential as conditional use since it provides an opportunity for additional review. Dennis Brown responded that he thinks the proposed QCR zoning district should be consistent with the proposed HCR zoning district. Bruce responded that he doesn't see the need for the zoning districts to be consistent with other districts.

Bruce Riddle asked Matt to discuss the required Planning Commission Report for the proposed QCR district. Matt gave an overview of the report.

Next Steps: Robin Adair Logan asked if the Planning Commission should hold another meeting to consider the changes to the proposed QCR zoning district. Matt Osborn responded that the Planning Commission should be comfortable with the proposal before moving forward with the formal zoning amendment process. He suggested holding a Planning Commission workshop on Monday, February 1st at 5:30 p.m. The Planning Commission agreed.

Matt Osborn described the zoning amendment process. It will require a minimum of one public hearing with the Planning Commission and a minimum of one public hearing with the Selectboard. Notices regarding the zoning changes must go out to the Planning Commission chair of adjoining towns, the Regional Planning Commission and the Department of Housing and Community Development. Each public hearing will require a 15-day notice and needs to be advertised in a local newspaper and posted at the normal posting locations. Matt noted that the process normally takes 2-3 months depending on whether changes are made to the zoning amendment which would require additional public hearings.

Adjournment: John Reid made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Dave Sherman and approved 7-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.