

**TOWN OF SALEM
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2019 – 7:00 P.M.
SALEM TOWN HALL – CONFERENCE ROOM 1**

PRESENT

Ruth Savalle, Chair
Vernon Smith, Vice Chair
John Gadbois, Secretary
Terri Salas
Diba Khan-Bureau, Alternate (*seated*)
LaVan Norwood, Alternate (*seated*)

ABSENT

Margaret Caron
David Miller
Eric Wenzel
Ray Gionet, Alternate

ALSO PRESENT

Town Planner Justin LaFountain
Selectman Liaison David Kennedy

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Savalle called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SEATING OF ALTERNATE(S):

Alternate Member Commissioners Khan-Bureau and Norwood were seated for Full Member Commissioners Caron and Wenzel, respectively.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Roy Wolstenholme, 20 Salem Ridge Drive, a longtime Salem resident, reported on the presence of five to six vehicles, at any given time, on the property located at 19 Salem Ridge Drive. He believes that no one is residing in the home and the air conditioner appears to be running 24/7. Though he was told not to do so, he has entered onto the property and, upon inspection, determined that two of the vehicles are not drivable, is full of garbage, and is odorous. It appears that the owner has a license to work on the vehicles and has noticed that the vehicles are moved from time to time; his main concern lies with the two, seemingly, undrivable vehicles in the front. He has contacted and spoken with the Uncas Health District, both the former and current Zoning Enforcement Officers numerous times, and one of the former Resident State Troopers – all of whom are unable to handle the matter legally. The backyard is fenced and he is unsure as to what kind of activity, if any, is occurring behind the fence. He feels that the property owner might be engaged in some suspicious activity and is becoming increasingly concerned that the property is becoming a health hazard and will eventually result in the decline of the neighborhood's property

values. The lawn, he added, is being maintained and the owner appears to be visiting and departing from the home during the morning.

Town Planner LaFountain, who was not familiar with the complaint, stated that he will speak with the Zoning Officer regarding the complaint.

4. PUBLIC HEARING: *none*

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S):

a) Regular Meeting Minutes July 16, 2019

M/S/C: Smith/Salas, to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of July 16, 2019.

Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0-1. Voting in Favor: Commissioners Khan-Bureau, Norwood, Salas, Savalle, and Smith. Voting in Abstention: Commissioner Gadbois.

M/S/C: Smith/Khan-Bureau, to move Item 7, New Business, to precede Item 6, Old Business, on the Agenda. Discussion: Vice Chairman Smith recommended they Commission switch the two items allowing Presenter Andrew Nyman to depart from the meeting following his presentation should he wish to do so. Voice vote, 6-0.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a) Presentation Regarding Existing Tree Conditions – Andrew Nyman

Commissioner Khan-Bureau introduced her former student Andrew Nyman, who is currently studying Civil Engineering at the University of Connecticut. Mr. Nyman provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the study, which was conducted by a group of students under the guidance of Tom Worthley, Associate Extension Professor at the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service and the University of Connecticut Department of Natural Resources and the Environment, and Commissioner Khan-Bureau. The study was conducted to determine the condition of the trees, many of which have been killed due the recent years' gypsy moth infestations, located along the Salem Multipurpose Trail. Following a physical review of the area and its inhabitants in October of 2018, the students utilized the information that was gathered and, along with ArcGIS and Google Earth, created a rough grid layout over the area in question, plotted the dead canopies, and determined that roughly 6% of the forest canopy died in 2016, based upon the date of the Google Earth map that was utilized. It is estimated that the 2018 Google map will reflect that approximately 12% or under 50 trees have been completely destroyed due to the infestation. A brief history of the gypsy moths, a non-native species, was provided and the inability of the trees to sustain the prolonged periods of drought and repetitive defoliation by the moths was discussed. In addition, the resulting declining condition of the trees is further exacerbated as the trees become more susceptible to Armillaria or Shoestring Root Rot. An additional culprit which arose due to the drought is the Two-Lined Chestnut Borer. Fortunately, the area has experienced a wet season, which activates a fungus infecting the gypsy moths, drastically

reducing their numbers. It is recommended that those declining or dead trees located along the trail be cut down to protect those who visit and enjoy the trail.

The chances of a tree that has been defoliated for two years or more to return to life would be unusual. It was noted that the death of the trees within the forest environment is part of its natural process and will allow for new growth to flourish and would promote the diversity of species. There were, in fact, a number of oak seedlings that were viewed during their visual assessment of the area. It is unknown as to the percentage of defoliated oak trees that reside in the forest. While the trees might be used for firewood, the sawmills would, most likely, not be interested in harvesting the trees as they have been sitting in their current, disintegrating state for a long period of time. The primary concern is that of falling trees, rather than the trees catching fire. Mr. Nyman estimated that the entire mapping process took approximately 12 to 18 hours and other methodologies, including the usage of drones, could be used to determine the exact percentage of the canopy that has been affected.

The Commissioners thanked Mr. Nyman for his hard work and presentation.

7. OLD BUSINESS

a) Continued Discussion Regarding Potential Areas of Zoning Regulation Review/Revision

The Commissioners reviewed and discussed the proposed changes to Section 17 – Administration, as drafted. One of the most notable changes includes the deletion of Sections 17.4.2 to 17.4.5, regarding the recording of notices of violations on land records and confusing and/or inaccurate statements, including the allowance for a violation to be contested before the Planning & Zoning Commission, rather than the Zoning Board of Appeals by whom all appeals are heard. It was agreed that the Commission should be informed of any violations as part of the monthly Zoning & Wetlands Enforcement Officer's reports. Several sections were deleted and new sections were added, providing details of more common zoning enforcement practices, and verbiage was clarified and simplified. Town Planner LaFountain stated that the Commission could review the revisions more carefully and propose and discuss any additional revisions at the Public Hearing.

M/S/C: Smith/Khan-Bureau, to approve and send the proposed revisions to Section 17 of the Salem Zoning Regulations to the Public Hearing scheduled for Tuesday, September 17, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

Commissioners Savalle and Smith expressed their appreciation to Town Planner LaFountain and requested that the ZEO submit a monthly report to the Commission regarding any Zoning activity.

8. ZONING ENFORCEMENT OFFICER'S REPORT/INLAND WETLANDS AND CONSERVATION COMMISSION REPORT

Town Planner LaFountain will speak with ZEO Matt Allen regarding providing a monthly report to the Commission. He will also inquire as to the status of the permit for Salem Farms

Campground and whether the quarry located on East Haddam Road experienced a change of ownership and DBA name change.

9. TOWN PLANNER REPORT

Foxwoods Resort & Casino will be hosting a NSSA (Northeast States Sign Association) Sign Expo this Friday, August 23. Neither his office nor he will be able to attend the Expo. The information, which he received through the Planning Listserv, will be forwarded to the Commissioners should they be interested in attending.

10. CORRESPONDENCE

a. A copy of the legal bill from the Town Attorney regarding enforcement matters.

11. PUBLIC COMMENT: *none*

12. PLUS DELTAS

Commissioner Smith commented on a good meeting. Commissioner Khan-Bureau agreed and commended Mr. Nyman on his presentation. Chairperson Savalle concurred and thanked Mr. Nyman for his hard work.

13. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: Smith/Khan-Bureau, to adjourn the meeting at 7:56 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Agnes T. Miyuki, Recording Secretary for the Town of Salem