

# **PLANNING BOARD MINUTES**

## **SPECIAL MEETING**

**October 2, 2008**

**Board members present:**

**Art Weber, Chairman   Ron Wolanski, Planning Director**

**Jan Eckhart, Vice Chairman   Frank Holbrook, Town Solicitor**

**Audrey Rearick , Secretary**

**Richard Adams**

**Gladys Lavine**

**Frank Forgue**

**Betty Jane Owen**

**The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.**

**1. Review PARE Corp. study (dated Sept. 3, 2008) to evaluate the impact of a proposed Zoning Ordinance amendment - Request of the Town Council for an advisory recommendation on a proposal to amend the Middletown Zoning Ordinance Section 603 regarding dimensional regulations (building height & building lot coverage) in the Office Park (OP) zoning district**

**Mr. Weber described the purpose of the meeting, which is to allow the consultant that provided a report on the impact of the proposed zoning amendments (PARE Corp.) to present the findings of the**

report and answer questions from the board. Public input will not be accepted, but will be allowed when the Board takes up the matter during its regular meeting on October 8th.

Pamela Sherrill, Principal Planner for PARE Corp., provided a summary of the procedures and findings of the study. She made the following points:

- The study was based on, and modified the results of the 2005 buildout study based on the proposed zoning amendments and assumptions.

- There is a low vacancy rate in the park.

- Shortage of larger (50,000 s.f.) spaces

- There is a mix of different uses in the park.

- 40-foot building height allows more design flexibility.

- Consideration must be given to the type of park the town wishes to promote. Larger footprints for R&D operations vs. office.

- Parking is the constraint in the park. Increased lot coverage to 45% has no impact due to parking and landscaping requirements.

Ms. Sherrill reviewed the results of the buildout analysis and the resulting tax revenue implications.

Mr. Weber asked about the discussion of structured parking, and Mr. Adams stated that the recommendations, which reference structure parking in relation to the building height, are confusing.

Ms. Sherrill stated that in order to accommodate the parking demand resulting from a 40-foot building, structured parking would likely be needed. The cost of structured parking could be prohibitive.

**Mr. Adams asked about the assumption that existing buildings would not be able to add floors due the structural constraints.**

**Ms. Sherrill sated that that assumption is consistent with the 2005 study, and is based on the age of the buildings, the possibility that they were not designed to support additional stories, and the disruption to existing operations resulting from such construction.**

**Mr. Eckhart asked about the possibilities of retrofit vs. demolition in the park.**

**There was discussion of the representative nature of the study, which focused only on lots were additions and demolition/reconstruction were seen as being more likely based on the assumptions. Mr. Wolanski stated that such activity could occur on any of the properties in the park.**

**Mr. Adams questioned Ms. Sherrill about the study's findings, including that the tax implications are insignificant, and the benefits of a 30' vs. 40' building. He also questioned whether a 30' building with larger footprint would be less likely to be LEED certified.**

**Ms. Sherrill stated that the tax implications are not as significant as she initially anticipated. The determination of marketability of 30 ft. vs. 40 ft. buildings are beyond the scope of the study, but the town must determine what it wants the park to be (office vs. R&D vs. warehouse).**

**Attorney David Martland, representing Gene Goldstein and other park property owners, asked if it is possible that an R&D operation would need ceiling heights exceeding 30 feet.**

**Ms. Sherrill stated that that is possible.**

**There was additional discussion of tax implications. Mr. Martland stated that the finding of minimal impact on tax revenues is based on only a sample of the lots and not the potential impact on the entire park.**

**There was additional discussion of parking.**

**Ms. Sherrill provided a memo containing industry standards for parking requirements. The Town could consider requiring alternative measures to manage parking demand and reduce the size of parking lots.**

**Ms. Lavine requested clarification of the impact on buildout potential. Mr. Weber asked if Attorney Greg Fater, representing residents of Ocean View Drive, had any questions regarding the study.**

**Mr. Fater asked if the town's parking requirements could be reduced to allow for larger building foot prints.**

**Ms. Sherrill stated that there are options for shared parking or parking demand management, though limited by the similar uses in the park.**

**Mr. Wolanski stated that the standards provided by Ms. Sherrill include a standard of 4 spaces per 1,000 s.f. of office space. The current Town standard is less than this at 3 spaces per 1,000 s.f.**

**Mr. Fater referenced the 2005 buildout analysis for the park and cited a statement regarding the need to consider impact on residents as the park is developed. He asked if the current study is consistent with that statement.**

**Ms. Sherrill stated that the statement in the 2005 study is still valid.**

**Mr. Martland asked if the desirability of interior space of a large-footprint building was considered.**

**Ms. Sherrill stated that it was not.**

**Mr. Martland asked if the land value was considered in the evaluation if tax implications.**

**Ms. Sherrill stated that it was not as the land values in the park appeared to be consistent.**

**Mr. Martland stated that the study found a range of per square foot assessments based on the current use of a building, but the estimated of tax impact was based on a blending of the assessments.**

**Ms. Sherrill stated that this was an assumption of the study and the use of the properties would ultimately dictate assessments.**

**Mr. Eckhart asked if the buildout potential were not limited by requirements such as parking or landscaping, which scenario would provide for more buildout.**

**Ms. Sherrill stated that that calculation was not completed, but she believed that the current 40' height limit, with the 35% lot coverage would allow for greater buildout potential.**

**Mr. Martland requested that the Board ask Mr. Hively of Ninigret Partners to attend the October 8th meeting in order for him to address the questions of market preference regarding the proposed amendment.**

**Motion by Ms. Rearick, seconded by Mr. Adams, to adjourn. Vote: 7-0-0**

**The meeting adjourned at 7:20pm**