

**SUFFIELD PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
July 19, 2021**

Present: Mark Winne, Chairman
Donald Rawling, Vice Chairman
Ginny Bromage, Secretary
Brendan Malone
Tracy Hespelt
Erin Golembiewski

Absent: Jeff Girard, Alternate
Leon Litvak, Alternate
Ross Wilcox, Alternate

Also Present: Bill Hawkins, AICP, Director of Planning & Development
Karen Isherwood, P.E., Town Engineer
Ellie Binns, Administrative Assistant

The proceedings of this video/teleconference meeting were recorded and made available on the Town website, along with all of the application materials.

I. ROLL CALL

Chairman Winne called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. as a hybrid meeting with five commission members in person and one member on the video/teleconference call. Mr. Winne called the roll, and all full members were in attendance.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

III. PUBLIC HEARING - None

IV. OLD BUSINESS - None

V. NEW BUSINESS

File # 2021-4: Request for a site plan modification for Phases 2-5 of a hydroponic tomato commercial greenhouse operation located 268 Poole Road. Map 24, Block 26, Lot 91 & Map 29, Block 26, Lot 39. Applicant, Four Season Farm.

Mr. Rawling recused himself from this portion of the meeting and there were no alternates at the meeting to be appointed in his place.

This application had been tabled at the June 21st meeting at the request of the applicant so that a permit from the Conservation Commission would be addressed first. Jay Ussery of J. R. Russo & Assoc., LLC. presented the application on behalf of Four Season Farm, giving an explanation of what has transpired since the approval of the first phase was given on February 22, 2016. The

Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) is requiring that all five phases of the plan be reviewed which caused the applicant to design the full build-out after the town approvals were given. Also, the utility companies need to know the facility's usage for all phases of construction so Four Season Farm is asking for approval of all five phases. He noted that the Conservation Commission has approved this as a modification to their original 2016 permit. The property has been purchased by the applicant, and 40 acres of adjacent land has been deeded to the Suffield Land Conservancy which was a condition of the ACOE permit. The plan is for approximately 42.82 acres of greenhouse, of which 10.02 have already been approved in the Phase 1 approval. Kevin Sullivan, a consultant on the project, explained the operation of the greenhouses, and how they will be self-contained and interconnected. All activity will be within the greenhouses and support building until the product is loaded on trucks and shipped. He explained how there will be special curtains used to prevent heat and light from escaping and affecting the surrounding area, and there will be minimal noise since they are not using fans for air circulation. There will be an expansion of the parking lot from the 40 to 60 spaces to accommodate up to 80-90 employees at full build-out. Mr. Ussery noted that the truck traffic will be less than it was when the Baker nursery was in operation and will be box trucks rather than tractor trailers.

Mr. Hawkins then summarized his report for the record, which gave a detailed description of the existing and proposed conditions and contained pictures of the proposed greenhouses and support barn. He noted that the conditions of the original approval are still in effect for this application. Mr. Hawkins stated that the project is consistent with several goals, policies, and objectives that support farming activities as well as economic development in the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD). Specifically, this application maintains the existing commercial and industrial base while encouraging expansion, rehabilitation, and revitalization. The greenhouses will keep a farming use on land that has historically been used for agriculture and will add to the town's tax base.

Ms. Isherwood then read her report dated July 15, 2021, which reviewed site access, parking, emergency vehicle access, utilities, and drainage into the record. Ms. Isherwood recommended two conditions of approval for updated details on the final set of plans.

Ms. Bromage moved to approve File #2021-4 with the conditions as noted the Town Engineer's report dated July 15, 2021. The motion was seconded by Mr. Malone and approved unanimously 5-0-0.

Mr. Rawling entered back into the meeting.

VI. REPORTS

Chairman – None

Director of Planning and Development – Mr. Hawkins reviewed the memo he had sent to the First Selectman concerning Senate Bill SB 1201 – An Act Concerning Responsible and Equitable Regulation of Adult-Use Cannabis. In this memo, he summarized the cannabis legalization that took effect on July 1, 2021 and the types of licenses that will be available. The summary notes the regulations imposed by the State and options that municipalities have to

regulate these potential businesses. In addition, he discussed the possibility of enacting a moratorium so that the Commission can study the appropriate regulations they might want to put in place. Commission members discussed if the Planning and Zoning Commission would be the proper regulatory agency or if an ordinance enacted by the Board of Selectman would be more appropriate. There was discussion about addressing the needs of growers or retailers and it was noted that the State of Connecticut will be imposing many regulations as it stands. The Commission and staff will continue to monitor this new legislation and how other towns are addressing it.

VII. MINUTES

Mr. Malone moved to approve the minutes of the May 4, 2021 special meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Bromage and approved 4-0-2, with Ms. Golembiewski and Ms. Hespelt abstaining as they had not attended. Mr. Malone moved to approve the minutes of the June 21, 2021 regular meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Bromage and approved 4-0-2, with Mr. Rawling and Ms. Golembiewski abstaining as they had not attended. Mr. Malone moved to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2021 special meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Golembiewski and approved 5-0-1, with Ms. Hespelt abstaining as she had not attended.

VIII. CORRESPONDENCE - None

IX. ADJOURNMENT

With nothing further to come before the commission, Mr. Malone made a motion to adjourn at 8:46 pm. The motion was seconded by Ms. Golembiewski and approved 6-0-0.

Submitted,

Ginny Bromage, Secretary

cc: Assessor, Building Official, Conservation Commission, Selectmen, Town Clerk, Town Engineer, Zoning Enforcement Officer, Commission Counsel