

The Planning and Zoning Commission of the Town of Avon held a *GoToMeeting* on Tuesday, October 26, 2021. Present were Thomas Armstrong, Chair, Brian Ladouceur, Jr., Vice Chair, Lisa Levin, Mary Harrop, Joseph Gentile, Dean Hamilton, and Alternates Raz Alexe (did not sit), Drew Bloom (did not sit), and Elaine Primeau (sat). Absent was Peter Mahoney. Also present was Hiram Peck, Director of Planning and Community Development.

Mr. Armstrong called the meeting to order at 7pm.

PUBLIC HEARING

App. #4962 - Anna and Shane Leighton, owners, Anna Leighton, applicant, request for Special Exception under Section IV.A.4.q. of Avon Zoning Regulations to permit attached accessory apartment, 7 Linden Lane, Parcel 6370007, in an R40 Zone

Present was Shane Leighton, owner.

Mr. Leighton confirmed that he understands and accepts the conditions noted in the Staff Comments. He indicated that the accessory apartment would be used by both his parents and his wife's parents. He said that he will follow up with his builder to make sure that a closet is included in the building plans.

There were no further comments. The public hearing for App. #4962 was closed.

App. #4957 - Proposed amendment to Avon Zoning Regulations for creation of Housing Opportunity Zone (HOZ): Beacon Communities Development, LLC, applicant

App. #4958 - Twenty Security Drive, LLC, owner, Beacon Communities Development, LLC, applicant, request for Zone Change from IP to HOZ, 11.21 acres, 20 Security Drive, Parcel 3900020

App. #4959 - Twenty Security Drive, LLC, owner, Beacon Communities Development, LLC, applicant, request for 2-lot Resubdivision, 20 Security Drive, Parcel 3900020, in an IP (HOZ) Zone

Also heard at this time but not part of the public hearing.

App. #4960 - Twenty Security Drive, LLC, owner, Beacon Communities Development, LLC, applicant, request for Site Plan Approval for 176 residential units, 20 Security Drive, Parcel 3900020, in an IP (HOZ) Zone

Present were Attorney Tim Hollister, Hinckley Allen; Dara Kovel, President/CEO, Gina Martinez, Senior Development Director, and Nicole Ferreira, Exec VP, Beacon Communities Development; Tom Daly, Consulting Engineer, and Dave Sullivan, Traffic Engineer, SLR Consulting; Michael Binette, AIA, and Andrew Stebbins, LEED AP, The Architectural Team (TAT); Monique Hall, landscape architect, Michael Kluchman, landscape architect, BSC Group; Chuck Coursey, community outreach, Coursey & Co.

Mr. Hollister stated that the regulation and zoning map were filed with the Town Clerk more

than 10 days ago; this was included in the supplemental materials submitted on October 18. The notices were published by the Town as required and the CT Water Company was notified and they replied that based on the plan that they have no expected comment on the application.

Mr. Hollister displayed a PowerPoint providing an architectural view of what is hoped to be achieved. He indicated that the subject property at 20 Security Drive is 17 acres located in the IP zone. The existing office building dates back about 50 years (originally occupied by Security CT Life Insurance). The seller has requested a ground lease, as they are retaining adjoining property that will remain in the IP zone. The lots resulting from the resubdivision will comply with the IP zone. The existing garage on the site is not part of the ground lease and remain with the 20 Security Drive property. A CREC School currently occupies this building and has since 2013; they will be relocating voluntarily when their lease ends in 2022. The subject proposal is a four-part application that will be presented all at the same time. The property will be resubdivided (App. #4959) into 11.2 acres that is the subject of the ground lease and five acres will be retained by the seller. Both parcels will be served by easements or cross easements (Town drainage easement has been identified on Route 44 side – all Town rights and easements will continue unaffected). The 11.2 acres will be rezoned (App #4958 – zone change) to the HOZ (housing opportunity zone – App #4957 regulation change). The last application is for site plan approval (App. #4960). He explained that all four applications are proposed under CGS 8-30g (Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals). As applied here, 8-30g provides that if a proposed residential development will be built and administered with government financial assistance which in this case is called the Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program and the applicant agrees to follow financing program rules regarding preservation of units for moderate and low income households then the development qualifies for assisted housing under 8-30g and the zoning commission is obligated to approve the application unless it has evidence that the development plan will cause “a substantial public health or safety concern that clearly outweighs the need for affordable housing in the Town” (which means the Town and surrounding region, per the courts) and those concerns cannot be addressed by reasonable changes to the site plan. There are no wetlands on the site. The AWPCA issued a conditional will serve letter relative to treatment capacity. A potential list of approval conditions has been created as a result of comments and questions received from Town Staff and Commission members. There is an existing permit/certificate from the State Traffic Authority that will need to be reexamined and revised. A sign permit will be needed. The Natural Diversity Database has been checked to confirm that there are no endangered species identified.

Mr. Hollister addressed the proposed regulation amendment (HOZ) noting that the format is modeled on existing Avon regulations including AHOZ. The HOZ regulation defines precisely what can and cannot be built on the subject site; it is site specific. The approval for this project is proposed via site plan and not via special exception, which is a more discretionary process and not really compatible with 8-30g. He explained that this is the model (regulation amendment, rezoning, and site plan) that has been followed in dozens of 8-30g applications across the State. The regulation is site specific because this development requires a combination of use and rules with affordability requirements. We did not want to task the Commission with having to look at a regulation that might be applicable elsewhere in Avon. A site specific regulation is not spot zoning. Avon’s AHOZ regulation does not work for this proposal because it is not 8-30g compliant.

Mr. Hollister stated that this proposal has multiple “green” features and amenities, energy efficiency, sustainability, pedestrian friendly features, and ADA accessibility. Avon is at 4.1% (304 units affordable out of total units 7,400) of the Department of Housing’s 10% list. There are no 8-30g compliant deed-restricted units in Avon. Rental units are at 14% and 28% of households spend more than 30% of income on housing. These numbers add up to a need for the type of housing proposed with this application. He concluded by noting that the Town is currently studying how to improve affordable housing stock adding that the hope is to address this need with the subject proposal.

Dara Kovel, Beacon Communities, continued the PowerPoint presentation noting that this site is a great opportunity to create quality housing close to the Town Center. Beacon Communities has been focused on mixed-income and affordable housing for the past 25 years with properties in 12 states and expanding into CT. Beacon Communities create beautiful and quality homes for people and manage their own properties well to ensure that a sense of community is created. Beacon is committed to “green” features and leaders in sustainable designs.

Gina Martinez, Beacon Communities, continued the PowerPoint noting that the subject proposal is a mix of one bedroom (800-850 sf) and two bedroom (over 1,000 sf) units. The plan is to build on the subject site in two phases and structure the financing of each phase around the creation of a mixed-income community. This approach will help maximize our score and financial resources. The proceeds awarded will be maximized by providing non-age restricted housing with a mix of ½ one bedroom and ½ two bedroom apartments. Income distribution will be to have a mix of 30% to 80% of area median income households with about 20% of the units targeted to market rate housing. Common amenities (lounge, kitchen, fitness center, business/remote work center, bicycle storage) will be provided for all residents regardless of income; the goal is to build communities. The first phase involves the reuse of the existing office building into 76 apartments.

Michael Binette explained that his firm (TAT) are residential architects and have created 150K units of housing in New England and up and down the eastern seaboard. He noted that The Residence at Brookside (117 Simsbury Road – Assisted Living) is also one of their developments. The existing building on the subject site lends itself very well to a residential conversion to create unique-styled apartments; the building is very deep and much larger than what would be built in new construction. He noted that in the existing building the one-bedroom units are in excess of 900 sf (average) and the two-bedroom units are in excess of 1,200 sf (average). The new building (just under 59’) is similar in height to the existing building (58’). The new building is complementary to the existing building while not being too much alike. A lot of natural buffering (mature trees) exists on the site that will remain intact. The new building sits on the existing parking lot. Traditional clapboards with wood trims and panels will be used along with awning windows for energy efficiency; sustainability is a key component for the entire project. The site is ideal for residents to feed local merchants and add vibrancy to Route 44. Buildings will be fully accessible per all State and Federal Regulations. Buildings will have fire sprinklers and fire alarms, per the latest technology; all Building and Fire Codes will be met. Top of the market amenities will be available in all units in the development. He addressed Schedule B (Affordability Plan) explaining that it is a requirement to ensure that every household feels the same in a mixed-income development; there is no differentiation in the level of finishes and quality or in the layouts or size of any of the units.

Tom Daly, PE, displayed the survey for the site noting that the development area is about 11 acres; the site is surrounded by commercial uses. The site has about 213 parking spaces near the existing building. There are wooded areas along the perimeter of the site (north, east, and west). There are no floodplain boundaries on the site and there are no natural biodiversity overlays. A small portion of the site is located in an Aquifer Protection Area but the area is unoccupied. There are some steep slopes at the perimeter but the center of the site is relatively flat. The site is served by both public water and sewer and there is existing storm drainage onsite but no stormwater or water quality features. The majority of the site drains to the south, where there is a natural depression near the existing parking garage. The access from Security Drive will remain but be refreshed with an ADA lit sidewalk installed on the eastern side of the drive. A crosswalk will be installed at the bottom of Security Drive where there is also expected to be a bus stop. A loop drive and well-balanced parking will exist around the perimeter of the new building; the existing building (refurbished with 76 units) is located to the north of the new building. The existing loading dock will be retained as a dumpster area. A small storage building is proposed to the north of the new building. A new access drive is proposed across the front of the existing building to provide for good circulation around the site; there will be parking along the access way as well as enhanced emergency access. Additional parking is proposed on the western edge of the site; total parking is 256 spaces (1 space per 1 bedroom; 2 spaces for 2 bedrooms). Fall lighting package; all will be LED with full cutoff. There are no activities within the Aquifer Protection Area. The AWPCA will have their engineering consultant review the downstream system. The existing building will continue to drain to the north (stormwater) and the drainage system to the east will be eliminated but the majority of the site will continue to drain to the south. Analysis has shown that there will be no net increase in peak runoff due to a proposed underground stormwater chamber system, located south of the new building. No groundwater or ledge was found and very good soils exist. Two water quality chambers will be installed and designed to DEEP standards. A detailed stormwater maintenance plan has been created as well as a detailed erosion control plan. Mr. Daly stated his professional opinion such that erosion is not believed to be significant on this site. The Town Engineer has indicated that the design is well thought out and any remaining details/issues can be worked out between the developer and Town Staff; the applicant has no problem addressing these comments. Mr. Daly concluded by noting that the presented design meets all standards for health and safety without any impact on Town facilities.

Monique Hall addressed landscape improvements (continuing the PowerPoint) as well as site amenities. The existing building is mostly obscured by trees along Route 44 and the new building will be very far from the road. The new building closely aligns to the existing footprint of the parking lot area. A large grove of existing trees in the center of the site will be protected in place to the extent possible, with the exception of the new road to be built in front of the existing building. A few trees will be removed on the northwest edge to provide a basketball court but the majority of trees in this area will be preserved. A short trail connection is proposed from the new building (five minute walk from either building) to the basketball court. The existing tunnel (under Route 44) is viewed as a connection to the Avon Village Center.

Nicole Ferreira addressed the tunnel and noted that they have talked to "Bike Walk Avon", who has an application with State DOT to put a mural in the tunnel; improved lighting in the tunnel is also being reviewed. The applicant will reach out to the DOT and try to secure funding to make the tunnel more attractive and safer.

Monique Hall addressed exterior amenities noting that the main one is a multi-use lawn that will serve as an anchor between the existing and new building. There is an existing mature oak tree worth preserving and to serve as a focal point for the lawn area. There will be grilling stations and ADA accessible picnic tables. The existing playground (west of the lawn area) will remain; the existing fencing will remain but the gates will be replaced to be ADA compliant. Three gates will have direct access to the new sidewalks. Interior and exterior bicycle storage will be provided as well as parking for electric vehicles at both buildings. A small community garden is proposed just south of the existing playground; a pollinator garden and native perennials are also proposed. Two fenced dog run areas with ADA compliant gates are provided. Outdoor seating areas (both dining and lounge) are also provided. Ms. Hall concluded by noting that there are grill stations and seating areas throughout the site.

David Sullivan addressed the traffic study; there are five study intersections from Security Drive driveway to the intersection of Security with Darling Drive and three intersections along West Main. State DOT provided traffic data for two of the intersections; it is difficult to get new counts during Covid. New counts were done over the summer to understand the travel patterns and the volume results for this analysis were approved by the Bureau of Policy and Planning. He referenced the traffic study impact report noting that estimated trips in morning peak hour are 63 trips (ITE Trip Generation manual used) and 77 trips in the afternoon peak hour. The site has a current OSTA certificate and the redevelopment of the site reduces traffic generation potential. The AM and PM overall intersection LOS are currently very good; however, along West Main Street there is currently some congestion during peak hours. Whatever the LOS are today will remain after the residential redevelopment. The turn lanes on Route 44 that currently have queueing issues are not exacerbated by this proposal and there are a couple of instances where the new volumes may create a marginal improvement. The areas where vehicles would be added to the queues there is available queue storage; no queueing issues in the corridor are created. Sightlines were reviewed for driveway at Security Drive and found to be acceptable. Application will be made soon to revise the current OSTA Certificate. Mr. Sullivan concluded by noting that the proposed redevelopment will generate a net reduction in total site trips; it is not expected to reduce the overall LOS; and the two critical queues that traffic will be added to will not be exacerbated.

Chuck Coursey, community outreach, explained that outreach is done to find out if a proposal can be made better. He said that the outreach will extend to the north to the Residence Inn and O'Neill's Car Dealership and to the south to Peachtree Village and to the west to 151 Darling Drive including Stub Pond and also to Avon Village Center. He said that a website (www.thehomesatavonpark.com) has been created to view this proposal and ask questions.

Mr. Hollister concluded the applicant's presentation by noting that PA 21-29 became effective October 1, 2021. This Public Act requires that zoning regulations must "affirmatively further" the purposes of the Federal Fair Housing Act, which is generally understood as promoting economic and racial diversity in housing such that the proposed regulation is compliant with the direction from the legislature. The proposed development will not be tax exempt; once built and occupied taxes will be paid. Avon needs approximately 150 points to qualify for a four-year moratorium on 8-30g (units must be built and C/O's issued). He indicated that the subject proposal (176 units, 80% affordable) should get Avon to the level of qualifying for a moratorium, if interested. A request for an application fee reduction has been made; the fee for

the site plan was \$35K and it is hoped that a compromise can be worked out with the Town. He thanked everyone for their time.

Mrs. Primeau noted her concern that there is only one egress from the site and asked if there is somewhere on site where an emergency access/exit could possibly be created. She asked if one could be created by widening the existing trail and adding a gate. She said that she hopes consideration could be given to use the same lighting as exists in the Town Center.

Mr. Hollister explained that there is an existing building on the site with one access point noting that the emergency vehicle/fire truck access at the existing building will be improved and the new building will have emergency access around the entire building. Both buildings will have fire sprinklers and other fire safety measures. He said that a lockable gate on the west or north side of the site would require enormous amounts of earth movement and tree clearing.

Tom Daly said that there are topographical constraints in that area; Darling Drive in that location is at 230 elevation and the basketball court is at elevation 274. Getting an emergency access in this area would require significant clearing and grading. Applicant is working with CT Water to loop the water main for Security Drive and Darling Drives to create access to both locations for water and working with the Fire Marshal for hydrant locations. A 24-foot access drive comes up the main driveway, which is equivalent to a Town road and plenty of room for trucks.

Mr. Ladouceur said it's a safety issue; the existing building is being increased to 76 apartments, which is more than doubled with the second building. We had that October storm years ago and roads were blocked. There will be fire sprinklers but there are other emergency vehicles that may need to get to the site with potentially 276+ people.

Mr. Hollister confirmed that emergency access will be reviewed further.

Mr. Ladouceur said that it seems like there are a disproportionate number of two bedrooms in the new building and asked why this changed from two months ago.

Dara Kovel acknowledged to Mr. Ladouceur that she is not sure about the information being recalled from the previous presentation but explained that the program for these buildings gets established aligned with State public policy. This property would always have been a split between one and two bedroom units. The State financing program requires more than 50% one bedrooms to qualify for funding. The final unit mix has not yet been determined but it will be close to 51% two bedrooms and 49% one bedrooms. There may be limitations due to the footprint of the existing building. She apologized if this wasn't made clear or if we misspoke at the initial presentation.

In response to Mr. Ladouceur, Mr. Hollister confirmed that assisted housing qualifies as "A" affordable towards the 4.11% Avon currently has. He explained that he believes the Department of Housing will count the market rate units as part of the assisted housing; the entire development is considered because it's a mix with government financing. The long term preservation time period depends on the rules of the financing program; it's not 40 years as it is with set-aside housing. It may be 20 years on the low side and something close to perpetuity on the high side.

Dara Kovel said that it hasn't been less than 30 years for a long time but right now it is 50 years, at a minimum, to be competitive, unless the State changes that.

Mr. Ladouceur asked if the length of preservation is one of the criteria that makes an application more likely to get a limited number of credits than a competing application. You are bidding for the number of units as well as the length of time.

Dara Kovel said yes and noted she could provide information relative to recent past credit applications to provide context for a 30-year time period.

Mr. Armstrong asked about phasing for the project; the existing building will be done first and then the new building added. He asked for a timeline and will the amount of affordable housing be the same in each phase.

Dara Kovel explained that the hope is to build everything at once; renovate the existing building and build the new building because it's less expensive to do at one time. The only constraints are the size of the financing awards allocated by the State; the existing building would be renovated first. The next financing application deadline is January 2022, which is impossible to make so the next application date is January 2023. If funding received in January 2023 construction on the first phase would begin at the end of 2023 and new construction would follow by a year with that same funding. Occupancy would likely be early to midyear 2025, as there is a 14 to 18-month construction period.

Mr. Hollister addressed lighting noting that the preferred light fixture mentioned by Mrs. Primeau will be looked at.

Ms. Levin asked for details on the need for the new regulation, as opposed to using the AHOZ regulation. She also asked if Beacon looks at other infrastructure support such as city buses; currently there are only two bus stops on Route 44. There is ample parking but asked whether it will all be needed (will people in two bedroom units have two cars).

Mr. Hollister addressed the regulations noting that they started off by reviewing the AHOZ regulation but explained that it is not 8-30g compliant, either as a set aside or assisted housing, because it's only 20% of the units but it doesn't address the assisted housing at all. AHOZ does not address Section 6 which he understands and believes the intent was to make the regulation applicable across the entire Town but the rule is to begin with the dimensional requirements of the underlying zone and the only way to change it is to go through the special permit/exception process. He said that he been successful over the past 30 years working with affordable housing and 8-30g in more than 60 towns using a site specific regulation (HOZ) that has a combination of affordability and dimensional and use rules applicable specifically defining what can and cannot be built on that site.

Mr. Armstrong asked that if the Commission doesn't like the wording in the HOZ regulation wouldn't there be enough under 8-30g to move forward unless the Commission found the proposal adversely affected health and safety.

Mr. Hollister explained that theoretically an 8-30g application can move forward without a

regulation but noted that it's been his practice to propose a regulation to end up with a conforming use and if an approval is granted the private financing source will ask him for an opinion as to whether the land is zoning compliant. If no regulation exists it's very difficult to explain to private bankers what 8-30g is all about. It's better planning and financial practice to have a governing regulation.

In response to Mr. Armstrong, Mr. Hollister said that the Commission has the right to propose changes to the HOZ regulation. If the applicant feels any proposed change(s) does violence to what is being proposed they will say so.

In response to Ms. Levin, Mr. Peck confirmed that the AHOZ regulation allows for a development to have more than 20% of the total units to be "A" affordable.

Mr. Hollister noted his understanding adding that his earlier point was that an 8-30g compliant regulation would allow at least 30% and he did not want to revise the AHOZ regulation. We decided to incorporate all the 8-30g requirements along with the dimensional rules, the financing, and affordability requirements in a single package.

In response to Mr. Armstrong, Mr. Hollister said he would provide information about the case that is not spot zoning.

Ms. Levin asked if adding bus service/stops along Route 44 has been looked into.

Dara Kovel confirmed that they have looked into adding more bus stops along Route 44 but noted that it is very difficult to do since it is beyond their jurisdiction but added they are always willing to keep trying.

David Sullivan explained that the only buses that run along Route 44 are CT Trans buses and it's a long haul line between Canton and Hartford; there's only one stop in this area. He said they have requested stops and are sometimes successful but most times are not successful.

Ms. Levin said adding a bus stop at Whole Foods would seem the most natural.

Mr. Sullivan agreed adding that they could reach out to OSTA.

Mrs. Harrop asked if there was a porte-cochere because the parking is quite a distance from the doors and are there more exits than just in the front and back. There is no covering for bad weather days for parents with children and groceries.

Michael Binette said that a true porte-cochere has not been anticipated due to the design of the buildings adding that there are multiple doors around the buildings allowing for quick access to the parking areas but noted that they could take another look at the proximity of the access points. He noted that the main entrances have canopies but they don't extend to the parking areas.

Tom Daly explained that currently there is no access way that goes in front of the existing building so a central corridor has been added to the site plan and will serve as a drop off area.

Mr. Armstrong said he wants to maintain some open space or preservation areas along Route 44 and the first part of Darling Drive. He asked for a pedestrian-controlled light at one of the cross walks for safety.

Mr. Hollister indicated that they would look at the area for conservation and noted his understanding on the pedestrian light.

In response to Mr. Armstrong, Ms. Kovel explained that historically the State has been focused on creating open occupancy housing providing access for younger families and professionals as well as retirees. There's a disincentive relative to financing to focus on older citizens but added that a mix of units results in quite a few active older adults (55+). State financing rules govern how properties can be marketed (no preferences allowed) but effort will be made to work with the Town's employers and senior center.

Mr. Armstrong asked that if an approval is granted whether it could be worded in a way such that we know it's going to happen because it would be mutually beneficial.

Mr. Hollister noted his understanding and agreement adding that if we go forward all the pieces would be executed at the same time but if we don't move forward, we will approach the Town to unwind the approvals that are not useful to us.

The hearing was open for public comment.

Peter Harrison, Briar Hill Road, noted that he is a member of DeSegregate CT, who is advocating for land use reforms. He noted that he grew up in Avon and is currently working to move back to Avon. He noted his strong support for this application noting that this type of housing is greatly needed in Avon and the Farmington Valley.

There were no further comments from the public.

In response to Mr. Gentile, Mr. Coursey indicated that he has reached out to many people already but is still in the process with some others; he noted that he is aware that Mr. Gentile is an abutter to the north. Mr. Gentile said that he doesn't think there has been a reach out to the properties/abutters to the north. Mr. Coursey said that he should have made initial contact with every abutter by the next day or so.

There were no further comments from the Commission.

Ms. Levin motioned to continue the public hearing for Apps. #4957, #4958, and #4959, to the next meeting, scheduled for November 16. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ladouceur and received unanimous approval.

Mr. Hollister indicated that he will prepare and submit final responses to the Town to all questions/comments received tonight prior to the next meeting.

The public hearing portion of the meeting was closed.

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEETING

App. #4962 - Anna and Shane Leighton, owners, Anna Leighton, applicant, request for Special Exception under Section IV.A.4.q. of Avon Zoning Regulations to permit attached accessory apartment, 7 Linden Lane, Parcel 6370007, in an R40 Zone

Mrs. Harrop motioned to approve App. #4962 subject to the following:

1. Applicant shall demonstrate compliance with all requirements of the Farmington Valley Health District, Building Department, and Fire Marshal prior to any construction activities.

The motion seconded by Ms. Levin, received approval from Mesdames Harrop and Levin and Messrs. Armstrong, Ladouceur, Hamilton, and Gentile.

OTHER BUSINESS

8-24 Referral – 503 West Avon Road

Mr. Peck reported that the Town is considering purchasing 503 West Avon Road, located across the street from Avon High School. There is no specific plan at this time for the use of the site and the house is very old and run down and possibly not salvageable. Mr. Peck indicated he could draft a motion for the Commission's approval noting the building's historic attributes. The final decision is that of the Town Council. This property is not mentioned specifically in the POCD but the Town Council is looking for a finding that this purchase would not be in conflict with the 2016 POCD.

Ms. Levin motioned to grant the 8-24 Referral for 503 West Avon Road, subject to language to be prepared by Mr. Peck to be approved by the Commission. Mrs. Harrop seconded the motion that received approval from Mesdames Levin and Harrop and Messrs. Armstrong, Ladouceur, Hamilton, and Gentile.

Stratford Crossing – Status Update

Mr. Peck reported that there will be a meeting with the developer next week to discuss the outstanding issues that have been discussed many times.

STAFF UPDATES

Avon Village Center Status (signage question)

Mr. Peck reported that the developer of Avon Village Center has asked for a large sign to be placed at the corner of West Main Street and Climax Road. The current sign regulations do not allow for this. The Commission can suggest that a revision be made to the regulations. The Commission could decide that a sign in that location is not desirable. Building R3 is not yet built or in the planning stages but its location would be at the corner of Climax Road and West Main (in the area of the aforementioned proposed sign). He explained that he is concerned about the location of the proposed sign and whether it would have an impact as to whether R3 would ever be built. Mr. Peck asked for feedback from the Commission.

In response to Mr. Armstrong, Mr. Peck explained that there is information in the sign regulations for businesses not visible from the main road but it's not clear enough to allow a large sign as just discussed. He noted that he told the developer that once the other side of Main Street is built there will be a lot of people going to see what's there but right now there isn't a lot

of traffic because there are only a couple of tenants.

Mrs. Primeau said that they can't put a sign in the location where a building is supposed to be (Building R3).

In response to Ms. Levin, Mr. Peck confirmed that all the signage allowed per the Regulations already exists at the corner of Route 44 and Climax Road.

Mr. Peck offered to get a sketch from the developers on what they have in mind for a sign and will provide it to the Commission before the next meeting.

Ms. Levin said that while she understands all the concerns she noted that she really wants to see all the tenant spaces occupied. There are a lot of vacant properties and no amount of marketing is going to help them fill the vacancies if the prospective tenants are saying that they want visibility with signs.

Mr. Bloom said that when a tenant decides to become part of something like Avon Village Center you are getting the value of being part of something big and it doesn't always constitute having a sign on the main road. Every business cannot have a giant billboard sign; Avon Village is supposed to be a destination.

Mr. Gentile noted his agreement with Mr. Bloom adding that he is opposed to changing the Regulations or allowing an exception for a large directory sign on the corner of Route 44 and Climax Road. They could maybe have directory signs inside the development.

Mr. Ladouceur said that the sign for the opening of Whole Foods should come down. We spent a lot of time on the Avon Village Center sign and the lighting; allowing a huge directional sign there would be an eyesore and would stop development of that corner which is still a possibility and also tax revenue. It's a destination that people go to knowing there are going to be multiple businesses. Future major tenants could maybe be allowed some lit lettering signage on the existing stone wall on Route 44.

Mr. Peck noted his understanding on all comments and will convey to the developer. He added that he will work with the State DOT to remove the "opening" sign for Whole Foods and will also address the "help wanted" signs.

Legislative Updates

Mr. Peck reported that the Town Attorney has indicated that she could attend the December meeting to discuss the updates.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:15pm

Linda Sadlon
Avon Planning and Community Development