

**TOWN OF SOMERS  
ZONING COMMISSION  
MINUTES - REGULAR MEETING**

**Monday, December 2, 2019 - 6:30 PM - Somers Town Hall**

**\*\*APPROVED AS AMENDED AT FEBRUARY 3, 2020 MEETING\*\***

CALL TO ORDER: Meeting was called to order at 6:35pm. Member present, Jill Conklin, Karl Walton, Paige Rasid, Lucas Cherry and Dan Fraro Also present, Jennifer Roy, Staff Liaison, Town Attorney Carl Landolina and Consulting Attorney Evan Seeman

NEW BUSINESS:

Karl Walton made a motion take the agenda out of order, and approve the October 7<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> minutes prior to the public hearing. Dan Fraro seconded, all in favor, motion carried.

Karl Walton made a motion to approve the minutes as received, with a correction to the October 21<sup>st</sup> minutes, correcting the spelling and address of Nancy Rodrigues to Nancy Rodriguez, 646 Hall Hill Road; and the October 7<sup>th</sup> minutes as written. Paige Rasid seconded, all in favor, motion carried.

Approval of 2020 meeting schedule. Karl Walton made a motion to accept the 2020 meeting schedule, with the change of moving the November meeting from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> due to election. Dan Fraro seconded the motion, all in favor, motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Jill Conklin read legal notice. For the record legal notice correction from “to all” to read “to allow”; Carl Landolina. Also, Attorney Landolina confirmed with the commission that they were opening all four public hearings simultaneously.

#19-012: Hillsdale College, 33 E College Street, Hillsdale, MI. Pursuant to section 214-98 B (3) of the Zoning regulations, applicant is seeking a Special Use Permit to all operation of a religious institution at 700 Hall Hill Road, Somers, CT.

#19-013: Hillsdale College, 33 E College Street, Hillsdale, MI. Pursuant to section 214-98 B (3) of the Zoning regulations, applicant is seeking a Special Use Permit to all operation of a religious institution at 708 Hall Hill Road, Somers, CT.

#19-014: Hillsdale College, 33 E College Street, Hillsdale, MI. Pursuant to section 214-98 B (3) of the Zoning regulations, applicant is seeking a Special Use Permit to all operation of a religious institution at 732 Hall Hill Road, Somers, CT.

#19-015: Hillsdale College, 33 E College Street, Hillsdale, MI. Pursuant to section 214-98 B (3) of the Zoning regulations, applicant is seeking a Special Use Permit to all operation of a religious institution at 740 Hall Hill Road, Somers, CT.

Paige Rasid made a motion to open the public hearing at 6:43pm, Karl Walton seconded, all in favor.

Attorney John Parks representing Hillsdale College, stated they have several speakers present to provide information to the commission on behalf of the applicant.

Jay Ussery, of J.R Russo & Associates to present information related to the site plans. Mr. Ussery explained the location of the properties, existing floor plan of the property located at 732 Hall Hill Road, and the surrounding roads and intersections. The stone barn on Mr. Blake's property located at 708 Hall Hill Road would be used as a chapel. Mr. Ussery explained that a traffic report would be forthcoming.

Mr. Ussery explained there would be parking to the rear of the property at the bottom of a slopes, and that the parking would not be seen from the road. Mr. Ussery further explained he does not feel there would be a very large impact on the traffic. They (Hillsdale College) only expects to have approximately ~~60-80~~ 30-80 people in attendance at any particular time or event. The events would primarily take place in the summer months, and be training for professors.

Attorney Ryan Walsh, representing Hillsdale College up next to speak. Attorney Walsh provided the commission with a binder, which included an appendix of representative documents, and a cover memorandum. The binder contains several sections related to the college. Attorney Walsh introduced other representatives present from Hillsdale College, not intending to speak but they are present should the commission have any questions for them; Doug Banberry, VP of Business Development, Michael Harner, Chief Staff Officer, Dr. David Wallen, Associate VP of Curriculum, Rich Payway, Chief Administrative Officer, Emily Stack Davis, Associate Director of Media and Communications, and Robert Norton, VP and General Counsel for Hillsdale College.

Attorney Walsh gave a power point presentation on the history of Hillsdale College, including their mission statement.

Attorney Parks presented documentation of standings for all four properties, including permission for inspections by town officials. Attorney Parks also presented contracts for purchase of two of the properties; 700 Hall Hill Road to close in January 2020, and 732 Hall Hill Road to close in January 2021.

Attorney Parks spoke further on the development of the four properties, explaining that there will be no dormitories, no undergraduates, and will be very non-intrusive.

Jill Conklin asked about the use of the 2 residential properties, they are currently single family dwellings, she was directed to page 8 of tab 1 in the binder. Attorney Parks explained staff will occupy the other properties. The Blake's will occupy their home part-time when not in Florida.

Lucas Cherry asked about a traffic study. Jay Ussery responded that they are working on one and it will be submitted to Jennifer Roy for distribution to the commission.

Attorney Carl Landolina reminded the commission that the town has an ordinance to allow the commission to engage a third party consultant to review the traffic study, fee to be paid by applicant. A discussion was held regarding the traffic study.

Jill Conklin called those in favor to come forward and speak.

1. Michael Bushior, 118 Rosehaven Road, Somers
2. Damien Cregias, Wethersfield
3. Dorothy Cutter, 14 Olmstead Manor Drive, Somers
4. Linda Louis LaCasse, 87 Main Street, Somers

Jill Conklin called those in opposition to come forward and speak.

1. Kerry Geib, 514 Springfield Road, Somers
2. Kevin Foye, 40 White Oak Road, Somers
3. Andrew Phillips, 140 Sokol Road, Somers
4. Atty Joseph Williams, Shipman & Goodwin, Hartford; representing Danuta Toklowicz-Vuerich
5. Dr. Nancy Rodriguez, 646 Hall Hill Road, Somers
6. Suzanne LaBrie, 731 Hall Hill Road, Somers
7. Janice Martin, 92 Colorado Drive, Somers
8. Deanise Shewokis, 61 White Oak Road, Somers
9. Jerry Tarbox, 2 Meadowbrook Road, Somers
10. Michele Tarbox, 2 Meadowbrook Road, Somers
11. Ralph Williams, 425 Springfield Road, Somers
12. Mohammad Hazratji, 480 & 492 Hall Hill Road, Somers
13. Karen Regan, 597 Hall Hill Road, Somers
14. Chris Flynn, 537 Hall Hill Road, Somers

Signed petitions were presented to the commission with a total of 111 signatures in opposition of the applications. Circulators: Michele Tarbox, Suzanne LaBrie, Karen Regan, Andrew Phillips, Chris Flynn, and Joseph Duffy.

Discussion was held regarding traffic study. Attorney Landolina reminded the commission now would be the time to request if they would like to hire an independent 3<sup>rd</sup> party to review, so the applicant can be advised. Hours of operation should be considered when performing the traffic study.

Attorney Evan Seeman asked the applicants if they are claiming protection under RILUPA, and how so. Attorney Walsh responded referring to their narrative, page 3 describing Religious Institution.

Attorney Seeman asked what aspects of the use of the property will be religious; mentioning zoning is concerned with the use of the property not the user. Attorney Seeman asked for further explanation of the use of each property. Attorney Walsh responded that he feels the commission should ask the applicant what they'd like clarified.

Discussion was held.

Karl Walton made a motion to hire 3<sup>rd</sup> Party review of the traffic study. Paige Rasid seconded the motion. Conklin, Walton, Rasid and Fraro in favor, Cherry opposed; motion carried 4-1.

Karl Walton made a motion to continue the public hearing at their January 6, 2020 meeting, at 6:30pm in the Town Hall Auditorium. Dan Fraro seconded, all in favor, motion carried.

Karl Walton made a motion to adjourn. Dan Fraro seconded, all in favor, meeting adjourned at 9:07pm.