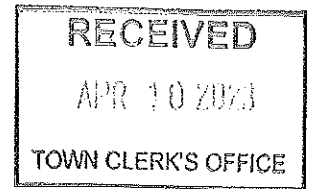


TOWN OF SOMERS - ZONING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Monday, April 3, 2023, 6:30pm



CALL TO ORDER 6:30pm, members present: Jim Formica, Chris Locatelli, Dan Fraro, and Howie Coro Also present Jennifer Roy, ZEO, Staff Liaison. Howie Coro is seated for Karl Walton

Absent: Karl Walton, Doug Ferro and Shane Manning

PUBLIC HEARING:

1. Application #23-002: Hillsdale College, 732 Hall Hill Road, Somers seeking a modification of the Special Use permit for operation of a religious institution, amending the conditions of approval regarding recreational use, restrictions placed on events, and possible additional events; per section 214-9.

Dan Fraro made a motion to open the public hearing, Chris Locatelli seconded, all in favor, motion carried.

Attorney George Schober was present representing Hillsdale College. Attorney Schober gave the commission some background on how Hillsdale College Blake Center came to Somers, and how the original Special Use permit came to be. Also present was Labin Duke, Director of the Somers Hillsdale College location. Attorney Schober submitted an annual events brochure for the record (exhibit 1); along with the original special use permit including conditions (exhibit 2).

Attorney Schober explained each of the 5 requests to the commission. Discussions were held regarding what Hillsdale College has done over the past year since the pandemic has passed. Labin Duke explained that the most people they can realistically fit for inside event, seminars and lectures would be 75 people. Mr. Duke further explained that some of the lectures that might have been listed as 4 days may work better for 2 days in the future.

Mr. Duke explained the procedure for those residents that would like to hike the trails; they must obtain a "pass". Boulders have been placed at the trail entrance so as to prevent ATV's from going on the trails.

Public comment:

First Selectman Tim Keeney, 57 Maple Street, Somers – in favor

Tom Skypec, 6 Winwood Circle, Somers – in favor

Ed Giza, 17 Hallie Lane, Somers – in favor

Patrick Mahon, 531 Hall Hill Road, Somers – in favor

Paul Salva, 17 Twinbrook Drive, Somers – in favor

Stu Rosenberg, Former President of Johnson Memorial Hospital Board of Directors – in favor

Dave Marti, 50 Springfield Road, Somers – in favor

John Bernie, 341 Watchaug Road, Somers – in favor
Jim O’Hearn, 22 Green Tree Lane, Somers – in favor
Samantha Mozdzanowski, 7 Meadowbrook Drive, Somers – in favor
Krystle Monticue, 119 Colton Road, Somers – in favor
Eric Young, 15 Rye Hill Circle, Somers – opposed
Mallory Duke, 708 Hall Hill Road – in favor
John Papale, 22 Bridle Path Drive, Somers -in favor

Jennifer Roy read written correspondence into the record:

Diane McAndrews, West Hartford – email received in favor
David Andrews, Falmouth Maine – email received in favor
Gerald and Michelle Tarbox, 2 Meadowbrook Road, Somers – letter received listing some concerns they have about restrictions.

Mr. Duke addressed the concerns the Tarboxs shared. Discussion was held.

Attorney Schober gave a closing statement to the commission. He reviewed the requirements in section 9.4E of the Zoning Regulations, and addressed how they have met each one.

Chris Locatelli made a motion to close the public hearing, Howie Coro seconded, all in favor, motion carried.

A brief discussion was held among the commission members.

Chris Locatelli made a motion to approve application #23-002: Hillsdale College, 732 Hall Hill Road, Somers seeking a modification of the Special Use permit for operation of a religious institution, amending the conditions of approval regarding recreational use, restrictions placed on events, and possible additional events; per section 214-9, with the following amendment to conditions:

1. Modification of SUP Condition of Approval 3. Allow Hillsdale College to permit recreational usage by local cross-country teams, the annual Somers Rotary Fishing Derby, and similar types of usage of the Property by eliminating the restriction on the number of individuals who may be on the Property at any one time for passive recreational purposes.
2. Modification of SUP Conditions of Approval 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. Given the lack of disruption to the neighborhood from the hosting of annual seminars and college events that Hillsdale College holds, eliminate the restriction on the number of annual seminars and college events Hillsdale College may hold.
3. Modification of SUP Conditions of Approval 9, 12, 13. Similarly, given the orderly fashion in which seminars and events have been conducted and given the size of the facilities, increase the number of permitted attendees at seminars and events to 75 attendees per seminar and/or event.
4. Allow Hillsdale College the discretion to permit charitable organizations such as the American Red Cross and the Rotary to hold events such as blood drives or other publicly beneficial events on the Property. Although there is no prohibition in the SUP conditions regarding the holding of such events, Hillsdale College is seeking express permission to do so.

5. Modification of SUP Condition of Approval 4. Given the length of the pandemic and the time required to fully establish operations at the Blake Center for Faith & Freedom, extend the time limit to hold the special event detailed in Condition of Approval 4 from three years to four years. It is anticipated that the event will be held on August 11, 2023.

And original conditions #1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 14 and 15 to remain.

Motion was seconded by Howie Coro, all in favor, motion carried.

MINUTES: March 6, 2023 Dan Faro made a motion to approve the minutes as written, Chris Locatelli seconded. Commissioners Fraro, Coro and Locatelli in favor, Formica abstained, motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT: Dan Fraro made a motion to adjourn, Howie Coro seconded, all in favor motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:55pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Roy

*****MINUTES ARE NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED A SUBSEQUENT MEETING*****