

The Public Hearing opened at 7:11 PM.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Doug Dubitsky (Chair), Pete Fiasconaro (Vice-Chair), Randy Godaire, Dave Garceau (online), Ken Fortier, Helen Weingart, Alternate Peter Haines, Alternate Dan Pearce.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Eric Beer, Alternate Bill Ireland.

ALTERNATES SEATED: Peter Haines seated for Eric Beer.

ALSO PRESENT: Zoning Enforcement Officer (ZEO) Jay Gigliotti, First Selectman Bill Rose, Selectman Joe Pinto, Attorney Dennis O'Brien (online), Jim Larkin from NECCOG and Recording Clerk Kathleen Scott.

D. Dubitsky read the Legal Notice that was published twice in the Willimantic Chronicle. Materials for the application are available for review at the Town Hall.

SUBJECT OF HEARING:

SP21-158-Town of Chaplin, Special Permit Application for Fire Department Message Board per Zoning Regulations Sec. 5.11:

ZEO J. Gigliotti presented the process for the special permit application and the timeline for a decision that is one month from the closing of the Public Hearing.

First Selectman Bill Rose (applicant) presented background for the Message Board that will be used to get the word out on such things as emergencies (closed roads, bridges falling through, downed power lines), flu shots at the Senior Center, recreation related and town related (meetings). The town was awarded the STEAP Grant for this project that preferred Covid related or emergency communication. The sign is similar to the one at the Griswold Fire Department and exceeds the square footage for that zone. It is easy to read with no sight line issues, is far enough off the road, is dimmable with LED soft glow lighting and has a night setting that can be controlled from the Selectman's office.

Attorney Dennis O'Brien who is representing the Town of Chaplin and not advising the Commission spoke about helping to write the application with the First Selectman. The Commission has control over signs to make sure they are safe. This sign does not block sight lines, is far enough back from the road but easy to read and is a public health and safety benefit to the town.

The hearing was opened for public comment.

Public comments in favor of the proposed Message Board:

- Applicant Bill Rose reiterated that the sign is a very valuable tool for communication.
- Selectman Joe Pinto commented about the sign being a great asset for the town to post messages for voting, school functions and disasters (Fire Department is used as an Emergency Station).
- Jim Randall of 27 Canada Lane is not opposed to the sign but would like to see different wording similar to Windham's sign.
- Town Clerk Shari Smith of 156 Palmer Road is in favor of the sign that would be an excellent way to communicate with residents (receives many phone calls about when events are happening). Could post

notices about voting to help increase voter turnout, dog license renewals, road closures, Recreation Department events and Senior Center/Library events.

- Bob Dubois of Bedlam Road is in favor of the sign and believes State Statute P.A.63-133 CT allows the PZC to exempt municipalities from sign regulations (allows oversized signs for all municipal buildings if one or more already exists).
- Adele Swart of Tower Hill Road supports the sign that will be a great asset to the town and help to keep the town current with what other towns are doing. She commends those that put the project together.
- Pete Kegler of 187 Federal Road is in favor of the sign that is a great idea and will replace the old sawhorse signs that fall over easily and are missing letters.
- Senior Center Director Lisa Kegler of Federal Road is in favor of the sign that will be an excellent asset to the town and very convenient for posting what's going on in town whether informational or recreational.
- Andrew Daniels of 83 Chewink Road is in favor of the sign that will be a great asset for the residents and is happy to see it may happen.
- Burt Chesters of 267 Palmer Road is fully in favor of the sign that will be easier to work on than the sandwich signs.
- Lisa Rose of 202 Tower Hill Road is in favor of the sign that is important to keep residents informed.
- Josh Walmsley of 8 Nutmeg Lane is definitely in favor of the sign and the key points already presented. It is a great way to get messages out for people to see and has many great features.
- Juan Roman of 161 Singleton Road is in favor of the programmable sign that will be great for Town Officials and Emergency Management to post incidents and get the word out to help seniors and announce events like a Public Hearing.

P. Fiasconaro asked why the drawing is different than what was presented at the special meeting (drawing at the special meeting was conceptual for the bid process and the newer drawing is more current).

P. Haines asked about changing the wording to Town of Chaplin (it is important to identify as the Chaplin Fire Department and will replace the existing Chaplin Fire Department sign). He also asked how long the sign is guaranteed to work (has a 5-year warranty and a life expectancy of about 15 years).

Public comments in favor of the Message Board:

- Town Clerk Shari Smith added another benefit of posting vacancies for town Boards and Commissions.
- D. Dubitsky asked about the content to be displayed and who decides the posting (advertising and political related content is not appropriate and could be made as a condition of the special permit to not allow, content would be controlled by the Selectman's office).

Attorney O'Brien speaking as Chaplin Town Attorney and not advising the PZC, reported that Zoning Regulation 8.4e allows the Commission to have discretion to allow larger signs and believes the Commission should use their discretion in favor of the sign. It is safe regarding location, will have short messages that are easy to read and be controlled by the Selectman's Office.

Public comments opposed to the proposed Message Board: None

Motion to close the Public Hearing at 7:50 PM, made by R. Godaire, seconded by D. Garceau. All in favor, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by,
Recording Clerk Kathleen Scott