



CITY OF DANBURY

155 DEER HILL AVENUE
DANBURY, CONNECTICUT 06810

ZONING COMMISSION
www.danbury-ct.gov

(203) 797-4525
(203) 797-4586 (FAX)

MINUTES OCTOBER 26, 2021

The web based meeting (hosted on Zoom) was called to order by Chairman Theodore Haddad Jr. at 7:30 PM.

Present were Sidney Almeida, Candace Fay, Ryan Hawley, Angela Hylenski, Rick P. Jowdy, James Kelly, Michael Masi, Robert Melillo, Theodore Haddad Jr., and Alternate Jason Eriquez and. Also present was Planning Director Sharon Calitro.

Absent were Alternates Nelson Merchan and Thomas Nejame.

Mr. Melillo led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Haddad said they would table acceptance of the September 28, 2021 minutes as the Commission members had not received them yet.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Petition of Golf Lounge DB, LLC, Danbury Fair Mall, 7 Backus Avenue/Space C101 (F17002 & F17013) for a Special Permit for a Cafe Liquor License. (This location was previously approved for and had a liquor license as a Red Robin Restaurant.)

Chairman Haddad read the legal notice regarding this petition. He then read the (Waiver to Site Plan Requirements) approval letter for the change of use from Red Robin Restaurant to the Golf Lounge with café.

Speaking in favor of the petition was Ajit Padda, who identified himself as a co-owner/partner in Golf Lounge. He said this is an indoor golf amusement business that was started in 2018. He said they currently have three locations, Fairfield & Orange, CT and Westchester, NY. They intend to model the Danbury location after the Westchester site, because they are both located in shopping malls. He said they will have approximately ten employees, including the bar, kitchen and golf staff. Chairman Haddad asked if golf is their primary business and then asked how the business operates. Mr. Padda said this business is more about golf than anything else, you can play around the world courses, the technology allows for teaching as well as competing. He said they host different events and hold fund raisers because their business is primarily an amusement/entertainment

center, although people do come in and just eat without playing golf. Mr. Padda said then said the “Trackman” technology offers all types and levels of golfing experiences including playing at world class courses around the world. He said they also employ professional golf staff so people can work on their skills and improve their game. Mr. Melillo referred to the article that was in the News-Times today about this business and asked that the article be included in the record (later designated Exhibit A). He also asked how the liquor service will be handled. Mr. Padda said they will have a bartender to dispense it and waitstaff to serve it. He compared it to a bowling alley with a bar in it. Mr. Melillo then asked since they have a separate exit to the outside, will they be open different hours than the Mall is open. Mr. Padda said they will, but it will be opening at 7 AM for lessons and some evenings they could be leagues that would run later than the Mall. Mr. Melillo asked if they intend to put tables outside. Mr. Padda said that is not planned at this time. Mr. Hawley asked what safety protocols they have in place. Mr. Padda said all of their equipment is certified, most people are only there for two hours, and when someone is hitting, no one is allowed in that area. He said the cleaning protocols became more stringent since COVID and they no longer rent out golf clubs. He added that has worked out since most serious players want to bring their own clubs. Chairman Haddad asked what the target opening date is. Mr. Padda said they hope to open in December

Also speaking in favor of this petition was Paul Rotello, 13 Linden Place, City Councilman for the sixth ward. He said adding recreational uses to the Mall along with retail is a good plan and he supports this new direction that the Mall is taking.

Ben Chianese, 5 Briar Ridge Road, also a City Councilman for the sixth ward spoke next. He said that he agreed with what Mr. Rotello had said and he also supports this petition.

Chairman Haddad asked if there was anyone to speak in opposition to this petition and there was no one.

Mr. Melillo made a motion to close the public hearing. Mr. Jowdy seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously with nine ayes by voice vote. Mr. Melillo made a motion to move this to item number two under the Old Business on tonight’s agenda. Mr. Masi seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously with nine ayes by voice vote

CONTINUATION OF PUBLIC HEARING:

Petition of 3 Lake Avenue Extension LLC to Amend Sections 2.B., 5.B.2.b.(19), and 5.B.5.g. of the Zoning Regulations. [Amendments to existing definitions, defining a new use (“transitional shelter for the homeless”), & adding this new use as a special exception use to the CA-80 zone.]

Chairman Haddad noted that they had received correspondence from the applicant’s attorney requesting that this matter be tabled and continued until the November 9, 2021 meeting. He added that an additional letter was received giving the Commission until November 30, 2021 to take action on this petition. He said the second continuance will allow them to the last day of their term to make a decision as the new Commission will

take over December 1, 2021. There was no testimony or discussion on this matter at this meeting.

Mr. Melillo made a motion to continue this hearing until the November 9, 2021 meeting. Mr. Almeida seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously with nine ayes by voice vote.

OLD BUSINESS:

Petition of 29 Federal Road LLC & Robert W. Schmus, 21, 29, 33-35, and 39 Federal Road (K11123, K11125, K11126, & K11127) for Change of Zone from IL-40 to CG-20.

Mr. Melillo made a motion to approve this petition for the following reasons:

- 1) Although this proposal is inconsistent with the POCD Land Development Plan Map, this map has not been updated since 2002 and does not reflect zone changes that have occurred in this area since that time. Since that time, the uses on these parcels has changed to more of a commercial/retail nature.
- 2) The rezoning of 1.655 acres of IL-40 zoned land does not represent a significant loss of industrial land and considering the sizes of these parcels, the dimensional limitations, and the existing uses, the CG-20 Zone may be a more appropriate zone for them.
- 3) Approving this petition will result in the use of land that is in the best interest of the City
- 4) Approving this petition will not detrimentally impact the health, safety, and welfare of the public

Mrs. Hylenski seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously with nine ayes by voice vote.

Petition of Golf Lounge DB, LLC, Danbury Fair Mall, 7 Backus Avenue/Space C101 (F17002 & F17013) for a Special Permit for a Cafe Liquor License. (This location was previously approved for and had a liquor license as a Red Robin Restaurant.)

Mr. Melillo made a motion to approve this petition with the following stipulation: *All alcoholic beverages sold on this premises are for on-premise consumption ONLY and must be consumed within the space leased by Golf Lounge 18.* The following reason was given for this motion: this will not have a detrimental effect on the environment or the health and safety of the immediate area. Mrs. Fay seconded the motion.

Before taking the vote, Mr. Jowdy asked Mr. Melillo to clarify the stipulation. Mr. Melillo said the intent of the stipulation was to prevent people from walking through the Mall with a beverage that was purchased in this business. Mr. Padda said that is clear. Chairman Haddad then called for a vote and the motion to approve with stipulation was passed unanimously with nine ayes by voice vote.

NEW BUSINESS:

Petition of the City of Danbury by Sharon B. Calitro, Planning Director to Amend Sections 3.C., 10.B.2. & 10.C.4.(a)(2) of the Zoning Regulations. (Amendments pursuant to Public Act 21-29: Opt out of Parking Requirements, Amend Zoning Permit Fee Schedule to Add Provision Authorizing Charging of Fee for Expert Consultant, and Amend Language in Additional Requirements for Approval of Special Exceptions and Special Permits relative to use of the word “character”) *Public hearing scheduled for December 14, 2021.*

Mrs. Hylenski made a motion to accept this petition, refer it to the Planning Commission for a recommendation, put on file in the Town Clerk’s office, and forward to any other agencies as may be required. Mr. Kelly seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

Chairman Haddad asked if there was anything to discuss under Other Matters. Mr. Hawley asked if the November 9, 2021 meeting would be held on Zoom. Chairman Haddad said in order to accommodate the expected crowd, the meeting will be held on Zoom. He then said there was nothing under Correspondence or For Reference Only.

At 8:34 PM with no further business to discuss, Mr. Jowdy made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Kelly seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously by voice vote with nine ayes.

Respectfully submitted,

JoAnne V. Read
Planning Assistant