

DRAFT
ZONING COMMISSION
NOANK FIRE DISTRICT
10 WARD AVE NOANK, CT 06340

Minutes of the Regular Meeting

Date: July 15, 2025

A link to the recording of the meeting: [2025-07-15 - Regular Meeting Minutes](#)

Call to Order: Rick Smith called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Members Present: Amanda Ober, Peter Drakos, Chairman Rick Smith, Dana Oviatt, and Alternate Kevin Lawrie, seated for Blake Powell.

Roll call.

Chairman's Remarks:

Smith welcomed new member Amanda Ober and thanked Alternate Stan White for his assistance with the residential renting spreadsheet.

Public Comment: Paul Bates requested that the Commission direct the ZEO to not forward incomplete applications for the commission's consideration. In the past, the Commission had decided to only act on complete packages and a recent application was changed mid-process, making it very difficult for the interested public to understand what was being proposed. He also requested that all application materials be dated properly so that documents can be tracked properly.

Patti Oat also asked if she could comment on detached ADU's during the informal public meeting. (Yes)

Wayne Burdick asked how one would seek approval for a pre-existing use determination for short-term renting. (See the ZEO)

New Business - None

Old Business - (Read into the record) Informal Public Informational Meeting - Public comment session on enhancing opportunities for residential renting (rental periods of 31 days or more in duration) in the Fire District by amending current regulations to allow in-structure "Accessory Dwelling Units."

This meeting will be an opportunity for the public to interact with commissioners in a non-binding, non-regulatory proceeding to better inform the Commission on the interests of the public and the potential need for such a change to our regulations. In the event the Commission decides to proceed further, a proposed regulation is the eventual outcome of further deliberations. If that happens, a public hearing is mandatory.

Smith explained the Commission's history of getting to this point of seeking public input and the current regulations regarding floor surface and lot size.

Commission and Public Input:

1. [0:16:54.93] Amanda Ober requested some clarification on whether state statutes indicate we cannot set minimum floor size for any unit. She stated her belief that we could only set a maximum. Could not set a minimum of 350, only a maximum. Separately on the parking issue, she believed it's an existing state statute that it has to be one parking spot per one bedroom unit.
2. [0:18:34.52] Ken Steere asked what constituted a curb cut? Driveways? What about where no "curb" exists? Parking on a lawn? Dana Oviatt recalled that the Commission had envisioned no driving onto a lawn from the street or from a curb cut. Ben Greenfield noted the issue of street frontage. Ober and Steere further discussed the need for definitions and requiring that a driveway be available (i.e. no parking on lawns).
3. [0:23:57.60] Dana Oviatt did not recall that the Commission had considered requiring two parking spots per ADU in addition to the permanent dwelling unit. Further discussion ensued regarding the number of parking spaces and the vetoed legislation in the 2025 session of the General Assembly, and how a parking space is defined.
4. [0:26:25.55] Andy Giblin recommended the Commission be flexible for larger lots without affecting lots in the village. Curb cuts may not be an issue outside of the Village Residential (RV) district, e.g. in R-40. He questioned why there is a proposed maximum floor size less than 30% of the principal dwelling unit? If there is a large enough lot, why limit someone who might want an ADU that is 50% of the total structure. He asked about the April 19, 1965 date. Smith and Paul Bates discussed views on the purpose for the April 1965 date. Drakos asked if the date appears in any other of our regulations (No). Oviatt asked what are our choices? Smith said we could omit the date, we could retain it, or we could change it. Oviatt asked Bates whether he thought the date should be retained? Bates said keep it or update it but ensure the preservation of the old houses in the Fire District so people don't tear down a nice old house in order to build a new one.
5. [0:37:48.00] Patti Oat asked if microphones and name plaques could be provided for the commissioners. She also recommended the Commission not limit lot size or ADU size. Recommended the Commission allow detached ADU's as well as attached (in-structure ADU's). Felt rental opportunities were needed. Felt most people would not be doing an ADU. She felt that anyone that had enough of a lot size that if they could build a a garage or

boat shed, they ought to be able to do it as an ADU, too. Smith noted that the ADU would have to comply with health regulations. Would require major reconstruction, sewer pipes, water, kitchen.

6. [0:46:49.21] Ken Steere asked if the homeowner would have to live on site. He favored requiring the homeowner to live on site. Smith and Wayne Burdick discussed the pros and cons of corporate ownership. Oviatt stated that John Casey, during the STR debates, advised that it would be illegal to require the owner to live on site, that we could not require an owner to live on-site. Ober said it may be different for ADUs.
7. [0:51:04.00] Ben Greenfield stated that he was in favor of the proposed regulation and noted that he has a detached structure on site that family use when visiting. ADUs are a good idea. Would like to use his accessory building (has sanitary hookup that he pays sewer fees on) as an ADU so he recommended the Commission include detached ADU's in the proposed regulation. Setbacks are necessary (side yard, etc). Air BnB's should not be an issue. They're not permitted.
8. [0:55:51.95] Lynne Marshall supported a cautious approach so that the Commission doesn't create unforeseen problems ("mistakes can have big impacts"). Once permitted, actions become non-conforming (pre-existing?) uses. Asked about setbacks since this is now living space. Asked about bulk rules, height limitations. Noted that regulations outside vs. inside the village could be different for different zoning districts.
9. [0:58:21.38] Andy Giblin wondered if the Commission shouldn't leave Section 2.13 alone, change the date up to something closer to today and write a new Section 2.13a. Noted there are big houses with big lots that might want more maximum square footage in their ADU. He commented that the regulation cannot be one size fits all because there are different issues in the village, and other areas with bigger lots.
10. [1:00:25.30] Janet Sutherland felt the Commission could not regulate minimum floor size for a dwelling unit, just a maximum, based on existing statutes. On the parking issue, she noted the existing Connecticut General Statutes have parking space limits for one-bedroom and two-bedroom dwelling units. She stated the Commission had opted out of ADUs but not the parking limits. She noted curb cuts and driveways would be public works (i.e. Town of Groton). [Editor's Note: The Fire District opted out of the ADU floor size requirements, the ADU parking limits, and the parking limits for dwelling units irrespective of ADUs].
11. [1:03:09.11] Marshall and Ober discussed what a living unit entails, kitchen, bathroom, egress, etc.
12. [1:05:20.75] Wayne Burdick recommended that we get on with it and not delay. Described his property and family use and potential renting use, and potential parking issues.
13. [1:06:32.76] Paul Bates noted that, in New London, there was a recent article in The Day that talked about "workforce apartments" with units as small as 400 sf. He recommended

that the Commission not make a decision on parking until the state government decides who gets to make the decision on parking issues.

14. [1:08:04.40] On a subject unrelated to the purpose of the meeting, Patti Oat asked if the Commission was interested in discussing “tear downs?” Smith recommended she discuss with ZEO Mulholland. She asked about Historic Districts, how to do it and how to have issues put on the Commission agenda. There were others that didn’t identify themselves that contributed to a lengthy back-and-forth. Oat wanted to know if the Commission ever came to a consensus about creating a regulation to prevent someone being able to instantly tear something down. She wanted to know how she would get this to be discussed.
15. [1:11:55.00] Also unrelated to the purpose of the meeting, Ken Steere tried to focus the discussion on what does takes to get the Commission to add something to its agenda, that is, how to get the Commission to consider new ideas within its process. Smith recommended that, on the tear down issue, the person should talk to the ZEO and then develop a list of potential actions that would be new business at a new meeting. On adding items to the Commission’s agenda, Drakos observed that, during the public comment period at the start of every meeting, the Chairman asks for comments on anything not on the agenda that anyone would like to bring to the Commission’s attention. Sutherland stated a person could propose a text amendment (i.e. propose a change or addition to the Noank zoning regulations) but if the person wanted Noank to change to a Historic District, she believed that proposal should be directed to the Executive Committee.
16. [1:13:42.50] Kevin Lawrie discussed concerns about “tear downs” or demolitions without a lot of public notice. Suggested future discussion would be worthwhile. Marshall, Smith, Giblin, Greenfield and Bates offered views on the subject.
17. [1:25:30.65] Ober asked the audience how they envisioned ADU’s being implemented, as family-only housing, or rental opportunities? Burdick responded from his perspective, in a detached ADU, a member of the family could stay in it and the other family members could enjoy the bigger home. Ober asked if he was considering renting to non-family? Burdick responded that, in the past, they have done so to pay taxes. Smith noted that he didn’t think one could regulate only to family users. Ober noted that some towns do.
18. [1:28:16.12] Oat felt the owner ought to be able to rent to anyone. Would love to live in the ADU and rent the big house. Should not have to be family only.
19. [1:29:20.99] Drakos felt the whole idea behind the Commission’s efforts was rental opportunities, not just family housing.
20. [1:29:49.00] Ober asked how people felt about owner-occupied on site? Oat felt that might be too restrictive.
21. [1:30:09.10] Ober asked what happens if a company buys a house and turns it into multifamily housing and rents it out? Oat felt it wasn’t likely to happen.

22. [1:31:22.30] Lawrie suggested the spirit of the State legislation was it's more the enhancement of housing opportunities, rather than just family opportunities.
23. [1:32:13.38] Ober noted that the regulation does not necessarily mean affordable housing. These apartments will go for market rates. We won't be addressing affordability.
24. [1:33:55.23] Oviatt observed it was likely that this process has evolved slowly because of a concern about increased congestion. Greenfield said that parking is tight in summer, Noank has always had parking issues, whether an event or seasonal, can't be regulated. Drakos felt that if we create too much congestion, it would be too late to fix the problem after the fact. Be cautious. Greenfield agreed.
25. [1:37:48.24] Smith noted that Blake Powell (a commissioner absent from the meeting) has expressed the same concern regarding congestion.
26. [1:38:00.00] Bates noted that recent Massachusetts legislation called for 1/2 a parking space per ADU.
27. [1:38:25.88] Burdick noted that the major congestion in Noank is Abbott's and the boatyards, not from the people who live here. Ober was concerned that more cars would be added to parking on the street. Public safety should be of utmost concern, also the quality of life in the village but everything is secondary to public safety. Greenfield noted that this is a very seasonal issue. Try to get cars off the street.
28. [1:42:07.25] Drakos recalled that one of the key issues that caused the commission to separate the detached ADU's from the in-structure ones was the issue of non-conforming structures that could be turned into ADU's. Oviatt noted that Stonington only gets 1-2 applications to establish ADU's a year. Oviatt felt we should do nothing if we're not sure. Ober noted ADU's are allowed now. Smith noted we're considering relaxing the existing rules. Oat recommended this be analyzed, worst case, probable outcome.
29. [1:48:33.33] Sutherland noted that ADU's are not allowed. Section 2.13 of the Noank Zoning Regulations does not allow ADUs. It conflicts with the zone-specific lists of permitted uses and only single family dwelling units are allowed in R and RV zones. Smith and Drakos questioned and discussed. Sutherland offered her view that the Commission would have to amend all the zone-specific districts to include two-family dwellings, then it could be done. Smith said he would discuss with Commission Counsel Casey.
30. [1:51:03.21] Kevin Lawrie and Paul Bates talked about parking, rooming houses, apartments, past rules and history on Church Street.
31. [1:54:37.12] Andy Giblin suggested on 2.13, check with ZEO and John Casey on the contradictions in the language. Giblin and Sutherland debated further.

32. [1:56:55.42] Marshall expressed a concern with setbacks, noting that it's a different circumstance to be next to a home vs. a work shed or garage. If setbacks have to be employed, they should be the same as for a dwelling unit and not a garage, or else the ADU should not be allowed.
33. [1:58:34.74] Bates noted that there is a legal term of art "The forgoing notwithstanding..." that is used to cover commissions when regulations are seemingly in conflict.
34. [1:59:26.06] Anonymous male - There's a lot less traffic in Noank now, than 25 years ago, it's a lot quieter, there's a lot less multi-family dwellings. He recommended ADU's be allowed, maybe not a single room but a small dwelling unit.

The informal public meeting ended at 9:00 PM.

Approval of Regular Meeting Minutes of 6/17/2025. Postponed

Receipt of ZEO Reports—June 2025. Received without objection

MOTION (Oviatt /Drakos): to adjourn at 9:06 pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Brown, Recording Secretary
Rick Smith, Contributor