East Haddam Planning and Zoning Commission
Land Use Office

Regular Meeting Minutes
October 13, 2026

1) CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Brownell called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm.

   COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Crary Brownell (Chairman), James Curtin (Vice Chairman), Richard Pettinelli (Secretary), Bernard Gillis, Deborah Langdon, Susan Kinsman, Maureen Pierson, D. Duncan Orr, Eric Chamberland, and Gary Turenne.

2) COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: None

   OTHERS PRESENT: Scott Jezek, Timothy Mulcahy, Attorney Stephanie Antone, Attorney Robert Rimmer, Kevin Staehly, Cody Annino, Rebecca Skinner, Elizabeth Johnson, Bob Casner, Merrick Kozlowski

3) MINUTES –

   Correct the motion to set the public hearing from Mr. Pettinelli and Mr. Curtin to Mr. Turenne and Mr. Gillis.

   Correct the spelling of Ms. Kinsman's name in two places.

   Mr. Brownell instructed the September 8, 2026 minutes are to be filed as amended.

   Mr. Pettinelli made a motion to change the order of business. Seconded by Ms. Kinsman and unanimously approved.

4) DISCUSSION

   d) East Haddam Historical Society Lighting

   Mr. Jezek explained that the museum property is scheduled for paving and requires improved lighting for safety. Town regulations are allowed for up to 12 feet high poles and requires commission approval for poles up to 20 feet. The proposed lighting is for 14 feet poles and will only be turned on during evening meetings, programs, and special events. Roughly 20 nights per year. The current lighting will continue to be used for the tenants upstairs.

   Mr. Gillis made a motion to accept the waiver for lighting for 14 feet. Mr. Pettinelli seconded the motion and passed unanimously. Chairman Brownell recused himself from the motion.

a) Scenic Roads

Commission members spoke about concerns with promoting scenic road designation, such as regulations that can oppose development and high maintenance costs, allowing the neighborhoods to initiate the designation rather than the commission to target certain roads, and ways to better inform the residents about the process. Some ideas to inform the public are to update the town website, make informational material available, publish notices through existing town channels, such as the local newspaper. Creating a dedicated social media page for the commission was discouraged.

b) Library Committee Update

Ms. Pierson shared that she looked into seeing if the two current library property sites would accommodate the expansion for an approximate 14,000 square foot building, however neither sites have enough space. Other suggestions for already town owned properties were at current school sites and the need to be located near the schools to be easily accessible to students.

Properties that are currently for sale were discussed as potential sites. There are 5 acres available behind the Liberty Bank Moodus Branch. The corner of Rae Palmer Road and Wm F Palmer Road has a 3.79 acre parcel for sale. Also, the several acres formerly known as Shady Brook.

The commission will continue to review potential sites before making recommendations to the New Library Exploratory Committee.

c) Regional Housing Information

Commissioners discussed the validity of the data used in regional housing projections and planning studies. The East Haddam housing inventory and education employment data does not support their findings. It was agreed to wait for more information regarding the accuracy of the data reported.

Mr. Pettinelli made a motion to take a two minute recess prior to beginning the Public Hearing. Mr. Curtin seconded motion and passed unanimously.

5) PUBLIC HEARING 7:45 pm

1) Application #26-16 55 Main Street, Map 026, Lot 006, Timothy Mulcahy. Construction of an addition under the East Haddam Village Regulations 9.5.

Chairman Brownell read the approval letter from the East Haddam Historic District Commission.

Chairman Brownell read an email from Robert Reynolds.

Mr. Mulcahy presented the proposal to construct a detached garage, master suite additions, and mudroom improvements within the East Haddam Historic District. Commission members asked questions regarding the design and placement of garage.

Attorney Antone, representing 51 and 53 Main Street, argued that the application was incomplete, claiming that the renderings had not been submitted, neighboring structures had not been adequately illustrated, that the site plan requirements were incomplete, and floor plans and informational elements were missing.

Mr. Mulcahy responded that property lines and structure locations were full shown, neighboring private property should not need detailed depiction, garage dimensions were clearly provided, and that the Historic District Commissions requirements had been followed through multiple meetings.

Mr. Gillis made a motion to continue the public hearing on this application to the October 27, 2026 meeting. Ms. Langdon seconded the motion and unanimously passed.

2) Revision to the East Haddam Zoning Regulations in response to the recently adopted Moodus Village Master Plan and the recent approved housing legislation. These changes can be found in the following Sections of the Zoning Regulations:

Section 5 – Definitions
Section 9.5 – East Haddam Village District
Section 9.6 - Moodus Village District, Proposed Moodus Village Zoning Map
Section 9.7 – C-3 Repeal
Section 11 – Parking
Section 14a – Site Plan Review
Appendix VI – EHVD & Moodus Village – Site Design and Compatibility Objectives and Guidelines

Section 5 – Definitions

Attorney Antone representing Cody Annino and Rebecca Skinner at 405 EH Moodus Road, and Robert Rimmer, representing Nicholson Baker and Margaret Brentano at 406 EH Moodus Road, argued that both the Food Establishment and Drive-Through Window definitions are too broad.

Kevin Staehly, Town Street, questioned whether farms would become regulated by the Chatham Health District under the definition.

Commissioners acknowledged concerns and indicated they would revisit the wording.

Section 9.5 – East Haddam Village District

There was no comment on this section.

Section 9.6 – Moodus Village District, Proposed Moodus Village Zoning Map

Mr. Brownell read a letter from Jacob Spurlock regarding serious traffic issues in Moodus, and from William Brown regarding adding drive-through operations and attracting more traffic to the area.

Mr. Pettinelli read a letter from Taylor Lassier CZO, Southern Connecticut Council Government, stating that it was determined that the proposed zoning regulation amendments and map amendments are not likely to have a negative intermunicipal impact.

A second letter read by Mr. Pettinelli from MK Land Use Services, Merrick Kozlowski, on behalf of Thomas Coccomo and Coccomo 2 LLC. The letter is in support of the proposed zoning regulation amendments related to middle housing.

Attorney Antone appeared on behalf of Cody and Rebecca Annino, 405 East Haddam Moodus Road, owners of property adjacent to 416 East Haddam-Moodus Road (former Cumberland Farms property).

Key points included:

- The proposed zoning amendments constitute impermissible spot zoning.
- The former Cumberland Farms property is currently a nonconforming use.
- Rezoning the parcel into the proposed Commercial Center District would effectively remove its nonconforming status and allow expanded uses.
- The property would become eligible for drive-through uses not currently permitted.
- The proposed definition of "food establishment" is overly broad.
- The proposed drive-through regulations are inconsistent with the walkability goals described in the Moodus Master Plan.
- The zoning map changes single out one parcel for special treatment.
- The amendment would allow substantially broader commercial and industrial uses than currently permitted.
- Requested modifications included:
    - Removal of "food establishment" from drive-through provisions.
    - Restricting drive-throughs to pharmacies and financial institutions.
    - Retaining 416 East Haddam-Moodus Road within the proposed Mudus Village District rather than the Commercial Center District.

A written statement and exhibit map were submitted for the record.

Attorney Rimmer appeared on behalf of owners of property at 406 East Haddam-Moodus Road.

Key comments included:

- Expressed concerns regarding spot zoning.
- Argued that the proposed map amendment affects only one parcel.
- Stated that drive-through uses conflict with the walkable village vision contained in the Moodus Master Plan.
- Questioned whether the amendment serves the community as a whole.
- Suggested the proposal primarily benefits a single property owner.
- Submitted written remarks and an exhibit map for the record.

Discussion occurred regarding opinions provided by Town Counsel concerning the legality of the proposed map amendments.

Cody Annino, 405 EH Moodus Road, spoke regarding:

- The proposed elimination of the C3 District.
- The history of drive-through regulations adopted in 2021.
- Information obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests.
- His belief that staff involvement with representatives of the former Cumberland Farms property demonstrated bias.
- Concerns that the zoning amendments were specifically crafted to facilitate future approval of a drive-through convenience store/gas station.
- Concerns regarding expansion of nonconforming uses.
- Potential impacts on traffic, community character, and walkability.

Mr. Annino requested:

1. Retention of the C3 Zone.
2. Narrower definitions of food establishment.
3. Geographic limitations on drive-through uses.
4. Restrictions on products sold through drive-through windows.
5. Recusal of staff from matters relating to 416 East Haddam-Moodus Road.

A written statement was submitted for the record.

Nicholson Baker, owner of property at 406 East Haddam-Moodus Road, stated:

- He purchased his property with the understanding that the C3 District would preserve neighborhood character.
- The proposed amendments conflict with that understanding.
- The Moodus Master Plan emphasizes pedestrian-oriented development, walkability, and preservation of village character.
- The proposed rezoning of the former Cumberland Farms parcel constitutes spot zoning.
- Information obtained through FOIA requests raises concerns regarding the history of regulatory changes affecting the property.
- Requested denial of the proposed rezoning and retention of the C3 zoning district.

Rebecca Skinner, 405 EH Moodus Road, a resident of the current C3 District, spoke in opposition to the proposed amendments.

Comments included:

- The Moodus Master Plan emphasizes a walkable, small-town village character.
- The C3 District provides important protections for nearby residential properties.
- Expanded drive-through uses would conflict with those goals.
- The rezoning of a single parcel raises spot-zoning concerns.
- Approval would create long-term consequences for the character of the village.

Ms. Skinner requested:

1. Preservation of the C3 District.
2. Prohibition of expanded drive-through uses within that area.
3. Revisions to ensure consistency with the Moodus Master Plan.

Elizabeth Johnson, a resident of 143 Creek Row, stated:

- One reason for moving to East Haddam was its rural character.
- She opposed additional drive-through development.
- Questioned the need for a new gas station on the former Cumberland Farms site.
- Requested denial of the proposed changes.

Bob Casner spoke as a resident and former participant in development of the C3 District.

Comments included:

- The original purpose of C3 was to preserve the residential character surrounding Plains Road and the western gateway into Moodus.
- The area presents opportunities for residential development.
- Removal of portions of the C3 District would undermine those original goals.
- Encouraged retention of C3 zoning protections.

Mr. Annino submitted copies of FOIA-obtained email correspondence for inclusion in the record.

MK Land Use Services

Mr. Kozlowski spoke in support of portions of the proposed amendments relating to middle housing and compliance with Public Act 25-1.

Comments included:

- State law requires municipalities to provide a process for middle housing development.
- Failure to adopt regulations could leave municipalities vulnerable to developments lacking local standards.
- The proposed regulations provide a framework for local review of middle housing proposals.
- The amendments would protect the community while promoting housing opportunities.

Kevin Staehly, Town Street, identified several issues in the draft regulations:

- Noted an apparent typographical error in Section 9.6.1 involving the use designation "SP." It should be “SPEX.”
- Requested clarification regarding distinctions among:
    - Moodus Village
    - Moodus Commercial Center
    - Plains Road Subdistrict
- Questioned why certain areas received differing development opportunities.
- Noted that future zoning changes elsewhere in town could create similar concerns regarding nonconforming uses and district boundaries.

Section 11 – Parking

Commission members questioned several items that they felt the wording was unclear and need to be clarified. It was suggested clarifying the ADA requirements are based on standards in effect at the time an application is submitted.

Section 14a – Site Plan Review

There was no comment on this section.

Appendix VI – EHVD & Moodus Village - Site Design and Compatibility Objectives and Guidelines

Mr. Pettinelli mentioned that the parking in Moodus Village should not be the same as the East Haddam Village and needs to be review.

Mr. Pettinelli made a motion to continue the public hearing to October 27, 2026. Mr. Gillis seconded the motion and passed unanimously.

6) LAND USE ADMINISTRATOR REPORT - None

7) ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Pettinelli to adjourn at 9:22 pm. The motion was seconded by Ms. Langdon and was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Lori Olson
Recording Secretary