

BOLTON PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
7:30 PM, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 13, 2025
BOLTON TOWN HALL, 222 BOLTON CENTER ROAD
In-Person and Via Zoom
MINUTES

PZC Members Present In-Person: Chairman Tom Manning, Marilee Manning, Alternates Tom Crockett and Diane DeNunzio

PZC Members Present Via Zoom: Vice-Chair James Cropley, Alternate Kawan Gordon

PZC Members Absent: Steven Clark, Arlene Fiano, Jeremy Flick, Thomas Robbins

Staff Present Via Zoom: Patrice Carson, AICP, Consulting Director of Community Development, Michael D'Amato, Zoning Enforcement Officer, Kacie Cannon, Recording Secretary

Others Present Via Zoom: Andrew Ladyga

1. Call to Order: T. Manning called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m. K. Gordon was seated for A. Fiano, T. Crockett was seated for J. Flick, and D. DeNunzio was seated for S. Clark.

2. Approval of Minutes: July 9, 2025

T. Crockett MOVED to approve the minutes as written. J. Cropley SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 5:0:1 (K. Gordon Abstained).

3. Residents' Forum: No residents wished to speak.

4. Staff Reports:

P. Carson reported that no applications were received this month; however, several inquiries were made regarding allowable uses in specific zones, storage units, chickens, and lot line reconfigurations. She noted that she met with the Cider Mill property owner (and his attorney), who has consulted with the Bolton Lakes Regional Water Pollution Control Authority (BLRWPCA) and is working with a developer. P. Carson added that work is ongoing with Connecticut's Countryside.

M. D'Amato noted that he reviews approximately 6-10 special event and solicitor permit applications per month of varying complexity. He also reviews some of those permits for special projects, such as solar, in conjunction with building permit applications to simplify the process. M. D'Amato reported that work is ongoing with CAI and the Assessor's office to update the Town's parcel map, and the Assessor is compiling the changes into a database. No resident complaints were received this month, aside from one neighbor dispute that was resolved privately between the parties.

5. Old Business

a. Other: There was no old business.

6. New Business

a. Other: There was no other new business.

7. ONGOING DISCUSSION: Bolton Subdivision and Zoning Regulations

Signage Regulations: P. Carson provided the Commission with signage regulations from Bolton, Tolland, and Ridgefield. She noted that Tolland's regulations were recently revised, reviewed by an attorney, and adopted. J. Cropley asked if M. D'Amato had reviewed Ridgefield's regulations. M. D'Amato replied that he has not thoroughly reviewed them, but noted they appear more complicated than expected. He stated that he originally wrote Tolland's regulations in collaboration with Halloran Sage to ensure content-neutral regulations, and also drafted Mansfield's regulations, which were more complex due to the nuances between developed and rural areas.

K. Gordon shared his preference for the simplified Ridgefield regulations over Tolland's, which includes legal language that may be difficult for the public to digest. T. Crockett added that Ridgefield's regulations have been in place since May 1, 2007 and serve as a helpful guide. P. Carson noted that some amendments were made in 2023.

M. D'Amato explained that Tolland's regulations are based on location adding they moved away from content-based regulations after the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that regulating signs based on content violates free speech. A Connecticut court decision further limits towns to regulating commercial speech and prohibits the regulation of personal signs unless they pose a hazard. M. D'Amato will provide a memo to the Commission outlining the court cases.

P. Carson recommended updating the sign measurement calculations to a less-complex formula and noted that the current calculations result in different answers and cause issues with sign companies.

The Commission agreed to use Tolland's regulations as a guide and discussed enforcement methods, allowable signage types (including gas station canopies), and easing regulations to attract more businesses. Members were encouraged to observe signage around town over the next month, take photos of examples they support or oppose, and review Tolland's regulations to suggest changes at the next meeting.

Permitted Use Table: P. Carson stated that the Commission previously reviewed the draft Permitted Use Table at the May 8, 2025 meeting, and noted that the changes they proposed are listed on the updated table in red. She added that items requiring Commission input are also in red with question marks and highlighted the abbreviation definitions on the back of the table. P. Carson explained the difference between Administrative Zoning (AZ) and Administrative Zoning As Of Right (AOR), noting that AOR refers to businesses allowed to operate in certain zones by statute such as daycares in R1-R3 zones, farming, and home occupations with no employees or customers. M. D'Amato added that Commission approval is only required if a business exceeds statutory limits, such as a daycare exceeding the limit of six children. T. Manning asked if AZ requests are handled entirely by staff. P. Carson confirmed that Commission approval is not required for AZ and referenced certain ADUs and art studios, galleries, and museums as examples.

T. Manning asked about projects requiring a site plan review. P. Carson noted that no hearing is required and the Commission must render a decision within 65 days of receiving the application. She added that Special Use Permits require public hearings. T. Manning asked if town facilities are exempt. P. Carson explained that all town facilities are exempt from Planning and Zoning Regulations under a May 15, 1995 Board of Selectman ordinance, and noted that other Connecticut towns she has worked for also exempted town facilities. The Commission reviewed the fitness center category and agreed to allow them in both the General Business (GB) and Gateway Mixed Use Industrial Zones (GMUIZ).

P. Carson inquired about the separate categories for “grocery and convenience stores” and “grocery stores”. M. D’Amato explained the difference, noting that convenience stores are smaller, sell pre-packaged goods, and have late hours, whereas grocery stores are larger, sell fresh food, and have shorter business hours. P. Carson suggested creating definitions to explain the difference or separating the categories as “convenience stores” and “grocery stores.” T. Manning agreed with the changes.

The Commission discussed zoning for each type of store, differentiating factors, and how to classify businesses such as Dollar General and Target. M. D’Amato proposed defining grocery stores as those dedicating a percentage, say 60%, of floor space to fresh food, which includes produce, meat, seafood, bakery, and dairy items. The Commission agreed to classify all stores as retail, using operating hours to determine zoning, and limiting Neighborhood Business Zone stores to 5,000 sq. ft. by site plan. Retail stores exceeding 5,000 sq. ft., including grocery stores, would require a site plan in GB and a Special Use Permit in GMUIZ. M. Manning recommended researching whether 5,000 sq. ft. is an appropriate limit.

M. D’Amato recommended adding “catch-all” language to the Special Use Permit for future or unique businesses not specifically listed and cited language from Willington Regulations, Section 315-504(d).

The Commission discussed definitions, examples, and current zoning for home occupations and houses of worship. P. Carson noted that current regulations allow houses in Neighborhood Business zones to be converted to small businesses and recommended further review. T. Manning agreed and stated that the goal is to define zoning districts and then review the table for allowable uses. He proposed changing the houses of worship category to places of assembly to include movie theaters, auditoriums, and other places holding large gatherings. T. Crockett noted that places of worship are allowed in any zone. P. Carson read the Special Use Permit regulations and confirmed that houses of worship, schools, colleges, libraries, city buildings, and mortuaries, etc. are allowed in any zone with a Special Use Permit and a public hearing.

T. Manning suggested combining businesses such as finance, insurance, real estate, candy manufacturing with sales, personal and business services, and other business-related classifications into one category. T. Manning asked members to review the table and bring any proposed changes to the next meeting. P. Carson reminded members that she e-mailed the Table of Permitted Uses to them on July 14, 2025.

8. Correspondence

The Connecticut Federation of Planning and Zoning Officials newsletter was in the meeting packet.

9. Adjournment

T. Crockett MOVED to ADJOURN the meeting at 8:56 p.m. J. Cropley SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:0.

Respectfully submitted by Kacie Cannon

Kacie Cannon

Please see the minutes of subsequent meetings for the approval of these minutes and any corrections hereto.