

Griswold Withdraws Application for Halls Road Village District at 11th Hour; HRIC Chair Twining Responds, Says “Withdrawal ... Was Last Minute Action Taken Without Notice or Consultation”

November 10, 2021 by [Olwen Logan](#) [1 Comment](#)



Old Lyme First Selectman Timothy Griswold (File photo)

OLD LYME — UPDATED 11/10 at 1:20am with HRIC Chair’s Response to withdrawal submission: Around lunchtime on Monday, Old Lyme First Selectman Timothy Griswold formally withdrew the Town of Old Lyme’s petition for the amendment of the Old Lyme Zoning Regulations to create the Halls Road Village District by submitting a letter to Paul Orzel, the chairman of the Old Lyme Zoning Commission.

The petition had been submitted to the Zoning Commission in September 2021 and the Public Hearing on the proposal was due to be continued at the Zoning Commission Monday evening.

In his letter, Griswold states, “It has come to my attention after the submission that the proper sequence of process was not followed ...” noting that he will send the proposal back to the Halls Road Improvement Committee (HRIC) for further review and “possible resubmission.”

Griswold continues, “When the Chairwoman of the HRIC [Edie Twining] asked me to sign the petition so the Town could be the formal applicant to the Zoning Commission, I had the distinct impression that the application had been reviewed and voted favorably upon by the full HRIC, and that it had been favorably reviewed by the Planning Commission.”

He adds, “Further, I understand there have been some subsequent important changes to the application that have required or will require amendments.”

In conclusion, he states, “I believe the withdrawal of the application at this time will allow a more thorough review to take place before the application is resubmitted.”

We asked HRIC Chairwoman Twining to comment on Griswold's action — our understanding is that it was not discussed with the committee in advance.

Here is her response, which was received Tuesday afternoon, to the actions of First Selectman Griswold:

The withdrawal of the Halls Road Village District application on November 8th, the day of the scheduled public hearing, was a last minute action taken without notice or consultation.

It was very unprofessional to spring this on the Halls Road Improvements Committee (HRIC). We had already notified residents by email to attend the public hearing as well as property owners by certified mail.

When I spoke with the First Selectman about the project on November 3rd, he made no mention of taking any such action and instead said he would look into getting funding for additional services related to zoning.

The zoning subcommittee has worked carefully with BSC Group to create a document for rezoning the C-30 (Commercial District) to a Halls Road Village District. We have assured residents and property owners that the initial proposal will definitely undergo revisions as we hear from the public.

Last night's meeting [Monday, Nov. 8] was to review the first revisions at the public hearing conducted by the Zoning Commission. The goal was to hear any further questions, and further revise as needed. It is our understanding, after asking ZEO Dan Bouret about the process, that this is the appropriate forum to collect and revise the proposed document.

By withdrawing the application it stops the public process and suggests this effort will either be dropped altogether or revised in private.

The zoning changes support the Halls Road Master Plan, which has been widely publicized, and was formally accepted by the HRIC as the template to use in going forward. That plan calls for public improvements and the zoning changes necessary to remake the mix of uses along Halls Road.

Our committee approved the Halls Road Master Plan in July 2021. We agreed that our next steps would require subcommittees to work on the details to follow up on the recommendations to the plan. These subgroups are for Grants, Zoning, and Signage.

When the zoning proposal was ready to submit, it was distributed among the whole committee at Mr. [David] Kelsey's recommendation. The email asked for comments and contained a schedule of all the next actions through final submission to the Zoning Commission, with no mention of any vote.

Surprisingly only the zoning subcommittee members supplied any comment. Mr. Kelsey had no comment, even though he requested to read it. He apologized for not doing so, finally, at this past October's meeting.

We are now hearing [from Mr. Griswold's letter withdrawing the petition from Zoning] that not conducting a vote that was never planned or called for, was somehow "not following proper procedure." There was no procedure requiring a vote of the whole committee. There was adequate time to ask for one, or even make comments, but no one did.

The committee has followed the advice of the Zoning Commission in navigating the process of changing zoning. To date, rezoning applications are not required to be posted on-line but the committee posted their application on the HRIC & Zoning town site once they were told it was allowed.

It is also not legally required to directly notify property owners of rezoning applications but the committee decided to send certified notifications because it is such an important district change.

We are listening to all comments, making revisions, and were intending to ask for a continuance beyond the December 13th deadline to make more time for public involvement.

This is an important initiative to protect Halls Road from becoming a service plaza for the highway. By introducing residential with commercial, property becomes more valuable, we answer the need for small-scale residential uses, and we aid in evolving the car-centric strip centers into the walkable, bike-able town center many residents have asked for.

The rezoning proposal is for Old Lyme. It is not for individual gain or recognition. It is not for investors. It is not a party issue. It is a way to protect and promote the hometown feel of Old Lyme.

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Comments

1.  Sandra Rueb says

[November 10, 2021 at 8:20 am](#)

As a community resident, I am saddened that Selectman Tim Griswold abruptly withdrew the application for rezoning the Halls Road commercial district. This public hearing was our second opportunity to voice our thoughts about rezoning to make a Halls Road

Village District. I understand there were revisions ready for this meeting that would explain revisions based on comments already supplied to the committee. I believe the zoning commission's public hearing is the right way to get to a final set of regulations that would allow mixed use on Halls Road.

We desperately need new housing options here in town. We also need to make sure we don't lose our shops or become a series of service stations for the highway. New zoning regulations are the way we, as a town, can make sure a new village district solves these challenges. I think it will take time and effort to get all the details worked out. Instead of working towards this end the application was withdrawn. Stopping this process doesn't make sense to me. How else can the Zoning Commission learn what we think of the proposed regulations?

A village district allowing mixed use will bring revenue to the town and help us maintain our town's main commercial area. Why is Tim Griswold blocking this effort?