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AUG 16 2023
Debrah W. Reed, AIC

TOWN OF SOUTH WINDSOR
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

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JULY 25, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT: Stephen Wagner, Bart Pacekonis, Robert Vetere, Alan Cavagnaro, Kevin Foley, Michael LeBlanc, Stephanie Dexter

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Paul Bernstein, Atif Quraishi, Carolyn Carey

STAFF PRESENT: Michele Lipe, Director of Planning; Jeffrey Folger, Senior Environmental Planner; Pamela Oliva, Zoning Enforcement Officer; Michael Lehman, IT Support; Joshua Stern, Administrative Secretary/Land Use Coordinator

The meeting was held at the Community Center, 150 Nevers Road.

Chair Pacekonis called the public hearing to order at 7:01pm.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Wagner read the legal notice.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. **Appl. 23-25P The Metro Realty Management Corporation** – request for a zone change of approx. 4.82 acres from Buckland Gateway Development Zone to the Multifamily Assisted Housing (MAHZ) to include a portion of 240 Deming Street (4.82 ac) and a portion of 440 Buckland Road (.36 ac), including conceptual plan in accordance with Sec 7.22.2.A. (continued from 7-11-23)

Attorney Tim Hollister, Hinckley Allen, represented the applicant. Also present was Ben Tripp, Metro Realty. The applicant team presented Exhibit A.

Attorney Hollister gave a brief summary of the presentation the applicant team gave at the previous meeting, noting that 15 of the 72 units would be market rate and outlining the affordability levels of the rest of the units. He responded to concerns about overcrowding the school system by saying that few school-age children live in 1- or 2-bedroom rental units (Exhibit A). The target population for this and similar developments is older adults looking to downsize and people beginning their careers and facing life transitions; a portion of these units would also be reserved for adults with intellectual disabilities. He requested that speakers be specific and back up their concerns with evidence when possible.

Director of Planning Michele Lipe provided the Planning report.

1. Request for a zone change of approx. 5.2 acres from Buckland Gateway Development Zone to the Multifamily Assisted Housing (MAHZ) to include a portion of 240 Deming Street (4.82 ac) and a portion of 440 Buckland Road (.36 ac), including conceptual plan in accordance with Sec 7.22.2.A.
2. The application is being submitted as a CGS §8-30g Affordable Housing application under Sec 7.22.2 Multi-Family Assisted Housing of the zoning regulations. The purpose of this regulation is to allow “Assisted Housing” projects that will qualify for publicly-financed “assisted Housing.” The affordability narrative provided by the applicant, this development is being designed to provide housing suited to the needs of all ages and income levels and will accommodate a supportive population as well. The land use process for this use requires the submission of a zone change with a concept plan including unit counts and proposed layout. If approved, a special exception/site plan application will be required.
3. In acting upon the zone change, the Commission shall consider the various factors favorable and unfavorable to such a change, including but not limited to:
 - The goals, objectives, and recommendations of the Plan of Conservation and Development;
 - The purposes of zoning and of these regulations;

- Changes that have taken place in the rate and pattern of development and land use within the Town and adjoining communities;
 - The supply of land available in the present and proposed zone;
 - The physical suitability of the land for the proposed zone;
 - The impact on the capacity of the present and proposed utilities, streets, drainage systems, and other improvements;
 - The general character and zoning of the neighborhood;
 - Impacts on the surrounding area;
 - Traffic congestion impacts;
 - The impact on surrounding property values;
 - The environmental impacts;
 - The health and general welfare of the community;
 - Neighborhood acceptance weighed against community needs; and
 - The protection of historic factors.
4. Other criteria for this zone include only commercial properties that are adjacent to residential zones; with a minimum of 4 acres and 400 feet of road frontage and a minimum of 15% to be dedicated as conservation land.
 5. This commercial site is surrounded by residentially-zoned land to the south and east and Buckland Gateway Development zone to the north and west. Properties in the commercial zone are currently developed with housing. This property has in excess of 400 feet of frontage on Deming Street.
 6. The current Town Plan depicts this area as Commercial which does include medium-high density residential. The Town Plan notes, for example, that medium-high density residential developments might be limited to those areas having direct access to state routes or where they serve to buffer less dense residential developments from commercial development.
- Other housing strategies in the plan include:
- Protecting established neighborhoods from business encroachment; Offer a range of housing choices to help meet the needs of the community; Allow flexibility in meeting emerging housing preferences and needs; support housing that helps achieve economic and transportation goals.
7. In the Affordable Housing plan adopted by the town in June of 2022, one of the strategies identified was to increase “assisted housing” in town. The Guide location for these types of higher density projects includes areas of the town where public water and sewer currently exist; bus transit service close by and pedestrian amenities (within walking distance to the stores). See map on page 22.
 8. This project will provide South Windsor with additional affordable units towards the State’s “10%” list. While South Windsor is currently at 6.7% of housing stock as affordable units, based on the affordable housing we have created, the Town has qualified for a 4-year exemption from affordable housing appeals which is in effect until October of 2024. It should be noted since that moratorium we have not built any new affordable units; however, we do have affordable units in both the Sullivan Ave (Geissler project) and the new apartments under consideration in Evergreen Walk.
 9. The concept development plan shows the site will have a single access drive off of Deming Street. The applicant has provided a traffic report indicating the number of new trips anticipated from this development. Engineering will comment further on the traffic report.
 10. There is an existing sidewalk in front of this site (from Buckland Road intersection) that will be extended into the site. A bus shelter is being proposed along the frontage.
 11. The site does contain a small area of regulated wetlands in the northeasterly corner. An application has been submitted the IWA/CC and is scheduled to be heard on July 19.
 12. Public water and sewer are available to the site. A letter has been submitted from CT water demonstrating water capacity as well as sewer information to the Supt of Pollution Control. Water Pollution Control Authority approval is required.
 13. At the site plan stage, the plans will have to demonstrate compliance with zoning requirements related to: building height, coverage ratios, parking requirement, landscaping, open space, etc.

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14. The applicant will also be required to submit an affordability plan that indicates how the applicant will administer the Plan for the duration of the affordability restrictions.

15. The Architectural and Design Review Committee will review the plans at the site plan submission.

If this zone change is approved, the Commission must state on the record that you have found the zone change to be consistent with the Town Plan of Conservation and Development and the Town's Affordable Housing Plan.

Speakers in favor of the application included: Jim Clyburn of 50 Elm Street said his daughter, who has a disability, got a job and gained independence with coaching from MARC, Inc., the nonprofit partnering with the applicant. He said South Windsor values inclusion and spoke about what supportive housing allows people with intellectual disabilities to gain, including the ability to be part of a community. He said the proposed housing is a new emerging model and would allow individuals who cannot drive to take the bus to work and walk to nearby venues.

Rachel Bailey of 137 Orchard Hill Drive said South Windsor is a family-oriented community where people look out for each other. She works with children with disabilities and said their families often express concerns about housing as they become adults; some join waitlists for complexes an hour or more from their homes. She said the proposed development would allow these individuals to stay in their community and that South Windsor has a need for this type of housing; she asked the Commission to consider the evidence that the public's concerns about traffic and safety would not come to fruition.

James Bailey of 137 Orchard Hill Drive said there is a critical shortage of housing in South Windsor and Connecticut in general, and the solution is to build more housing. He said one-fourth of South Windsor residents are currently spending 30% or more of their income on rent. He noted the thorough traffic study and said studies have consistently shown that the impact of affordable housing on nearby property values is negligible; in some cases, property values have increased near affordable housing developments. He also said the existing affordable developments in South Windsor have not increased crime.

Rebecca Shinkoff of 49 Loon Place said inclusion is a human right and the community should strive to embrace all people regardless of ability or economic needs; she said people who oppose affordable housing developments in their neighborhoods pose a barrier to inclusion. She said the South Windsor school district has roughly 700 students with special needs, who will soon be adult residents who will need housing. She said concerns about traffic delays, noise, and impacts to the schools should be weighed against the positive impacts the development would have on the Town.

Caroline Shinkoff of 49 Loon Place said the community is experiencing an affordable housing crisis and not everyone has had the luxury of growing up in a single-family home; South Windsor does not yet meet the State requirement for 10% of its housing to be affordable. She also said she is in favor of supportive housing as she is the older sister of an individual with intellectual disabilities, who has expressed her desire to live in an apartment when she is older. She said people with disabilities both need and want housing, and the proposed development would be in close proximity to public transportation and amenities, allowing them to participate in the community. She said the community should strive to accept and support all individuals.

Bill McAvoy of 497 Foster Street said there is a need for housing and proposals like this one should be encouraged. He said the project's engineers are able to address any traffic-related issues and that overcrowding needs to be addressed whether or not this application is approved; denying it because of overcrowding would suggest that the Town is closed to all new developments. In response to concerns about safety and noise, he said he lived in apartments for over 25 years and was never accused of being unsafe or noisy, and he only occasionally experienced noise from neighboring tenants; he said apartment dwellers learn to live together and

homeowners are more likely to make noise that disrupts the neighbors. He said people who cite safety and noise concerns in opposing the application should be specific about what they mean.

Marek Kozikowski of 863 Clark Street, Town Council Liaison to the PZC, spoke as a Councilor, certified planner, and nearby resident. He feels the issue of social obligation is overshadowed by State laws such as CGS 8-30g, which requires municipalities to meet a threshold of 10% affordability in their housing stock; he believes stricter laws will be passed that could cut off discretionary funding to municipalities that do not comply with this requirement. He reminded the Commission that if the application is denied, once the moratorium on affordable housing expires, South Windsor will no longer be protected from the 8-30g appeals process, allowing developers to ignore zoning requirements regarding density, setbacks, building height, and other features.

Attorney John H. Parks, representing neighboring property owners opposed to the application, presented Exhibit B. He first submitted a petition from property owners within 500' of the proposed location; per CGS 8-3b, the Town staff will calculate whether the signers own a total of 20% or more of the surrounding land. He then submitted three petitions to intervene, signed by property owners within 100' of the site, as well as a petition for Commissioner Cavagnaro to recuse himself. The residents who signed the latter petition feel Commissioner Cavagnaro's involvement in Desegregate CT and comments he has made about affordable housing show he would be predetermined in favor of this application.

Attorney Parks said that per the regulations, only parcels zoned AA-30 and abutting property on which there is an existing multi-family development shall be proposed for inclusion in the MAHZ. The proposed MAHZ location currently contains property in two separate zones and abuts housing for people over 55, which is not considered multi-family housing. He said these location issues impact the density of the development as the housing would be in the Gateway Zone, with the residential portion being used as open space.

Speakers against the application, and with questions and comments, included: Mark DiCiancia of 39 Debbie Drive said he feels there has been a lack of transparency with regard to this application. He said he is not against development, but the residents' tax dollars are increasing, and he feels the Town needs to think properly about development as it is losing its sense of community; he said the proposed development would add expenses to the community.

Chair Pacekonis said the three petitions have been received with the intent to verify them and consult with the legal department.

Jack McCabe of 56 Gilbert Lane said the people opposed to the development are not ignorant or opposed to inclusion, but feel the plan is poorly thought out and would negatively affect the neighborhood. He has seen traffic become heavy over the last few years, increasing pollution and dangers to pedestrians; he has seen very few pedestrians since he moved to town. He is concerned about the impact on access to Deming Street, saying residents and emergency, sanitation, and police vehicles can access certain areas on the hill only by Deming, which does not have room for a sidewalk. He said traffic has increased since Costco was built, and the police no longer station a patrol car on Deming to enforce the speed of ingress and egress; he projects that the development would lead to cars being parked throughout Deming Hill.

Bobby McCabe of 56 Gilbert Lane said the mass extinction of life on earth is a pressing environmental issue, and the biggest driver of extinction is destruction of natural habitats. He said projects like the proposed one lead to the incremental destruction of forests, a fact that has long been known by ecologists; he is struck by the project's disregard for the natural areas of the property and said deforestation worsens erosion and flooding, impacts biodiversity, and makes the air warmer. He does not share all of his neighbors' concerns and understands the need for affordable housing but feels the project could be designed with preservation of the natural spaces in mind.

Vicky Margiott of 32 Sele Drive said the neighbors have sensed a sentiment that they knew about the nearby Buckland Gateway Zone when they bought their properties, but many of them bought their homes before the Gateway Zone was established. The area was zoned agricultural when she moved to the area. The PZC created the Gateway Zone three years later without much public knowledge, eventually deciding to set it as far back from Buckland Road as possible and opening it up to grocery stores; she said the PZC did not notify abutters of

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this change. She later served as a citizen representative for a review of the Gateway Zone, and when she argued against apartments, she was told any apartments in the zone would be upscale units behind Evergreen Walk with few school-age children; there is now a day care near Tempo, with many school buses. In 2006, the Town addressed the conflict between the residential zone and the Gateway Zone, allowing the church to sell lots along Deming as part of the AA-30 zone; she hopes the Commission will honor this decision with respect to the site of the current proposal. She said construction in the Gateway Zone has negatively impacted views in the neighborhood, which contribute to property values, and caused issues with noise and light, which the proposed change would worsen. She feels the proposed development would be a worse disturbance than other potential uses as it would cause disruption 24 hours a day; in response to the argument about access to grocery stores, she said the decision to allow grocery stores in the Gateway Zone in the first place has led to a number of issues.

Vincent Attianese of 33 Sele Drive said he is not opposed to multi-family assisted housing but feels the proposed development does not fit; the parcel is just 1 acre over the required minimum size, and the density is significantly higher than similar developments. He noted the Affordable Housing Plan's recommendation that developments be located in walkable, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly areas with a sense of place; he said the abutting conservation land prevents a sense of place and there are no sidewalks to the grocery store, and that the proposal is for spot zoning, not a transition zone. He also noted the requirement in the MAHZ regulations that the zone abut property with a multi-family development, which the nearby assisted living facility is not. He said accidents at Deming and Buckland have increased by 250% since 2019, and he feels they would increase due to traffic queueing issues, particularly during bad weather. He noted the requirement in the regulations to provide safe and orderly vehicular and pedestrian flow, saying Deming is already overcrowded and will be used increasingly as a cut-through to Costco and Whole Foods. He said the requirement for noise to be under 45 db at the property line is difficult to enforce at a multi-family development; he expressed concern about children playing near the road and said there are better-suited locations listed in the Affordable Housing Plan.

Annamae Davis of 9 Ridge Road said her road does not get much traffic other than residents. There were no developments nearby when she moved there, and when housing for individuals over 55 was proposed for the area, the residents fought the proposal, which was ultimately denied. She said the increase in traffic on Deming already makes the road unsafe, and tandem trucks take up large amounts of space when they stop there; she favors housing developments but said she fears for people's lives given the unsafe road.

Raul Cruz of 241 Deming Street said he lives across from the church and moved to the neighborhood because it was quiet and had a sense of belonging. He does not oppose affordable housing, but expressed concern about high-speed traffic on Deming Street as well as the ability of the location to accommodate 72 apartments; he said the applicant did not research whether the development would increase or decrease the nearby property values or property taxes.

Mark Basile of 20 Sele Drive read a letter from State Senator Saud Anwar, who said he had visited the site and spoken with the neighbors and concluded that the project would not be safe due to density and traffic issues. Senator Anwar believes the site could accommodate up to 15 apartments.

John Samsel of 333 Deming Street said he has lived on Deming since it was mostly a farm road; the road rises in the center, and he recently saw a semitrailer and an ambulance driving through while 11 children were by the side of the road. He feels sidewalks should be placed along Deming, Ridge Road, and Summit Street and that the road should be widened as trucks' wheels hang at least 10 inches over the center line. He also thinks the traffic study was conducted before the shopping centers were built, making the numbers significantly off. He said the Gateway Zone was intended to be aesthetically pleasing with many amenities, and he does not currently see it that way. He said the PZC should evaluate the surroundings of the site and expressed concern about light

coming from Buckland Road and Deming; he said there should be a left-turn signal from Deming onto Buckland and that the traffic study should be redone.

Jill Pasqualoni of 15 Grandview Terrace said she and her neighbors are opposed not to the apartment complex but to the location. She said Ben Tripp had claimed that the location has walkability to Stop & Shop and Evergreen Walk, but she recently walked from Calvary Church to Stop & Shop and back and noticed significant inclines on Buckland and Deming, making it difficult to walk while carrying groceries. She said the round trip to Evergreen Walk is longer and noted that drivers turning right on red pose a danger to pedestrians; many drivers also run yellow and red lights and use cell phones while driving. She expressed concern for the special-needs population and their caretakers and said she would support the development if it were located within Evergreen Walk or near Stop & Shop; she has worked with children with special needs and does not feel this location is right for them. She encouraged the Commission to walk the area and to consider who would benefit from the location.

Ivy Farinella of 594 Deming Street said she is not opposed to affordable or supportive housing but opposes it at this location, saying traffic has increased since Costco was built and drivers often do not obey the stop signs. She often has difficulty walking to her mailbox or has to wait for multiple cars when exiting her driveway; she said trucks cause problems as well and that the traffic study should be redone.

Jeff Holcombe of 33 Woodmar Circle said he feels affordable housing disincentivizes people to work their way up financially as they would lose access to that level of housing. He said there are better ways to provide housing for people from disadvantaged areas and that a personal connection is lost when government policy takes care of people in need, saying it leads them to lose their humanity, dignity, and sense of self. He opposes the application for these reasons and said the Town should make decisions based on what it thinks is the right thing, not fear of repercussions from the State.

Dwight Johnson of 84 Brian Road expressed concern about whether the developers would keep their word, saying he feels their ability to help seniors has been weak and his concern is with taking care of people. He said Deming Street is used by many as a shortcut to Evergreen Walk and Costco and the residents should not be burdened further.

Shiju David of 18 French Lane said he does not oppose affordable housing, but the location is not right. He said it is ironic that the Commission is considering adding apartments given that the meeting location had to be moved to accommodate the number of people who wished to voice their opinions; he questioned whether the Town is growing in a sustainable manner. He expressed concern about the middle and high schools, the Town swimming pool, and other amenities being overburdened, and asked the developers to put themselves in the shoes of the residents and consider whether they would support this development in their neighborhood. He said Costco and Aldi have increased traffic, as will Whole Foods, and that he does not need to be an expert to understand the development would increase traffic, noting that residents would also receive visitors. He said he and his neighbors chose the area for its serenity and safety and pay high taxes, and the proposed development would be unsustainable.

Margaret Tanner Glover of 247 Deming Street said the applicant's plans would involve destroying over 40 trees, including 10 oaks; she said trees provide shade and oxygen and that heat records have been broken this month. She used to live in a MAHZ in another town and does not oppose them but agrees that the traffic is high; she said the traffic study is out of date, and observing the road from her house would lead the engineers to a different conclusion. She said the concerns about overcrowding stem from the proposal to fit 72 units onto the site and noted that Zillow gives her property a walkability rating of 43, meaning cars are necessary. She wants the earth to cool and noted multiple bird species that live in the trees, encouraging the developers to consider what they would destroy. She said a 30-unit development could allow the trees to be preserved and that she and the neighbors would welcome a medical building or restaurant, which would not generate traffic and light 24 hours a day.

Virendra Shah of 36 Castlewood Drive said development comes with a cost and he has seen traffic increase over the last five years. He said the opposition to the proposal deserves representation as provided by Attorney Parks, and he feels the development would increase the burden to taxpayers and create law-enforcement issues

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for the Town. He also expressed skepticism about the traffic study, saying a different expert could argue the opposite conclusion based on the same facts.

Rebecca Stewart of 76 Newmarker Road said she feels every acre of land does not need to be developed, noting multiple natural and agricultural areas that have become housing developments over the years. She said the applicant is assuming residents would want to walk to Stop & Shop and the nearby medical buildings, noting that the region often experiences inclement weather and sidewalks may not be cleared in a timely manner. She also said residents would not necessarily choose to switch to medical providers at the nearby ECHN buildings or have insurance that those providers accept; she said grocery shopping by foot is inconvenient and most travel in and out of the development would be by car. She said the student populations of the elementary schools are increasing, and the South Windsor Woods development increased Pleasant Valley's enrollment by several times what the developer had projected. She said families are desperate to move to South Windsor and this influx is weakening the schools, citing several examples; she does not feel the school system could accommodate the proposed complex, noting that the number of bedrooms does not limit how many children would live in an apartment. She expressed skepticism about walkability and said educational and recreational activities and summer camps would also be overburdened by the influx of residents. She agreed that Commissioner Cavagnaro should recuse himself and said the Commission's responsibility is to listen to the concerns of residents, the majority of whom at this meeting are not in favor.

Mike Ouellette of 101 Longmeadow Drive said he used to live on Cardinal Way and Elmore Way and has seen the traffic increase dramatically; he noted that Whole Foods will impact the traffic on Deming as much as Costco. He said if the Commission approves this application, they would likely be legally bound to approve a similar application across the street. He said under SB 998, South Windsor is required to build 1,422 affordable housing units over the next 10 years, and the Town needs to develop a long-term strategy to enable the schools, transportation, and other services to accommodate this additional housing. He feels the location and time are wrong for this application and asked the Commission to represent the people.

Ralph Riola of 552 Deming Street said Deming is a hilly, narrow road with many dips and curves. He said the picturesque views from Deming give the neighborhood a quiet, rural character, and many residents walk and cycle there; he said single-family homes continue to be built on Deming. He has driven a wide range of vehicles professionally and is confident traffic from the development would travel east on Deming more often than the Buckland Road route; he has test-driven both routes and said the Buckland Road route is far slower. He said traffic will increase in both directions once the school year begins, and at least six school bus routes run along Deming; he expressed concern about the safety of children at the bus stops and buses holding up traffic. He asked the Commission to follow the spirit of the law by denying the application.

Craig Fenn of 400 Deming Street said he moved there because it was a quiet residential area where his children could safely spend time in the front yard. He noted the exponential increase in traffic in recent years and said he could not justify adding 72 apartments to the road.

Bill Ezedine of 13 Gilbert Lane said Metro Realty is not a charity and questioned why they have proposed to build the development at this location. In response to Attorney Hollister's request that the public provide evidence, he said the public wishes to speak their opinions and should not have to hire experts. He said he and his neighbors would support the project if it were proposed in another location.

Khaled Alqaddumi of 36 Grandview Terrace said the people who support the project tend to live far from the site. When he had a death in the family, the street was blocked due to the number of people coming to pay their respects, and he had to hire a valet service; he said the development would have an even greater effect.

Loc Pho of 260 Deming Street said he recognizes the need for affordable housing but opposes the application as an abutter due to health and safety issues. He said according to data from the Town Police Department, accidents in the intersections have increased 250% since before the COVID pandemic, a fact supported by the UConn Crash Data Repository. He said Buckland is the most dangerous road in town, noting that the sidewalk is on the opposite side of Buckland from the proposed project and expressing concern about residents crossing the street.

Anita Attianese of 33 Sele Drive said the role of zoning is to protect property values, prevent nuisances, ensure capability between adjacent land uses, and protect land and natural resources, and the proposed zone change fails on these accounts. She said it would negatively affect quality of life and property values in the neighborhood and that Metro Realty has a track record of not maintaining their properties. She expressed concern about noise, lighting, traffic, and rodents at the dumpsters and said that because there is no recreation space, people might use the conservation area for parking, picnics, and other activities. She said the land is not compatible between adjacent uses and that pedestrians would cut through others' properties to reach the bus stop; she expressed concern about eliminating trees, wetlands, and the wildlife translation path. The residents had been told in 2006 that the conflict regarding the depth of the Gateway Zone had been resolved, and she and her family had chosen to stay in their home based on this decision; she said the Affordable Housing Plan recommends Town-owned properties for this type of development.

Srinivas Vemuri of 364 Deming Street said he is not opposed to affordable housing or supporting the disabled, and this is not mutually exclusive with opposing this application. When he and his family moved to Deming, they were concerned that the road was too busy, and he said it has since become unbearable with the addition of Costco and the lack of sidewalks; he noted that Whole Foods and a medical office will open soon in the area. He said South Windsor is a desirable location where people wish to move and that a holistic approach should be taken to evaluating development proposals, considering the impact to taxpayers and the Town as a whole; he asked the Commission to consider input from the Education Department and the public and said he feels the proposal is a safety hazard.

Mohan Kocherla of 45 Sele Drive said he is the father of a child with special needs, and members of that population need a calm environment; he is concerned about building housing intended for them near a busy intersection. He said his children have noticed that the school bus has been arriving 5-10 minutes later, and he recently noticed a car speeding past a school bus with its stop sign out; he expressed concern about children who live in the units standing outdoors. He said the development could increase the already long lines at M&T Bank's drive-up ATM, affecting traffic on Deming, and also noted the upcoming dermatology office; he said there are enough logical points to deny the application.

Rosalind Hoagland of 276 Quarry Brook Drive said she does not live near Deming and supports affordable housing but is concerned about the cost of this development to the citizens. She moved to town before the mall, Target, and Evergreen Walk were built, when there was more agricultural land, and has seen the Town grow rapidly; she said renovating the elementary schools was a 10-year project and the schools are still not big enough, noting the significant expansion of Pleasant Valley School over the decades. She would be concerned about this development anywhere in town and recommended a 10-year plan to address the impacts of adding housing rather than continuing development at the same pace; she expressed concern about the impact of the development on the Town budget.

Albert Allard of 247 Deming Street said that per the regulations, the purpose of the Gateway Zone is high-quality development with careful attention to appearance; he said no-amenity housing is the antithesis of this goal and that the proposed development is too dense for the location. He said the balconies would be visible from Deming and Grandview Terrace, causing an eyesore as tenants often use balconies to store trash and household items; he submitted photos to back up this observation. He said landscaping is deficient at the Berry Patch property, also owned by Metro Realty, and he feels Metro's properties fall below the professional standard of the Gateway Zone. He said the regulations call for areas reserved for open space to be distributed throughout the site, and the only open space proposed is off to one side and likely to be misused.

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Rich Delhaie of 95 Cody Circle said there are reasonable people on both sides of this issue, and he would support the application if it met the zoning regulations. He said Section 7.22.18 states that if any provision of the MAHZ regulations conflicts with a generally applicable provision of the regulations, Section 7.22 will control; he said Section 7.22.4 states that only a parcel zoned AA-30 and abutting an existing multi-family development, and commercial properties adjacent to residential areas, shall be proposed for the MAHZ. He said the two properties of the proposed zone change are currently bound in no legal manner and the commercial portion does not abut any residential property; he said combining the two properties after the fact does not comply with the regulation. He assumes the applicant added the residential parcel to maximize the number of units; he recommended that they either reduce the number of units or go through the resubdivision process and resubmit the application.

Anthony Amato of 2 Elmore Way said he grew up in the neighborhood when there was more farmland, before there was a stop sign on Deming. He concurred with an earlier speaker's concern about the applicant team's request to speak only with facts. He said summer camps and other recreational programs in town should not sell out in a matter of minutes and expressed concern about overburdening the rebuilt schools; he asked the Commission to serve as a voice for the residents.

Rebecca Stewart said she is not against affordable or supportive housing but feels the development should be scaled back to 24 units. She presented a series of statistics showing recent increases in enrollment in the South Windsor schools, saying they are overwhelmed and the development would increase these numbers even more.

Sue Larsen of 350 Deming Street said that when she first moved to the neighborhood, there was hardly any traffic on Sunday mornings. She had observed the traffic on the road this past Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning and counted significant numbers of cars.

Dennis Cao of 58 Sele Drive said Metro Realty is a business aiming to maximize income; the residents are not against affordable or supportive housing but feel the application should be denied for safety reasons. He said that if Metro Realty wishes to advance their stated goals, they could scale back the development or propose it in another location.

Mike Fischer of 38 Red Rock Lane said he feels property values are the bottom line and his property taxes have increased over 65% in the last 17 years. He lives under a mile from the site and concurred with a concern stated earlier that approving this application would set a precedent for approving similar developments nearby, especially with Watson Farm and Berry Patch already in the area. He said he and his neighbors are not against affordable or supportive housing, but noted that supportive housing would account for only 15 of the units; he said it is incumbent on the Commission to preserve home values.

John Stengel of 5 Red Rock Lane said he is opposed to the petition calling for the recusal of Commissioner Cavagnaro, who has no financial interest in the outcome and was duly elected to the PZC. He feels all Commissioners will vote based on their education, their principles, and the information submitted to the record.

Councilor Kozikowski said he feels the issue of affordable housing is bigger than the Town and that if it is forced out of the hands of the Commission by State statutes, concerns about traffic, schools, and budgets would go unaddressed. He said Metro Realty has been a good partner for South Windsor and other towns and has demonstrated an ability to adjust plans to accommodate the Town's needs; he concurred with Ben Tripp's prediction that the development would be favorable for competitive funding from the State. He said he would favor a site plan with fewer units and more buffers. He would also like the applicant to clarify the anticipated process for obtaining land use approvals for the project depending on whether the zone change is approved. He asked the applicant to outline a marketing plan and elaborate on what income levels would qualify for the affordable units; he expressed support for MARC's involvement and asked for details about making the units

available to South Windsor residents with disabilities. He asked why the driveways are nearly double the minimum size and asked the applicant to consider reducing the 65' curb cut or separating the driveway into two; he suggested moving the bus shelter to Buckland Road due to traffic issues and concurred with the public's concerns about pedestrian safety at the Deming-Buckland intersection. He asked the Commission and the applicant to consider public interest and attempt to make accommodations.

Margaret Glover spoke on behalf of a resident of Berry Patch, who was involved in the creation of a bill Representative Delnicki co-sponsored due to Berry Patch's predatory practices. She said landscaping is deficient at Metro Realty's properties and that she feels Metro Realty has proposed 72 units to maximize income; she said the residents of Berry Patch have reported that their rents are increasing and their appliances are not replaced in a timely manner.

John Samsel said he is a volunteer firefighter and some fire trucks would be unable to turn into and out of the parking lot as currently designed. He recommended adding a three-way stop sign at the intersection of Sele and Deming or a traffic light at Deming, Ridge, and Summit, as the existing sign is not easily visible; he mentioned speed bumps as another option.

Vicky Margiott said Metro Realty is not a good neighbor and encouraged the Commission to view the photos Albert Allard submitted of balconies being used for storage. She said Metro does not maintain their properties, noting numerous tree stumps and damage from vehicles at Watson Farm and Berry Patch and saying these properties do not belong near the Gateway Zone. She said the proposal does not match the nearby architecture, and the traffic engineer's comparison to a coffee shop is irrelevant as drive-throughs are not allowed in the Gateway Zone. She said when affordable housing is put in an area that is not depressed, it drops the surrounding property values; she thinks Costco has already impacted property values in the area and said the PZC is obligated to maintain them. She asked the Commission not to let the pressure to meet affordable housing requirements cause them to make the wrong decision for the location, saying the development would be anomalous in every direction and the PZC rewrote the requirements for affordable housing without notifying abutters. She said affordable housing should be placed near other apartments and noted that Costco customers leave grocery carts at the bus station on the corner of Buckland Road.

Members of the public in opposition submitted Exhibit C.

Letters in support of the application from James Bailey, Laurie Theroux, Aarav Nair, and James Shinkoff, and letters against the application from Dawn Holcombe, Maria, Manjusha Vasanthapuram, Sathish, Sandra Chicky, Antonio Cosme-Plein, and Joan Walsh, were read into the record.

The Chair asked for Commissioner questions and comments.

Commissioner Cavagnaro concurred with Councilor Kozikowski's comments regarding curb cuts and other recommended changes. He would also be in favor of relocating the trash pickup or removing some parking spaces from that area.

Commissioner Vetere said the public's concerns about the traffic study should be addressed.

Commissioner Foley concurred with Commissioner Vetere's concern about the traffic study, noting the discrepancies between it and the public's observations. He said he plans to visit the area. He said the residents bought their properties with the knowledge that 240 Deming was in the Gateway Zone, not MAHZ, and he feels property values are an issue. Chair Pacekonis noted that some of the property owners bought their homes before the Gateway Zone was established there.

Commissioner Wagner asked about the Town's progress toward the State's affordable housing requirements. Michele Lipe said the Town is at 6.7% of the 10% goal; she will calculate the number of units still necessary. Commissioner Wagner asked about taxes. Ben Tripp said the property would be taxed as it would no longer be owned by the church and the applicant is not requesting any tax abatement. In response to public comments about abutting the AA-30 zone, Commissioner Wagner said the regulations also reference commercial zones, which would include the Gateway Zone. He said affordable units would impact the schools regardless of where they are built, and that the traffic situation is not ideal and the traffic study is incremental.

TOWN OF SOUTH WINDSOR
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

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Commissioner LeBlanc said he feels the Gateway Zone is working and he is not in favor of zoning changes within it, noting the setback requirements in the zone and saying Buckland Road serves as an effective gateway to the Town. He is not against affordable housing and is a major proponent of the ADA but feels this is not the right location; however, he will continue to examine the issue.

Commissioner Wagner made a motion to extend the public hearing to no later than 10:45 p.m. Commissioner Dexter seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Dexter said she is generally opposed to zone changes as zones are established for reasons, with significant thought put into the process.

Commissioner Carey said she will ask a follow-up question at the next meeting about the 2006 change.

Commissioner Quraishi agrees with the public's concerns about traffic and the school system and asked the applicant to elaborate on how they came to the numbers in the application.

Chair Pacekonis asked how the applicant could guarantee compliance with the proposal to reserve 25% of the units for individuals with intellectual disabilities. He asked if the complex would have management, a superintendent or property manager, or a rental office onsite. He concurred with many of Councilor Kozikowski's points and asked the applicant to present a timeline. Chair Pacekonis noted the changes in elevation on the site and asked if retaining walls would be necessary. He said it is important to protect tree lines and expressed concern about the vegetative setbacks and the existing buffers, which give the residents of Berry Patch a sense of security; he thinks the proposed density would cause the buffer to be reduced by half. He asked about noise and maintenance issues caused by the pumping station and the location of the stormwater basin.

Commissioner Wagner said he is sensitive to input from the public but asked how much flexibility the Commission would have to deny the application given the State legislation on affordable housing. Lipe said the moratorium was put in place because the Town had earned enough points to qualify. After the moratorium expires in October 2024, a denial of a qualifying application would need to be defended in court.

At 10:41 p.m. Commissioner Wagner made a motion to continue the public hearing to August 15, 2023. Commissioner LeBlanc seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

REGULAR MEETING

The Commission did not open the regular meeting.

APPLICATIONS OFFICIALLY RECEIVED: Appl 23-33P, Pete's RV T & C Renewal – request for a 2-year temporary and conditional permit (Section 2.13.a) for storage of up to 35 RV campers, on property located at 395 John Fitch Boulevard, GC zone.

The meeting adjourned at 10:41 p.m. in accordance with Article 9, Section 3 (by-laws require regular business to be completed by 10:00 p.m. unless a 2/3 motion to extend the meeting has been made and approved).

Respectfully Submitted,

Joshua Stern
Administrative Secretary/Land Use Coordinator