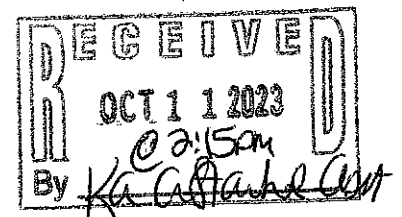


**TOWN OF SOUTH WINDSOR
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION**



MINUTES

-1-

SEPTEMBER 19, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT: Stephen Wagner, Bart Pacekonis, Alan Cavagnaro, Kevin Foley (left at 7:23 p.m.), Stephanie Dexter

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Paul Bernstein, Carolyn Carey (left at 6:55 p.m.)

STAFF PRESENT: Michele Lipe, Director of Planning; Michael Lehmann, IT Support; Joshua Stern, Recording Secretary (arrived at 6:55 p.m.)

SPECIAL MEETING

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Pacekonis called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Commissioners Bernstein and Carey were seated for Commissioners Vetere and LeBlanc.

6:30 PM EXECUTIVE SESSION

Discussion related to litigation for **Appl. 21-11P, REESG Newco South Windsor, LLC** – request for a Zone Change from General Commercial Zone (GC) to Sullivan Ave Mixed Use Development Overlay Zone (SAMUD) of 19 +/- acres and General Plan of Development for the renovation of 60,740 sf of commercial space and the development of 125 apartment units, on property known as Sullivan Avenue Plaza, located at 959, 1017 and 1079 Sullivan Avenue, GC zone

Commissioner Wagner made a motion to enter Executive Session, including Michele Lipe, Director of Planning. Commissioner Dexter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously and the Commission entered Executive Session at 6:35 p.m.

Commissioner Wagner made a motion to exit Executive Session. Commissioner Cavagnaro seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously and the Commission exited Executive Session at 6:55 p.m.

Commissioner Carey left the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

7:00 PM PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

NEW BUSINESS: Discussion regarding the Plan of Conservation and Development with consultant SLAM:

1. Project Schedule

Pat Gallagher, AICP, of SLAM, presented **Exhibit A**. He began by briefly previewing the project schedule.

2. Recap of Key Community Trends

Gallagher began by outlining the trends in demographics over the last 10 years, noting that South Windsor gained approximately 1,200 residents between 2010 and 2020, putting its growth rate in the top 10% for the State. This increase was mainly due to net migration; he noted the generational turnover as families whose children are grown sell their homes to younger families. The percentage of the Town population 65 and over has increased; most are at the younger end of this age group, but may develop new needs with regard to housing and services over the next 10 years. There has been an increase in residents in their 20s and 30s as well. In response to a comment from Commissioner Wagner, Gallagher noted that because all people have aged since the previous survey, a decrease in an age group does not necessarily mean people are moving out of town. Commissioner Bernstein said he thinks these trends are largely driven by life changes.

Gallagher said the Town has added 500 new housing units, half of them multi-family, since the last POCD review. The share of the population living in rental units has also increased. He said that as of July, the average

TOWN OF SOUTH WINDSOR
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

MINUTES

-2-

SEPTEMBER 19, 2023

monthly rent in South Windsor was \$2,200. He noted the Commission's proactive approach to planning for affordable housing.

Gallagher said the Town continues to have a strong industrial base, which remains its largest employment sector, with the transportation and warehousing sector a close second. The Town has netted just under 1,750 jobs, approximately 1,500 of which were in transportation and warehousing. About 17% of South Windsor residents commute to Hartford for work, and the Town's warehousing and transportation industries are drawing workers from throughout the region. The median annual income is approximately \$127,000.

Chair Pacekonis said high-end industrial is a stronger tax base than transportation and warehousing. Commissioner Wagner noted that the Town has lost jobs in manufacturing and professional, scientific, and tech services. In response to a question from Commissioner Dexter, Michele Lipe said the \$127,000 median income is calculated using a different source than the affordable housing requirements. Gallagher said most of the construction jobs are through trades companies based in South Windsor.

Gallagher showed the land use map and said the amount of residential land has increased; commercial, industrial, and mixed-use land increased by about 1%, and open space increased as well. He said the commercial, industrial, and residential gains come from vacant land. He displayed a map showing the major developments over the last 10 years, including multi-family developments, single-family subdivisions, assisted and independent living facilities, retail developments, and warehousing and distribution facilities; he said these developments are indicative of South Windsor's market and the types of businesses that will continue to drive development. Chair Pacekonis said Costco and Pleasant Valley School should be added to the map.

3. Review / Discuss Development Element

Gallagher then discussed community structure, showing the existing zoning map with the Town Center and Route 5 North overlay areas marked. Chair Pacekonis noted the North Central overlay area as well. Gallagher said the community structure has largely stayed the same and showed a map illustrating the hierarchy of the Town's major activity centers and corridors. Commissioners and staff discussed locations to add to and remove from the map.

Commissioner Foley left the meeting at 7:23 p.m.

Gallagher said housing is a major issue, and the Commission will need to balance the Town's housing needs and market demand with the issue of school capacity. He also noted the loss of vacant land to development, a key concern expressed in the survey. It was noted that when seniors move from single-family homes into senior housing, the homes are likely to be purchased by families with school-aged children. Gallagher said the assisted-living facilities in town had reported an increase in inquiries. He posed the question of what additional services could help elderly residents stay in their single-family homes longer; the Commission discussed. Commissioner Bernstein noted the waitlists and high demand in town for senior housing. Gallagher said this issue could be addressed with a floating zone or other ways of incentivizing development, such as lessening fees. The Commission discussed the placement of senior housing developments.

Gallagher said disabled housing is often considered in the same category as elderly housing, but people with disabilities can have unique needs. Some towns are increasing the use of universal-design units, which are built to accommodate people regardless of ability. He said proximity to services is important for people who become disabled. Commissioner Dexter asked about converting units in mobile home parks to affordable housing. Lipe noted that a Housing Committee is being formed, with representatives from the PZC and other bodies, that might be able to look into this possibility and other housing issues.

TOWN OF SOUTH WINDSOR
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

MINUTES

-3-

SEPTEMBER 19, 2023

Gallagher said seniors and low-income residents have several overlapping needs with regard to housing. He noted the opportunity areas in the Affordable Housing Plan and said the Town might consider investigating other areas, possibly with inclusionary zoning. Single people also have overlapping needs and largely seek smaller housing units. He said South Windsor is attractive to families and asked what strategy would be best to provide for this demand given the issue of the school system. Commissioner Bernstein said maintaining scarcity would help maintain home values but would not meet affordability goals. The Commission and staff briefly discussed accessory dwelling units. They also discussed increasing open space purchases by the Town and how the Commission should steer single-family development.

Gallagher said that in 2013, increasing business development was survey respondents' highest priority, but in this year's survey, it was the lowest priority. He displayed a map showing the major business zones in town. He said ecommerce is increasing and will continue to impact business developments with a retail and service focus, with some sectors more resilient to ecommerce than others. He also expects the rise of remote work to impact the Town as smaller offices might become remote or hybrid. Commissioner Wagner noted that coworking spaces are increasing. Gallagher outlined the biggest anticipated impacts of remote work in South Windsor; as an example of how business districts can adapt to a decreased demand for retail space, he noted that the Goddard School is in a space in Evergreen Walk formerly occupied by restaurants and retail. The Commission discussed.

The Commission then discussed three major areas of focus in town: Buckland Road and Evergreen Walk, Sullivan Avenue, and the Town Center. For each, Gallagher asked the Commission to consider three approaches for development: reimagining or transforming the area, adapting it with gradual changes, or maintaining the current focus. The consensus of most of the Commissioners was to focus on adapting the Buckland/Evergreen and Sullivan areas, with Sullivan a slightly lower priority for housing. They feel the Town Center has recently been reimagined and that the reimagining should continue and be given a chance to work.

Gallagher noted the development over the last 10 years of land along the Route 5 corridor that had already been zoned industrial. He said it will remain a regional employment center and, as there is little remaining undeveloped land in this area, the focus should be on redevelopment, possibly through brownfield redevelopment grants or financial incentives. He said the Economic Development Commission could also be involved in this effort. The survey indicated strong support for business intensification in the Route 5 corridor. The Commission discussed possible land uses and aesthetic improvements in this area.

4. Next Steps/Schedule

The Commission is scheduled to hold a Special Meeting with SLAM on October 17 to discuss infrastructure. They discussed holding a Special Meeting in December as well.

ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Cavagnaro made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Dexter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Joshua Stern, Recording Secretary