

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

**MINUTES**

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**DECEMBER 13, 2022**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Steve Wagner, Michael LeBlanc, Stephanie Dexter, Alan Cavagnaro, Bart Pacekonis

**ALTERNATES PRESENT:** Atif Quraishi, Paul Bernstein, Carolyn Carey

**STAFF PRESENT:** Michele Lipe, Director of Planning; Michael Lehmann, IT Support; Caitlin O'Neil, Recording Secretary

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**REGULAR MEETING/MADDEN ROOM:**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** None.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Discussion/Decision/Actions regarding the following:

**1. Initial kick off meeting with SLAM regarding: Plan of Conservation and Development**

**a. Introductions/Project Team**

Patrick Gallagher and Glen Chalder were present to discuss the upcoming timeline and details of the Plan of Conservation and Development. Mr. Gallagher reminded the Commission that he and Mike Zuba are from SLAM and they are joined with Glenn Chalder from Planimetrics to assist on the new Plan of Conservation and Development. Mr. Gallagher commented that he would be the Project Manager for the project. Glenn Chalder from Planimetrics has worked with South Windsor on the previous Plan of Conservation and Development and also the recently adopted Affordable Housing Plan. Mr. Gallagher asked for the Commissioners to go around the room and introduce themselves and give a little background information on themselves including their time on the Commission.

**b. Project Schedule**

Mr. Gallagher reviewed the project schedule, starting with the kick off meeting and review the scope of the project. Upcoming topics for future meetings would be reviewing plan elements such as the sustainability and resiliency element, conservation element and development element. They would conduct community engagement activities and ultimately coordinate Planning and Zoning Commission meetings to provide public hearings to finalize the plan. The update to the Plan of Conservation and Development should be completed by June of 2024.

Mr. Gallagher commented on the community outreach portion of this project. The Plan of Conservation and Development will have a project website which would be maintained by town staff and would be used to provide updates and further information. Additionally, the Story Map platform will be utilized. He commented that the first major public outreach would be a community survey and they would be looking to launch this survey in the early spring of 2023. Michele Lipe commented that the Strategic Planning Committee would be looking to meet in January and confirm and distribute their survey shortly afterwards. Pat Gallagher commented that this time frame works out well since they would ideally like a two to three months buffer between these two surveys. He added that they have a tentative time frame for a community vision workshop to occur in the late spring of 2023. This vision workshop would help them gather initial feedback on community strength and key areas of focus. They would be slated to host another community workshop in early 2024 before finalizing and drafting a plan by spring of 2024.

Commissioner Wagner commented that he would like to make it as clear as possible to the public the differences between the Strategic Planning survey and the Plan of Conservation and Development survey. Pat Gallagher acknowledged this concern and commented that they will avoid redundancy. Michele Lipe commented that she is a member of Strategic Planning and can help bridge the gap between the two Committees.

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- c. Set PZC Tentative Meeting Dates – set tentative dates, targeting third Tuesday of the month (Special Meeting) beginning in April 2023.

Pat Gallagher commented that they would need to discuss and set a tentative schedule for meetings. Mr. Gallagher commented that after discussions with town staff it appears that the third Tuesday of the month would be the best time to meet as a group. He commented that they would not need to meet each month, however, they would need to meet approximately nine times in over the course of the 18-month contract. Mr. Gallagher reviewed some proposed dates for the spring and fall of 2023. The proposed schedule would provide them proper amount of time to discuss the Plan of Conservation and Development as a group and give the attention that is needed. Ms. Lipe and Mr. Gallagher commented that they would provide materials ahead of time for each these special meetings as well. Commissioner Wagner questioned at what point would other Committees or organizations join in on the POCD discussion. Mr. Gallagher commented that they would be distributing a questionnaire for other Committees and members of town staff and would be following up with the Chairpersons of these boards.

- d. Review of 2013 POCD

Pat Gallagher reviewed what had been accomplished with the previous Plan of Conservation and Development. He reviewed accomplishments that occurred with the conservation theme which included the Main Street Preservation Study, Purchase of Development Rights Program, and regulation modifications. Mr. Gallagher questioned what some of the conservation measures were being updated or changed in the zoning regulations. Michele Lipe reviewed some of the proposed changes to open space subdivisions, expansion of lot sizes and setback requirements and inclusionary zoning. Mr. Gallagher highlighted other areas of progress such as addition of trails in town, two trails in South Windsor received designation as State Greenway. Pat Gallagher and Glen Chalder commented on the Open Space Master Plan being updated in 2023 with additional target properties. Michele Lipe commented that this plan had not yet been finalized but should be done soon. Mr. Chalder commented that they may want to talk with Open Space Task Force ahead of time to align with the changes that may be made with their Master Plan.

Commissioner Wagner commented that the group Walk and Wheelways is currently working on a biking and walking plan and attempting to update their town wide plan. Wagner commented that he spoke to that Committee about getting re-engaged again. Mr. Gallagher commented that the benefit of the Plan of Conservation and Development is to look at the overall plans for various town Committees and organizations and see if there are any overlapping messages or goals.

Pat Gallagher then highlighted other conservation accomplishments such as development of fairgrounds, expansion of the town's Farmers Market on Nevers Road and creation of Winter Market. Mr. Gallagher questioned if there were any other items that they should be aware of in the conservation realm. Ms. Lipe commented there have several open spaces purchases that have taken place since 2013. Commissioner Wagner commented that they had passed regulations for recreational cannabis regulations but was unsure if this fell under this category. Mr. Gallagher commented that this may be cited more under development.

Pat Gallagher questioned if there were any additional conservation goals or topics that they want to discuss. Commissioner Dexter questioned the status of the Priest family property. Michele Lipe briefly reviewed the history of the property that was purchased with town funds. She added that there was a plan created for the property right before COVID but the committee has not met in several years and she was unsure where plans currently stand for that property. This may be an item for community discussion. Commissioner LeBlanc questioned if the town owned the walking trail behind Evergreen Walk. Ms. Lipe explained that this trail system was owned and a part of Evergreen Walk. Commissioner LeBlanc questioned if this trail could be linked to other public trails. Pat Gallagher questioned if there were any easements on this trail and Michele

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Lipe reviewed the easements for this area. Commissioner Wagner commented that some portion of that trail system connects with nearby neighborhoods of Evergreen Walk. Ms. Lipe added that Evergreen Walk was looking to enhance the trail system and create mapping to highlight parking for those that may want to utilize the trail system and are unfamiliar with the area. Glenn Chalder commented that when they begin to work with Thad Dymkowski in GIS and Michele Lipe on the Story Map feature they can highlight this type of trail mapping better. Mr. Gallagher commented that he experienced trying to link private trails with public trails while working with the Town of Hebron. Commissioner Wagner commented that the cross-town trail had gained attraction from surrounding towns like Ellington and Tolland.

Chairman Pacekonis commented that a multipurpose field at Nevers Park was recently up as a referendum item and failed. Glenn Chalder commented that they can look into why this item failed and the adequacy of fields in town. Pat Gallagher reviewed how they can build this into the town wide survey. Michele Lipe mentioned that a conservation trend that she feels the Commission has done a good job at creating corridors of land that connect, particularly in open space subdivisions. She added that she would like to try to focus on continuing this effort as future land gets developed.

Mr. Gallagher began to review the development themes for South Windsor. He commented that there has been significant commercial development since the 2013 Plan of Conservation and Development, especially in Evergreen Walk and the Buckland Road Corridor. Mr. Gallagher added that South Windsor saw a 3% growth in the commercial, industrial and utility portion of the grand list between 2013 and 2020. Other accomplishments for development included zoning and sign regulation amendments to better support businesses, adopted Village District for the Town Center core, sidewalk extensions in Town Center, new zoning districts created for the Route 5 Corridor as well. Commissioner Wagner commented that something they also added recently were two areas related to energy, the first the EV charging regulations and the second the regulations for solar panels. Mr. Gallagher commented that he would highlight this further in the sustainability portion.

Pat Gallagher then reviewed development theme in terms of housing in South Windsor. Since 2013 there have been about 500 new housing units approved, about half of these were multifamily. Additionally, the town adopted an Affordable Housing Plan this past year as well. Mr. Gallagher questioned if the Commission had noticed any other major developmental trends, besides inclusionary zoning. Commissioner LeBlanc commented that he has noticed trends in South Windsor such as senior/independent housing which was big ten or so years ago and now has noticed a trend for large warehouses. Commissioner Bernstein commented on the large number of banks that have been built in town. Michele Lipe commented on some of the large unoccupied buildings in town like the former Rockville Bank near town center. Mr. Gallagher commented on the trends of office conversions into housing and medical office spaces being built more frequently. Commissioner Dexter commented on the Mestek building on John Fitch Boulevard, which has become an eye sore and questioned what could happen with this building. Ms. Lipe commented that this building was still privately owned and is currently in and out of blight. Ms. Lipe added there are still other buildings on Route 5 that need attention, however, since 2013 there have been at least 4 or 5 applications for buildings in this area that have been repurposed or rehabbed, which has made a positive difference.

Glenn Chalder questioned where the warehouse moratorium stood. Michele Lipe commented that they have been working on regulation updates and should have something to submit by February with public hearings in March. Pat Gallagher questioned if there were updated regulations on recreational-use cannabis. Michele Lipe reviewed the updated regulations, which now includes hybrid cannabis facilities and production. Chairman Pacekonis commented that this may be a good time to bring up developable acres behind Hampton Inn and Joann Fabrics. Michele Lipe reviewed the 50 acres behind Joann Fabrics on the Manchester town

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line. This area has approximately 30 acres of developable land for commercial use and high coverage allowance. Additionally, there are no wetlands on the site. Mr. Gallagher questioned if there were any other development priority sites. Chairman Pacekonis commented on the old Willow Brook Golf Course, which went out of business a few years ago but still has a driving range on site. Commissioner LeBlanc commented on concerns with the Sullivan Avenue area and areas of unappealing buildings. Chairman Pacekonis commented on updating the regulations to require better aesthetics for buildings in this area and Route 5. Chairman Pacekonis, Michele Lip and Pat Gallagher briefly discussed eligibility for STEAP funding to help update facades.

Pat Gallagher reviewed the infrastructure theme, since 2013 the town has built three new elementary schools with a fourth school under construction. Additionally, the Town Council had adopted a Complete Streets policy. Commissioner Wagner commented on following up on what has been accomplished in this policy. Michele Lipe commented that Beelzebub Road will have sidewalks installed and this was a goal in this policy. She added that they also have an updated plan of recently created sidewalk linkages. Glenn Chalder confirmed that there was a sidewalk layer on the GIS. Mr. Gallagher highlighted additional infrastructure accomplishments like the water system improvement on Buckland Road and fiber-optic lines extended to Town buildings. The group had a discussion regarding the sewer lines extensions and updates in town. Mr. Gallagher questioned if there were any additional infrastructure topics. Chairman Pacekonis commented on the bridge replacement on Pleasant Valley Road in front of Veterans Memorial Park.

Commissioner LeBlanc commented that the Town Center has never transpired and added that he would like to see further development to happen in this area. Chairman Pacekonis commented there have been properties on Ellington Road that have recently been sold and thinks there may be a start of some development in this area. Michele Lipe commented that during this process there may be an opportunity to review the Town Center Overlay Zones and review what mixes may be desirable. Pat Gallagher commented that he would look at some of the market data and trends that are occurring in this area. Commissioner Bernstein commented that there seems to be some desire to mirror towns like West Hartford and Glastonbury but was unsure how achievable this would be for South Windsor. Commissioner LeBlanc commented that he would prefer to see more restaurants in town. Glenn Chalder reviewed West Hartford and how regulations affected their development over the years. Mr. Chalder added that they can review other surrounding communities and see what they have done successfully and examine what opportunities are available in South Windsor. Commissioner Quraishi commented that he has heard from members of the public that there is limited public transportation in town and questioned what could be done to help make this more accessible in town. Commissioner Wagner commented on the Transportation Committee who has suggested a shuttle going up and down Sullivan Avenue to help people reach bus routes safely. Commissioner Quraishi commented that they should also look into adding bus routes near denser housing. Michele Lipe reviewed the lengthy process of changing a bus route. Chairman Pacekonis commented on the transportation plan in the 2013 Plan of Conservation and Development and reviewed where bus routes are currently located in town. Ms. Lipe mentioned that the Commission recently had their first project approved using rail road with Home Depot.

Pat Gallagher moved to the sustainability section, which does not currently exist in the Plan of Conservation and Development, however, they felt it was a topic that needed to be added. Mr. Gallagher reviewed some accomplishments, such as the adopted zoning regulations for small and large scale energy systems and electric vehicle charging station regulations and the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan that was updated in 2018. Commissioner Wagner noted that 100% of municipal energy now comes from solar. Michele Lipe questioned where social accomplishment may be noted on the plan. Mr. Gallagher commented that this could

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perhaps fit under sustainability. Ms. Lipe commented that the Town had adopted a Social Justice and Racial Equity Commission, which recently met. Additionally, the Town also adopted an Arts Council.

Mr. Gallagher commented that he wanted to lastly focus on potential focus areas for the upcoming Plan of Conservation and Development. Mr. Gallagher commented that during preliminary discussions he understood that other areas of focus on interest to the Commission would be sustainability and resiliency, housing dynamics, community facility capacity, economic development and opportunity/growth area. Mr. Gallagher questioned if there any additional areas of focus that they should be aware of at this time. Commissioner Wagner commented that he felt the area of climate change needed some focus, such as if South Windsor is doing their part in assisting with reducing climate change and can farming remain sustainable in town. A general look at resiliency in South Windsor would be recommended. Commissioner Wagner discussed current flooding concerns. Commissioner Dexter commented on the boarder they share along the Connecticut River and commented that she would like to have some type of discussion around protecting the town from future flooding and additionally what passive recreation could be created here. Michele Lipe commented that the Parks and Recreation Department did recently receive a grant to help study access to the Scantic River. Chairman Pacekonis commented on further developing of the town owned boat launch on Vibert Road. Commissioner LeBlanc commented on other surrounding towns that have larger trail systems like Manchester and Vernon or larger recreation areas and would like to see something similar created. Commissioner Dexter agreed and added that she would like South Windsor to take advantage of their location along the Connecticut River like Glastonbury has done with Riverfront Park. Commissioner Bernstein briefly questioned and discussed if they could research if more could be done to protect their electrical grid given the higher frequency and intensity of storms. Mr. Gallagher commented that other communities have been exploring back-up power for critical facilities, which may be highlighted further in the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Commissioner Wagner commented on encouraging local infrastructure to help make the grid more sustainable with resources such as solar panels. Commissioner LeBlanc commented on linking open space piece together to create larger trails. Glenn Chalder commented on some of the challenges with additional trail creation and connections. Mr. Chalder noted that does seem clear that pedestrian walkways, sidewalks and trails seem to be an important focus for the Plan of Conservation and Development. Commissioner Wagner commented that they should be mindful since easement requests will be distributed for the cross-town trails.

Pat Gallagher asked if there any additional questions or comments. Commissioner Bernstein commented that he was under the impression that the community was looking for an indoor swimming pool, may be something they want to consider adding to the survey. Commissioner Bernstein questioned what kind of mechanism would be used to distribute the community survey. Mr. Gallagher responded they would use Survey Monkey. Mr. Gallagher explained they would be relying on the town to publicize the survey on the public website, press released in local paper and email blasts. Additionally, they suggest leaving paper copies at facilities like the Senior Center and Library. Commissioner Bernstein questioned if there was be any concern with confusion between Strategic Planning and Plan of Conservation and Development surveys. He added that they may want to consider adding some language in the survey that reviews what exactly the Planning and Zoning Commission does. Mr. Gallagher discussed information that would be featured on the landing page, information such as what is a Plan of Conservation and Development. He added that they could certainly add a frequently asked questions portion to the landing page to help further inform the public of the role that the Planning and Zoning Commission plays in South Windsor. Commissioner Wagner commented that lighted fields may be a discussion point for the community as well. Glenn Chalder briefly reviewed the methodology for the Affordable Housing survey, which resulted in 900 responses. Michele Lipe commented that they can put some demographic questions on the survey to make sure they are reaching

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a representative mix of audiences. Commissioner Wagner questioned if direct mail would be an option. Chairman Pacekonis and Michele Lipe commented that this would cost a large amount of money. Chairman Pacekonis commented that the survey should be posted on social media as well. Mr. Chalder agreed and commented that they frequently push for these surveys to be accessed on social media. Commissioner Dexter questioned when the next meeting would take place. Pat Gallagher commented April 2023. He added that in January they would be working to meet with town staff and go over questions for the surveys and then launch the survey around April. He commented that they could provide the Commission with a draft survey to review ahead of time. Michele Lipe confirmed that there would not be a subcommittee for the Plan of Conservation and Development, the entire Commission would be involved.

**2. Discussion and review of proposed draft regulations**

Michele Lipe gave a brief update on draft regulations and three subcommittees' work. Ms. Lipe reviewed the target dates for text amendments and the moratorium timelines. All three subcommittees have one more meeting in December and should be able to provide text amendments that can be sent to CRCOG and then move towards a public hearing. Ms. Lipe commented that she had drafted a table that reviews what has been modified, added or removed to the regulations and will be able to present this to the Commission after the subcommittees have finalized their text changes. She added that they will be targeting the February meetings to hold public hearings on the residential regulation. Chairman Pacekonis thanked Michele Lipe for all of her efforts on these regulation changes and the subcommittee meetings.

**BONDS:** Callings/Reductions/Settings

**MINUTES:** 11/29/22- Accepted by consensus.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Chairman Pacekonis reported on the Quad Board meeting that took place on November 30<sup>th</sup>. Chairman Pacekonis commented that Town Council member Steven King Jr. was voted in as the Chairman and Chairman Pacekonis was voted in as the Vice Chairman. He reviewed the purpose of the subcommittee and explained that they are currently working on providing a mission statement. The focus on this board is to provide better communication between the various boards and commissions. Chairman Pacekonis commented that this group will meet the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every month going forward except there will be no meeting in August. Commissioner Dexter questioned if there would be any other communication that is offered besides the minutes on the website. Chairman Pacekonis responded that he was not aware of any other type of communication.

**APPLICATIONS OFFICIALLY RECEIVED:**

1. **Appl. 22-46P Michels Power Yard-** request for a two-year temporary and conditional permit for a temporary staging area and storage of equipment for EverSource contractors on approximately 5 acres, on property located at 416 John Fitch Boulevard (westerly of Route 5, south side of Pleasant Valley Road), I zone

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

**CORRESPONDENCE/REPORTS:**

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Commissioner Wagner motioned to adjourn.

Commissioner Carey seconded the motion.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Caitlin O'Neil, Recording Secretary