

TOWN OF SOUTH WINDSOR
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

MINUTES

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APRIL 30, 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bart Pacekonis, Kevin Foley, Stephanie Dexter, Bill Flagg, Steve Wagner

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Paul Bernstein, Michael LeBlanc (arrived 7:40 p.m.)

STAFF PRESENT: Michele Lipe, Director of Planning; Lauren Zarambo, Recording Secretary

SPECIAL MEETING / ORCHARD HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARY 7:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Pacekonis called the Special Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Presentation by Superintendent Kate Carter at the Orchard Hill Elementary School Library on School Enrollment & Demographics.

Dr. Kate Carter described a meeting held last fall about the South Windsor Public Elementary School Facilities Ten-Year Plan and enrollment data from Milone & MacBroom consultant Patrick Gallagher with the Town Council, Public Building Commission and Board of Education. At the request of Mayor Andy Paterna this material is now being presented to the Planning & Zoning Commission.

A power point presentation was given and accompanying documents, 'Update on South Windsor Public Schools Elementary Facilities Ten-Year Master Plan', 'Elementary Schools Master Plan Ten-Year Timeline' and 'Special Edition Elementary Facilities Plan Retrospective', were distributed to commissioners. Dr. Carter described the Special Edition Retrospective covering achievements under the Ten-Year Plan as written about in the New England Real Estate Journal and noted school population is growing at a rate much faster than expected.

The Ten-Year Timeline includes three phases starting with Orchard Hill Elementary School which opened in August 2017 on time and under budget in Phase One. Phase Two is currently underway and on schedule with the construction of the Eli Terry Elementary School and the Philip R. Smith Elementary School. Because of increasing enrollment, three classrooms will be added to Philip R. Smith and two classrooms added to Eli Terry with costs absorbed by the Phase Two budget. Phase Three will call for a referendum in 2020 for the construction of a new elementary school for Pleasant Valley. Acquisition of adjacent land has already taken place and gives flexibility in citing the new building so that students will not have to be moved to the old Orchard Hill school while the new school is being built.

An 'Increasing Enrollment' graph was shown using enrollment data gathered when the Ten-Year Plan was created in 2013 compared to a new enrollment trajectory calculated by Milone & MacBroom in 2018. It is projected, in 2022 - 2023 when the new Pleasant Valley School is to open, there could be 1,232 more students than originally estimated when the Ten-Year Plan was created. Another graph, 'K-5 Enrollment Trends in Greater Hartford from 2015 to 2018', illustrated surrounding towns losing up to 4% or remaining at current rates compared to South Windsor's enrollment increasing 11.7%. Rocky Hill is the only other town experiencing a similar growth trend to South Windsor.

Enrollment has impacted the Ten-Year Plan resulting in moving the pre-school program out of Orchard Hill to accommodate K-5 enrollment and consideration may be given for an addition in the future. Eli Terry and Philip R. Smith are remaining on track with the addition of 5 classrooms. Four portable classrooms have been added to Pleasant Valley School and the new school will be designed with these trends in mind. The 2019-2020 budget will additionally be increased by 1% with the impact of growing enrollment and will continue to increase as the trend continues.

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Commissioner Wagner asked how the old Orchard Hill School will be used. Dr. Carter stated there is nothing planned presently but they are not willing to give the school up at this time until there is a better idea of where things are going.

Vice Chairman Foley voiced concern that 'We cannot grow anymore.' citing quality of life issues and asked what will happen if a referendum is held in 2020 and ¾ of South Windsor has new schools and votes no. Dr. Carter disagreed it would happen since Pleasant Valley already relies on portable classrooms and is projected to keep growing and cannot fit where it is and there is State support for their Ten-Year Plan which is underway and under budget. Vice Chair Foley asked about any plans for South Windsor High School. Dr. Carter described affinity grouping of families taking place in South Windsor by those with work visas who may be here for 3 years or renewed for 6 years. It is not known if this population will age up through middle school to high school. The Vice Chair noted development is promoted but will cripple the town. It is a great community with a great school system and is a target destination. The Police and Fire Departments are already short. Dr. Carter stated there are challenges that can be worked on together to be worked out.

Chairman Pacekonis noted one of the goals of Planning and Zoning through the Plan of Conservation and Development is to get all types of housing represented in town. One bedroom apartments and efficiencies are not represented. Director Michele Lipe explained development is zoning dependent and what type of housing that is mostly available by right is single-family zoning. Everything else requires a zone change or text amendment to allow for multi-family zoning.

Mr. Patrick Gallagher from Milone & MacBroom, Inc., consultant for South Windsor Schools and the Board of Education since 2016, continued the power point presentation with a 'Public Schools Enrollment Projections Update'. He described a trend that started in 2016 when the downward projectory of enrollment stopped and began a rapid increase over the last four years. Affinity grouping of South Asian families in the Hartford area has been one of the drivers of the enrollment increase. South Windsor is attractive with its excellent school system, affordable housing, proximity to employment in downtown Hartford with nearby shopping and amenities. It appears many families come on work visas for 3 to 6 years to work in the IT sector and are attracted to family style rental condominiums. The existing condominium stock in the Orchard Hill and Pleasant Valley districts has been a main factor in increased elementary school enrollment numbers. There is also a strong housing market in South Windsor for single-family homes.

Dr. Carter distributed copies of the presentation from Milone & MacBroom to commissioners.

Data showed single family homes produce the highest number of students per unit. For example, Clark Estates produces with just under one student per unit while units with one or two bedrooms produce less, such as Evergreen Walk Apartments producing .14 students per unit. However, because of the number of units there are more total students coming out of Evergreen Walk Apartments than from Clark Estates. Numbers are also dependent on the amount of bedrooms per unit with 2 to 3 bedroom units (or 2 bedrooms with dens) yielding more than 1 bedroom units. Mr. Gallagher noted a projection Dr. Carter mentioned that there are 400 more students now than they were two years ago and of those 400 students less than 60 will come from multi-family units. It is a contributing factor but not a driving factor.

Mr. Gallagher stated affinity grouping has emerged in South Windsor because of the existing condominium rental stock. There are 1,500 older condominium units in Orchard Hill and Pleasant Valley districts. The total K-5 enrollment in those condo complexes as of October 1, 2018 is 230 students with 400 students overall, at

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2.8 students per unit, making it almost double the amount of students coming from Evergreen Walk Apartments.

It is a combination of factors influencing the jump in enrollment in recent years. High levels of in-migration tied to existing levels of housing stock is the highest magnitude with new construction and turn-over of existing housing stock secondary. These three things happening simultaneously have led to the uptick particularly in Orchard Hill and Pleasant Valley where new construction and existing condo stock are located.

Mr. Gallagher indicated their data shows the trajectory that South Windsor is on currently will persist over the next ten years including significant new home construction, affinity grouping continuing and high levels of housing turnover. These three factors are built into the projections which could change if any factor goes up or down. Commissioner Wagner asked if the new home construction included only the home construction the town already had and can see in the works or does it include the projection that South Windsor is a town that will continue to approve new houses. Mr. Gallagher stated an average of the last 3-4 year period was used where South Windsor averaged 75 new housing units per year. The 175 Oakland Road and Schoolhouse Drive projects have been accounted for in these numbers but a project like the Estates at South Windsor, where there has not been a comparative project in the Eli Terry district, the numbers were added in manually. There is a significant amount of housing already built into these numbers. Commissioner Wagner asked if numbers include projects that have not yet been proposed. Mr. Gallagher stated if projects are approved or planned they can be accounted for but do not account for vacant land, however, they do account for some housing to occur at non-specific sites.

Persistency ratios, kindergarten and pre-school data, and elementary school projections were discussed. District projections are complicated by private industry trends and the regional economy.

Commissioners discussed data with Mr. Gallagher, Dr. Carter, Director of Planning Lipe, Council Liaison Jan Synder, South Windsor Public School Board Chairman Craig Zimmerman and Mr. Donald Poulin of Goman + York.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to adjourn the Special Meeting at 8:57 p.m. was made by Vice Chairman Foley.
Seconded by Commissioner Wagner.
The motion carried and the vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren L. Zarambo
Recording Secretary