

TOWN OF SOUTH WINDSOR
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

MINUTES

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FEBRUARY 23, 2021

MEMBERS PRESENT: Stephanie Dexter, Bill Flagg, Kevin Foley, Kevin Greer, Stephen Wagner

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Paul Bernstein, Elizabeth McGuire

STAFF PRESENT: Michele Lipe, Director of Planning; Jeff Doolittle, Town Engineer; Scott Roberts, Assistant Town Manager/IT Support; Lauren Zarambo, Recording Secretary

Council Liaison Janice Snyder was in attendance.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Acting Secretary Commissioner Dexter read the legal notice as published in the Journal Inquirer on February 11 and February 18, 2021.

PUBLIC HEARING / Webex Conference ONLINE MEETING 7:00 PM

- 1. Appl. 21-01P, Town of South Windsor Fairgrounds at Rye Street Park** – request for a modification to allow limited use of the Troy Road access (currently emergency only), on property located at 75 Brookfield Street (westerly side of Brookfield Street and northerly side of Troy Road), RR zone (**Continued from 2/9/21**)

Superintendent of Parks and Grounds John Caldwell continued the request and stated he had no new material to add from the February 9th presentation.

Acting Chairman Foley appointed Alternate Commissioner McGuire to be seated for Commissioner Pacekonis, and Alternate Commissioner Bernstein to be seated for Commissioner Bonzani.

Director of Planning Lipe had no additional staff comments and noted the draft approval conditions provided to commissioners.

Town Engineer Doolittle had no additional comments.

Acting Chair Foley asked for public comments. Mr. Roberts connected a call from Mr. Matt Galligan who will comment on the next application.

The Acting Chairman asked for comments from commissioners.

Commissioners McGuire, Bernstein, Greer and Wagner had no additional comments or questions.

Commissioner Flagg stated the application is an all-round good idea for the flying club, the town and public access. Commissioner Dexter agreed with Commissioner Flagg and voiced her support. Acting Chairman Foley complimented the access as awesome.

Acting Chairman Foley closed the public hearing at 7:11 p.m.

- 2. Appl. 21-02, Evergreen Walk Lifestyle Center, LLC** – request for a zoning text amendment to modify Section 4.2.5 Permitted Uses in the Buckland Gateway Development Zone to eliminate Section 4.2.5.B which places limitations on grocery store locations within the zone

Charter Realty & Development Corporation Vice President of Development Karen Johnson representing Evergreen Walk Lifestyle Center LLC presented the request for a zoning text amendment with Langan Civil Engineer David Gagnon. Ms. Johnson stated Charter Realty took over the management from POAG late last year with Evergreen Walk at 40% capacity. Eliminating the restriction on grocery stores within 1,500 feet of

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other grocery stores will enable a new approach to continue the success of Evergreen Walk. A market overview, status of buildings in the development plan, and leasing plan were shown and discussed.

Ms. Johnson described Charter Realty & Development's focus on the changing landscape in retail with an approach to redevelopment emphasizing a tenant mix that works with experiential retail and food and beverage service uses. This approach can contribute to the continued success of Evergreen Walk. Common area upgrades with enhanced outdoor seating is positive trend coming out of the effects of last year, but lower rents and competition have also affected retail. Eliminating the grocery restriction will help. The Promenade Shops will be laid out slightly differently in a more traditional shopping district area by relocating two active successful tenants there that are now located in the new development area.

A graphic was shown with a 1,500-foot radius drawn on an aerial showing the impact of the grocery store restriction on Evergreen Walk in relation to the new Aldi Supermarket. A three-mile radius of grocery stores in the area was shown. Ms. Johnson noted the grocery shopping trend of customers making multiple trips to multiple locations supporting many retailers is expected to return after the pandemic. Charter believes there is an existing market for a new grocery store that focuses on fresh produce in Evergreen Walk since Highland Market has closed but a section of the regulations presently prohibits it. Grocery stores are an allowed use in the zone. There is a tremendous amount of guidance within the regulations for control of site appearance and performance issues. The 1,500-foot restriction does nothing to further the intent of the Buckland Road Gateway Development zone in terms of the economic health and diversity of a mixed-use project.

Director of Planning Michele Lipe gave staff comments:

1. This proposed amendment to Section 5.8 of the zoning regulations would eliminate any requirements on grocery stores in the Buckland Gateway Development zone. The current regulation has no size restrictions on grocery stores (which eliminated in 2012); however, does require grocery stores to be a minimum of 1,500 sf away from any other existing grocery store. Specialty food stores less than 10,000 sq ft. throughout the corridor
2. The 1500-foot separating distance was adopted by the PZC in 2005 with the idea that it allows the Commission to evaluate whether the amendment is successfully producing the type of market that is compatible with the Gateway Zone before numerous similar applications could be filed. The thought was that if the Commission is pleased with initial results, the separating distance could be reduced or eliminated if the Commission so desires.
3. Any new store is subject to the rigorous design standards, walkability and access management standards contained in the Buckland Road Gateway Zone. Additionally, there is a grocery store shopping cart management plan required to be submitted at the time of application.
4. A zoning amendment request is the appropriate time to consider traffic impacts that could result from the proposed amendment. In this instance, the zone is well served by Buckland Road; there should be no unusual infrastructure impacts from adoption of the proposed amendment. Each site would be evaluated at the time of site plan approval.
5. The Town Plan of Conservation and Development does not speak specifically to this issue; however, the two primary goals of Chapter 8: Business Development are to attract additional businesses that is consistent with the character and scale of its surroundings; and encourage business development that builds the tax base and provides job and services. Buckland Road corridor currently supports a variety of commercial and mixed-use developments. The plan supports minor updates to zoning to help accomplish business goals of the community.

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6. The Capitol Region Council of Governments has reviewed this amendment as required and has forwarded their report that found no apparent conflict with regional plans and policies or the concerns of neighboring towns.
7. If this amendment is approved, the Commission must find that it is in conformance with the Town Plan and must set an effective date.

Town Engineer Jeff Doolittle had no comments.

Acting Chairman Foley asked for public comment.

Mr. Roberts connected a call from Munigov Consultants LLC Matt Galligan representing the Town of South Windsor for the economic development program who spoke in support of the text amendment. Mr. Galligan recounted the history of Evergreen Walk, and stated this market will be a positive force in bringing other like tenants. He commended the new management for their new approach and rehabilitation of the site, and their vision that matches that of the PZC.

Commissioner Dexter read letters written in support from the Mayor Andrew Paterna, Economic Development Commission Chairman Paul Burnham and Mr. Alan Cavagnaro of 83 Pine Knob Drive. (Exhibit A)

Acting Chairman Foley asked for comment from commissioners.

Commissioner Dexter asked if the regulation is not changed what is the distance from the proposed grocery store site in Evergreen Walk to Aldi's. Ms. Johnson indicated a distance of 1,200 ft. Commissioner Dexter asked if the vacant Highland Park building would remain. Ms. Johnson stated they are looking at removing both buildings and constructing a new one with adequate parking area in front with access from Hemlock Avenue and visibility from Buckland Road while not blocking the retirement community. Highland Park building would be demolished.

Commissioner Flagg voiced concern of survivorship of existing and new grocery stores in the area. Ms. Johnson described Stop and Shop, Aldi, and Geisslers and stated they believe with the increase in residential and office use in the area there will be a strong market to support a new grocery store and to have all these different stores in a small geographic area support each other.

Commissioner Greer noted the new Aldi is supposed be the anchor store of the Gateway Development. There are many groceries in a very small area creating a lot of competition. Someone will fail. Not all can succeed.

Commissioner Wagner noted the success of the gingerbread house show in Evergreen Walk during the holidays but saw how many stores were vacant. If this plan for redevelopment will help solve vacancies it is a good thing. Highland Park Market was important but failed because it was built before the apartments and retirement communities. Now there is a local market and if it is a store that will attract business it will be a plus. Commissioner Wagner discussed the Highland Park location with Director Lipe, and asked Ms. Johnson what impact this store will have on vacancies. Ms. Johnson stated they do have other plans and once this tenant comes in, other tenants will follow. Access of roads on the leasing plan was discussed.

Commissioner Wagner suggested considering destination EV charging in back parking lots as something to plan for.

Commissioner Bernstein discussed with Director Lipe the history of the 1,500-foot grocery restriction that the commission put it into place in 2005 to limit the number of grocery stores. Commissioner Bernstein confirmed there were no agreements made with Aldi or Costco to preclude other groceries coming in and

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noted trends he sees in grocery shopping that they would be enhanced by another store a coming in and supports relocating existing retailers within the development.

Commissioner McGuire stated we want to encourage development within Evergreen Walk and discussed the draw of the proposed tenant with Ms. Johnson who stated there is enough to differentiate this grocery from others as is a high quality operator that will augment what is already here.

Acting Chairman Foley noted there were good reasons why the Commission put the grocery store restriction in place in 2005 and discussed with Ms. Johnson relocation of existing successful tenants. Ms. Johnson noted frequency of business and trips is beneficial to everyone in Evergreen Walk and complemented what South Windsor did in Evergreen Walk extremely well was to create a parallel roadway to Buckland Road supporting the variety of uses within Evergreen Walk that complement each other. It is unique in the northeast.

Commissioner Flagg asked if the grocery will have a sit down food service within the store and sell products besides groceries. Ms. Johnson stated the plan is revolving but will have outdoor seating and also sells health and beauty products.

Commissioner Bernstein noted Traders Joes in Buckland Plaza brings people in to the area and is an example of creating a healthy consumer market.

Commissioner Greer noted the advantage of great parking at Sakura's present location, and how parking will become a premium if moved to the Promenade Shops.

Acting Chairman stated the public hearing will be continued to the following meeting on March 9, 2021.

- 3. Appl. 21-07P, Town of South Windsor** – request for special exception to Section 7.18 and site plan of development for the construction of a 175 foot monopole radio communications tower, on property located at 555 and 575 Pleasant Valley Road, A-20 and I zone

Fire Marshal Walter Summers presented the request stating the communications tower is a part of a multi-year plan underway, noting improvements throughout town that have already been made. Current and proposed coverage maps showed the need for improved service in the south end of town that the tower would improve substantially. An aerial site plan locates the tower at the highest point while retaining maximum tree coverage. The fall zone of the tower is in Town property and the height of 175 feet is within regulations. A weather balloon will be flown at the height at some time between the public hearings. Mr. Summers noted the Town Staff group effort to design the project and that construction will be scheduled around the Veterans Park swim schedule so not to interfere.

Marcus Communications consultant Chris Hack, Assistant Fire Chief Brian Peck, and Chief of Police Kristian Lindstrom were on line available for questions.

Director of Planning Michele Lipe gave staff comments:

1. Town of South Windsor – request for special exception to Section 7.18 C and site plan of development for the construction of a 175 foot monopole radio communications tower, on property located at 555 and 575 Pleasant Valley Road, A-20 and I zone
2. Proposed height of the antennas is 175 feet as allowed in the regulations. For point of comparison, the monopole tower at the SW Police Station is 199 feet.
3. Special Exception criteria for consideration are those criteria found in Section 8.7 In addition, other criteria to consider for the construction of a tower include:

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- The proposal is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Plan of Conservation and Development.
 - The application has met the intent of the zoning regulations.
 - The land is physically suited to the proposed use.
 - Minimal, if any, adverse environmental impacts are created.
 - No traffic or other hazards will be created.
 - The impacts on the capacity of the present and proposed utilities, street, drainage systems, sidewalks, and other elements of the infrastructure will be minimal.
 - There will be minimal or no adverse effects on existing uses in the area.
 - Surrounding property values will be conserved.
 - The character of the neighborhood will be maintained or minimally disrupted.
 - The general welfare of the community will be served.
 - There is a balance between neighborhood acceptance and community needs.
 - The overall physical appearance of the proposed development is compatible with surrounding development and the Commission's goals for the neighborhood/corridor.
4. Other criteria listed include:
- Whether alternate sites were exhausted; what lies within the fall zone of the tower; existence of endangered species; whether other development is being proposed or considered at or near the site; effect on bird habitats; and length of access road; and the public health and safety will not be adversely affected.
5. General site requirements are included in Section 7.18.4, including:
- Towers cannot exceed 175 feet
 - Towers must be painted non-contrasting blue, gray or black;
 - Towers shall be designed to collapse upon themselves;
 - Any pole over 150 feet must accommodate at least two additional users; and
 - Parking for at least one vehicle must be available;
 - And all utilities must be installed underground.
6. Along with the site plan, the applicant has provided coverage ratio maps of the area. In order to help the Commission and public visualize the height of the new pole, the applicant intends to fly a balloon at the 175 foot height some time in between the two public hearings (weather permitting).
7. The site improvements include the addition of an access drive off the existing parking area in the rear of VMP to access the site, 100 X 100, which will be cleared to accommodate a shed, generator and propane tank for Town use. This area will be enclosed by a 7 foot fenced area.
8. There are regulated wetlands on site, however there is no activity proposed within the upland review area. The erosion and sedimentation review was handled through Wetlands Minimal Impact permit.

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9. In accordance with section 7.18.8, the Special Exception for a telecommunications facility, the regulations require that tower construction commence within one year from the date of approval. There is also an abandonment clause in the zoning regulations that requires removal of the facility within 90 days from the date of abandonment and restoration of the area to its previous appearance.

If this application is approved, the Planning Department has no additional modifications.

Town Engineer Jeff Doolittle stated the tower is situated at the high point amongst a group of trees in effort to minimize impact the neighborhood.

Acting Chairman asked for public comment. Commissioner Dexter read the letter from Mr. Alan Cavagnaro of 83 Pine Knob Drive. (Exhibit A)

Acting Chairman asked for comment from commissioners.

Commissioner McGuire confirmed with Mr. Summers that there would be no noise or interference from the tower.

Commissioner Bernstein confirmed with Mr. Summers that only professionals geared with special equipment could climb the tower.

Commissioner Flagg confirmed with Mr. Summers that the tower would not have wires or need camouflage.

Commissioner Dexter asked how it might impact the new pavilion at Veterans Park. Mr. Summers stated the top would be visible but the existing trees will remain in place.

Acting Chairman Foley noted a weather balloon will be flown at 175 feet and stated the public hearing will be continued to the following meeting on March 9th.

REGULAR MEETING / Webex Conference ONLINE MEETING

CALL TO ORDER: Acting Chairman Foley called the Regular Meeting to order at 8:44 p.m.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Mr. Roberts confirmed no one on the line to speak.

Commissioner Flagg asked for in person meetings noting the Board of Education holds their meetings in person.

NEW BUSINESS: Discussion/Decision/Action regarding the following:

1. **Appl. 21-01P, Town of South Windsor Fairgrounds at Rye Street Park** – request for a modification to allow limited use of the Troy Road access (currently emergency only), on property located at 75 Brookfield Street (westerly side of Brookfield Street and northerly side of Troy Road), RR zone

Commissioner Dexter made a motion to approve with the following conditions:

1. Use of the gated entrance from Troy Road is restricted to authorized persons and/or groups after receiving approval from either the Town Manager, Director of Parks and Recreation, Superintendent of Parks, and his/her designee.
2. All plans used in the field by the developer must bear the stamp and authorized signature of the Town of South Windsor.

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3. All free standing signs and/or building signs require the issuance of a sign permit before they are erected.

Commissioner Wagner seconded the motion.

The motion carried and the vote was unanimous.

BONDS: Callings/Reductions/Settings

Bond Setting

Engineering recommends a bond in the amount of \$1,132,018 for public improvements associated with Appl. 20-04P, Chestnut Ridge Subdivision.

Commissioner Dexter made a motion to set the bond as recommended; Seconded by Commissioner Bernstein. The motion carried and the vote was unanimous.

MINUTES: 1/26/21 and 2/9/21

Commissioner Wagner asked for a correction to the February 9, 2021 minutes regarding page 4, item 1, paragraph 2 and suggested wording to replace the first sentence that is confusing. Commissioner Bernstein made a motion to accept the revised text; seconded by Commissioner Dexter. Commissioner Greer questioned rewriting minutes. Commissioner McGuire asked if there was an error in minutes. Director Lipe stated the Recording Secretary will rewrite that section of the minutes with more detail for the next meeting, and table the 2/9/21 minutes for now at this meeting. Commissioner Bernstein withdrew the motion.

Commissioner Wagner made a motion to approve the minutes of 1/26/21; Seconded by Commissioner Dexter. The motion carried and the vote was unanimous.

OLD BUSINESS: *see page 3*

APPLICATIONS OFFICIALLY RECEIVED:

1. Appl. 21-09P, (LSPT/Tom Bahler) Superior Northeast– request for renewal of a 2-year temporary and conditional permit for a 30' x 60' storage shed on property located at 24 Jeffrey Drive, I zone
2. Appl. 21-10P, Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church – request for site plan modification for a 1,500 +/- sf addition, on property located at 296 and 300 Buckland Road, Buckland Road Gateway Development zone
3. Appl. 21-11P, REESG Newco South Windsor, LLC – request for a Zone Change from General Commercial Zone (GC) to Sullivan Avenue 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 Plaza, located at 959, 1017 and 1079 Sullivan Avenue, GC zone

OTHER BUSINESS:

Director Lipe noted the applications officially received.

Acting Chairman Foley voiced the need to start moving forward with meeting in person. Mr. Roberts stated the managers are working on a plan to be shared soon. Commissioner Flagg agreed. Commissioner Dexter agreed and stated if meetings continue to be held virtually, holding open all of the public hearings is going to create such a backlog of applications and may not be in the best interest of anyone. Commissioner Dexter suggested speaking with the Chairman to consider some of the smaller public hearings that can be closed in one meeting.

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CORRESPONDENCE / REPORTS:

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 8:58 p.m. was made by Commissioner Foley,
Seconded by Commissioner Dexter.

The motion carried and the vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren L. Zarambo,
Recording Secretary