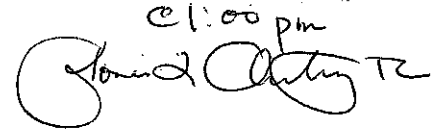


TOWN OF SOUTH WINDSOR
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
&
WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY

e 1:00 pm


SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

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JANUARY 16, 2024

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

PZC ALTERNATES PRESENT: Paul Bernstein, Despina Buganski

WPCA MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Lyon, Joseph Botti, David Basile, Doug Nation

WPCA ALTERNATES PRESENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Michele Lipe, Director of Planning; Anthony Manfre, Superintendent of Pollution Control; Michael Lehmann, IT Support; Joshua Stern, Recording Secretary

SPECIAL MEETING – 6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER: PZC Chair Wagner and WPCA Chair Lyon called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Members introduced themselves. Alternate Commissioner Buganski was seated for Michael LeBlanc.

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

1. Introduction & Background

Pat Gallagher, AICP, of SLAM, and Glenn Chalder, President of Planimetrics, presented **Exhibit A**.

Gallagher reminded members that per State statutes, each town must update its Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) every 10 years; since the last update, the State has implemented a requirement that the POCD include a sewer plan. The PZC met several times recently to review the POCD and decided on a growth management strategy for better coordination and alignment of land use, infrastructure, and conservation goals. They felt it was worth discussing aligning the sewer map more closely with land use policy and creating sewer areas for the WPCA.

2. Discussion of Growth Management Special Focus Area

- Land Use Policy & Sewer Service Areas

Gallagher displayed the Town's current parcel-based sewer service map and said it could cause challenges for properties that front sewer lines, which are not consistently classified. In addition, the current map does not identify any open space lands as existing or future sewer areas, which could lead to issues if the Town looks to add amenities to any of these areas. He noted that the Town does not have a consistent definition of open space. Gallagher also said under the current sewer map, large or irregularly shaped parcels are restricted to one sewer designation each. He showed sewer maps from Simsbury, Berlin, and Hebron to illustrate approaches more aligned with zoning. Hebron allows only structures within 150'-250' of the sewer main to connect to the system, an approach Gallagher said might be feasible for the Main Street area of South Windsor.

The goal the PZC and consultants had established is to create a more generalized sewer map that better aligns with zoning and land use objectives and creates clearer policy areas for the PZC, WPCA, and property owners. It had been recommended to establish three sewer service categories. Primary sewer service areas would be commercial, industrial, multi-family, and higher-density single-family residential zones; potential policies there would be to encourage existing properties to connect to the system, complete sewer line extensions as required,

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and connect all new developments. Limited sewer service areas would be lower-density residential zones that currently have access to sewer service, though the zoning may support on-site septic. One possibility for these areas would be to establish a buffer or offset policy like Hebron's, allowing only structures within a certain distance of an existing sewer line to connect; exceptions could be made if a development required sewer access for public-health purposes. Conservation areas, areas with a 1-acre minimum lot size without sewer service, are well aligned on the existing sewer map with lower-density residential zones that have no sewer service; the policy would be to avoid sewer expansions here and design developments to support on-site septic, with a possible exception for open space subdivisions as an incentive.

Gallagher showed a map overlaying the existing sewer lines and the Town's zoning, as well as a map distinguishing between the higher- and lower-density zones. Almost all higher-density and many lower-density zones in town are currently served by sewer. He then showed a delineation of a potential primary sewer area, containing higher-density zones and some smaller pockets of lower-density zones.

WPCA Chair Lyon said he sees the map change as reasonable but would like to understand the subtleties further before a decision is made. Joseph Botti asked why the sewer map was set up as parcel based. Michele Lipe said it had to do with the limitations of the mapping software at the time; a hand-drawn map had been used prior to 2009. Doug Nation asked if sewer and water service should be coordinated. Gallagher said most areas with sewer service also have water service, but the Town does not own the water infrastructure and plays a more advisory role.

Gallagher then showed an overlay of the parcel-based current map with the proposed primary sewer area. Most of the conservation areas marked on the current sewer map are either protected open space or utility corridors unlikely to be developed. He listed some residential areas not currently on the existing or future sewer map that could be added to the primary sewer area, including clusters of properties on Ellington Road and Oakland Road. Chair Wagner noted that 22 Wheeler Road is commercially zoned and already marked as a sewer area.

Gallagher then noted several areas of town that he thought warranted individual discussion, starting with the Main Street corridor, which is a priority area for conservation. The lots in the area are large, with some extending from Main Street to Route 5, leading to inconsistencies in the sewer policy. The corridor currently has sewer service north of Pleasant Valley Road, with connections on some cross streets; most properties on the sewer line are connected. Gallagher asked whether sewer extensions should be allowed to support developments on the interior portions of the lots. In addition, except for the mobile home park, the corridor currently has no sewer service south of Pleasant Valley Road; Gallagher asked if this area should be maintained as a conservation area. Commissioner Bernstein asked how sewer system expansions are financed. Gallagher said sewer infrastructure is typically built through a benefit assessment in which the development pays for the extension, though towns occasionally pursue grants. The Town would then be responsible for long-term maintenance of the sewer line.

To answer Gallagher's question about sewer extensions, Chair Wagner asked the PZC members whether they would like to discourage or encourage development a certain distance from Main Street; requiring on-site septic would disincentivize development. Commissioner Buganski expressed caution about bringing in new developments. Commissioner Pacekonis said he is leaning toward making the corridor a limited sewer service area, suggesting a distance requirement of 250'. Gallagher noted that some properties have existing rear developments that may require exceptions at the discretion of the WPCA and PZC. Commissioner Vetere concurred that limited service is the best starting point. Commissioner Bernstein confirmed that if an existing

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residential development wished to connect to sewer, the homeowners would be responsible for the cost and the PZC would process the application. He also favors the limited service option as it gives the most flexibility.

Commissioner Dexter said she favors making the corridor a non-sewer area to discourage development of the tracts of land extending from Main Street to Route 5. However, she expressed uncertainty about preventing properties fronting the sewer lines that run to the plant from connecting to them. Gallagher said a generalized approach would allow properties to connect unless there is a capacity issue. Dexter also raised the issue of soil contaminants; Gallagher said most of the properties would have city water. Commissioner Foley said he favors the limited service option, suggesting a 150' limit; in response to a question from Foley, Gallagher said Hebron's policy is to allow only structures within the limit to connect. Commissioner Cavagnaro concurred that the limited service option is best.

In response to a question from Wagner, Gallagher said the distance limit is measured from the sewer line, and he thinks Hebron allows structures that are only partially within the limit to connect. Wagner also proposed setting the limit so it includes any existing buildings along Main Street. The PZC opted not to extend sewers south of Pleasant Valley as the density does not justify the cost and because septic replenishes the aquifer.

Botti also expressed a preference for the limited service option but asked if it would devalue any properties. Gallagher said the map change could go through a public hearing process, but it would mostly impact undeveloped land.

Gallagher focused next on the northeastern area of town, near Barber Hill Road and Niederwerfer Road, currently in the RR zone. This area currently has no sewer lines and is designated mostly as a conservation area. Commissioner Pacekonis said he would favor leaving it as a conservation area in the POCD. Chair Wagner noted that the nearby Frazer Fir subdivision has sewer and recalled that some other nearby houses were losing their septic service several years ago. Commissioners noted that an exception for public health issues would allow such a development to connect to sewer; Gallagher said this exception could be limited to existing developments. As there are no existing sewer lines to use as a guide, it was the consensus of the members to retain the conservation area.

The north central area of town, near Griffin Road and Brookfield Street, contains several Town parks in the conservation area and two golf courses, one of which is listed as a conservation area. The Commission discussed sewer service options for the parks and golf courses, as well as Eli Terry School. Commissioner Pacekonis said he would not oppose running sewers to the parks but is mindful of the added cost; Chair Wagner expressed support for a limited service approach. The area west of Topstone and north of Rye Street Park, zoned A-20, is one of the few higher-density areas that currently has no sewer, though it is designated as a future sewer area. Commissioners proposed to provide limited service to the parks, retain the current status of Topstone and Willowbrook, and include the nearby A-20 and RR zones in the primary sewer area.

The central area of town has a similar setup to Main Street, with sewer lines on Clark Street, Pierce Road, Foster Road, Strong Road, and West Road with some gaps. The area is in the RR zone and also has large lots that extend far back from the roadway; many of the lots have development restrictions due to wetlands. The Commission decided to make it a limited sewer service area for consistency.

The last area Gallagher focused on was Route 5 north of the Scantic River, which is zoned A-20 and is in the overlay zone, identifying it as a transitional area with rural characteristics. It is classified as a conservation area in the current map; Gallagher said its density justifies sewer, but the cost of extending sewer lines across the Scantic would be higher. Commissioner Pacekonis asked if the area could connect to the East Windsor sewer

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system; Anthony Manfre said he thinks East Windsor's sewers do not extend far enough south. The Commission opted to leave it as a conservation area for this POCD.

The next step is for Gallagher to create a more detailed map to share with Manfre and the WPCA. The POCD will include a sewer policy map, which is separate from the official Town sewer map that the WPCA will ultimately adopt. Town staff will examine the Main Street area to determine the size of the buffer for the limited sewer service area in order to include all existing houses. The Commission will review the sewer policy and future land use plan maps further at the February 20 Special Meeting.

Joseph Botti made a motion to adjourn the WPCA Special Meeting. Seconded by David Basile. The motion passed unanimously and the WPCA adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

- P.A. 490 Discussion

Gallagher and Chalder explained that P.A. 490 provides a financial incentive for owners of farm, forest, or open space land to maintain it as undeveloped, by allowing it to be assessed based on use rather than market value. The intention is to prevent land from being forced into development due to tax burdens. The policy has a 10-year lifespan, with the ability for the municipality to recapture tax dollars if the land is sold in that time. The categories of farm and forest land are defined by the State, with farmland required to be a commercial farm and forest land defined as a parcel of at least 25 acres with an approved forest management plan. The statute also allows each municipality to create an individualized category for land preservation if recommended in its POCD and approved by a legislative body. South Windsor has not yet established this local option. Its criteria could consider conservation of natural resources, value to the adjacent property owners, historic sites, or public recreation; the PZC had previously discussed including residentially zoned properties that meet certain natural resource characteristics.

Gallagher showed the map of the existing P.A. 490 land in town and said most of the agricultural land along Main Street is currently enrolled in the program. Unless a local option is established, wetlands can become P.A. 490 land only if they are on land that meets the forest or farm criteria, though wetlands may already have lower assessment values. In response to a question from Commissioner Foley, Chalder said the P.A. 490 forest program requires a certified forester to visit the property and develop a plan regarding wood lot management and tree harvesting. Foley said certain areas of the South Windsor meadows have become overgrown over time and asked if they would fall under the forest category; Chalder said land that is associated with a farm but not being farmed can be assessed as woodland. The Commission discussed the parameters of the program.

The existing P.A. 490 land in town consists mostly of farmland and is concentrated in the Main Street corridor. Gallagher showed a map marking vacant parcels in town, organized by size, that are developable but could be candidates for a P.A. 490 local option. A local option could focus on undeveloped land or oversized lots that have developments but are large enough to be subdivided.

Chalder said the POCD could either contain a general recommendation for the Town to explore a local option or list specific parameters for the local option. Gallagher noted that the program could help address concerns about rising school enrollment. The Commission discussed potential zoning and size parameters for the local option. The consultants will draft language for the POCD recommendation for the Commission to review.

3. Next Steps/Schedule

The second community workshop on the POCD is scheduled for January 30, with a snow date of February 7. A Special Meeting of the PZC is planned for February 20 to review the future land use plan, sewer plan and

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strategy, and growth management strategy. The POCD will then be referred to the Town Council and CRCOG at the March 26 PZC meeting, starting the required 65-day public comment period.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Buganski moved to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Vetere. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Joshua Stern, Recording Secretary