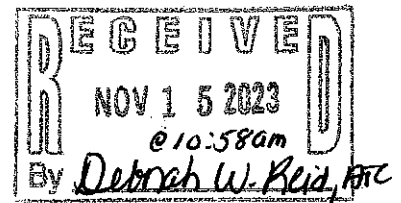


TOWN OF SOUTH WINDSOR
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION



SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

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OCTOBER 17, 2023

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

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Paul Bernstein, Carolyn Carey

STAFF PRESENT: Michele Lipe, Director of Planning; Michael Lehmann, IT Support; Joshua Stern, Recording Secretary

SPECIAL MEETING

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Pacekonis called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Commissioner Bernstein was seated for Commissioner LeBlanc.

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, and Glenn Chalder, President of Planimetrics, presented **Exhibit A**. They began by briefly outlining the project schedule.

2. Review / Discuss Infrastructure Element

Gallagher began by discussing the status of the Town's community facilities. The previous POCD focused on guiding the location of Town facilities and outlining long-term goals for use of Town buildings and land; in the 10 years since, most upgrades were to the school system.

Gallagher said the Town Hall will require improvements on an as-needed basis, noting the ongoing window replacements. The space is being used well, but there is not a large amount of space to support future growth, and it is possible the Town will need to consider a more major renovation or expansion if the Town staff grows. The Town Hall Annex was recently renovated and is not expected to have any major needs in the next 10 years. The police facility recently added new locker rooms, which took away some storage and equipment space, and according to the department, the current building could not accommodate a growth in staff; there may be some space on the site for a building addition. Gallagher also noted the Town's recent upgrades to its emergency communication system. There are no major concerns with TRACS facility.

Gallagher has not yet met with the Fire Department, but noted that the Town has a volunteer fire company and ensuring the department continues to have adequate staff will be important as the current volunteers age. There are some shared services for facility maintenance, but the volunteers are largely responsible for maintaining the buildings. Commissioners questioned whether the Town should consider hiring more paid firefighters. Gallagher was going to communicate with the Chief.

The Public Works facility has some site constraints. There is a need for more garage space here, as well as growing outdoor storage needs as the department considers expanding the services offered, potentially including organics removal. The biggest challenge is having adequate land to support the expansion; the Town is considering acquiring an adjacent property.

Commissioners Dexter and Carey joined the meeting at 7:10 p.m.; Commissioner Carey was seated for Commissioner Cavagnaro.

The Parks and Recreation Department recently relocated to a temporary space in the former Orchard Hill School building due to the school system's need for the Wapping School space; the Public Building

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Commission will lead efforts to find a permanent space for the Recreation Department. The outdoor Parks and Recreation spaces have no critical needs, but Gallagher note that fields for sports, including soccer and cricket, are in high demand. Indoor gymnasium space is at a premium, with a desire for a larger, subdividable gym. The Park and Recreation Commission last updated its Master Plan in 2020 and will update it again soon.

The Senior Center and Teen Center are both well-used spaces, with some competition over use of the space. The Senior Center in particular has seen a growing demand for programs, especially as younger seniors have expressed interest in more active, recreational programming. Gallagher had asked if the Teen Center would relocate to the recreation center once one is built, but the fact that the current location is across the street from the high school is beneficial to the students. There is also a growing need for youth counseling, which requires more small rooms for one-on-one meetings. In response to a question from Commissioner Dexter, Michele Lipe said improvements would be needed for the Orchard Hill building to become the permanent location of the Parks and Recreation Department. Commissioners noted the desire in the community for an indoor pool or aquatic center. It was noted that the former LA Fitness facility will become a Club Studio.

Gallagher still plans to meet with the director of the library. He noted that the building was renovated in 1996 and requires some maintenance and ADA compliance upgrades. The maintenance of the library and the Wapping Community House is being addressed as part of the Town's Community Investment Plan.

Gallagher noted that the four elementary schools are all operating near capacity. Monitoring and planning will be needed to meet enrollment needs, with the district staff preferring smaller, targeted investments like portable classrooms rather than major building projects. Enrollment is also growing in the middle and high schools; the middle school has some space to expand into now that the pre-K program has relocated, and the former Wapping School is now being used as a high school annex. The facilities themselves are in good condition. SLAM will share the enrollment projection update with the Planning Department once it is complete.

Commissioners and Gallagher noted that South Windsor's education system attracts families to the Town, increasing its school enrollment more than comparable towns. Commissioner Carey said South Windsor is unique due to its relationship to Hartford and its population of residents with H-1 visas, and these factors should be considered when projecting enrollment; the Commission discussed. Commissioners Wagner and Bernstein said the Orchard Hill building might have issues with ADA accessibility and asbestos.

Gallagher reviewed a list of potential strategies and priorities for improving the community facilities. There was brief discussion of certain issues relating to staff retention. Commissioner Bernstein asked about the amount of space in the Town Hall for storing documents. Lipe said finding meeting space can be an issue, but files are increasingly being stored electronically and more resources should be directed to digital data management. She said that not all Town offices are cramped; could always use more space and better organization.

Gallagher said the Water Pollution Control Facility has room to accommodate future growth, and there are no capacity issues with the inflow and outflow agreements. The Clark Street pump station is currently operating at close to capacity; a study of the sewer shed is planned to identify any capacity issues. Inflow and infiltration have become larger issues in many towns, especially during intense rain. Chair Pacekonis asked how the issues with the pump station affect future growth in the Gateway Zone and Town Center; Gallagher said the station has some capacity, and a study is needed to determine a full buildout. Commissioner Foley said the pipes have been relined as needed. Lipe noted that three applications were recently approved for improvements to the Clark Street and two other pump stations.

Gallagher displayed the sewer service map and said extensions were added in areas on Miller Road and Ellington Road that had already been planned for sewers; new subdivisions were added to the sewer system as well. He said he had never seen a parcel-based sewer service map before and that it could cause challenges,

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such as when a sewer line is fronted by a property with a conservation or sewer avoidance area; he also noted that many sewer lines currently service the lowest-density residential zones. He displayed and explained a conceptual map of a potential zoning-based approach to sewer service for the Town. The Commission, Gallagher, and Chalder discussed exploring this approach further, possibly in a special meeting with the WPCA. Gallagher listed potential strategies and priorities for the Town's sewer service.

Water service for the Town is split between MDC and CWC and is more extensive than the sewer service. Some developments still rely on well water, with the Kupchunos Wellfield and a portion of the Talcottville Wellfield in South Windsor; continued monitoring of the properties on wells and source protection for the well fields are key. In response to a question from Commissioner Wagner, Lipe explained that when a development is proposed in a well field area, the water company must be notified.

Gallagher said over the next 10 years, the Town should focus on system maintenance, improvements to protect water quality, and addressing resiliency issues such as drought planning. Regarding the drainage and stormwater system, he recommended moving toward on-site infiltration when possible.

Electrical and gas service for the Town are both provided by Eversource. Gallagher showed a map distributed by Eversource showing the transmission lines in town that have the capacity to support additional generation, such as solar panels. The capacity is more limited in the Route 5 corridor; he said the Town's role is to advocate for electrical improvements in that area. Commissioner Wagner asked about the Town's capacity to transition to electric vehicles. He also noted recent proposals to install large batteries near the middle school and the sewer plant to store power generated overnight from the grid. Telecommunications for the Town are largely controlled by private providers; the Town still maintains a certain level of communications and has been building a fiber network and upgrading emergency telecommunications.

With regard to transportation, Gallagher said the 2014 POCD identified goals of minimizing congestion, maintaining and upgrading Town roads, enhancing road connectivity, working with regional transit providers, implementing more walking and biking options, and promoting the rail line. The *Paving for Progress* asset management plan, implemented in 2022, has allowed the Town to prioritize projects involving the roads, drainage, and sidewalks. The Town Council adopted a Complete Streets policy, and Gallagher recommended focusing on actionable steps under this policy. Since many of the major arteries in town are State roads overseen by the Department of Transportation, there can be issues with coordination between the Town and the State. In response to a question from Chair Pacekonis about the \$35.5 million road bond, Gallagher said he thinks it was intended to be spread over five years. Compared to the 2013 survey, more residents identified traffic, particularly truck traffic, as a concern in this year's survey. Gallagher displayed a road map of the Town that shows how the state distinguishes among interstates, arterials, collectors, and local roads; Commissioners suggested changes to the classifications of certain roads.

Gallagher suggested that the Town think in terms of managing rather than reducing congestion as traffic is healthy for businesses; he said reducing congestion and truck impacts on local roads are important goals. He raised the possibility of establishing thru truck prohibitions on certain roads; the Commission discussed this process. Lipe noted a roundabout that will be considered on Governors Highway. Gallagher recommended implementing the Complete Streets policy in coordination with CTDOT, as well as enhancing the resiliency of roadways through bridge and drainage upgrades. For the Town Center, he recommended a greater focus on streetscapes, incorporating sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, and signage, to advance the goal of transforming the area into a walkable village. He recommended consistency with the design of the surrounding private developments to build a stronger identity.

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Commissioner Wagner said the biking community would benefit from wider sidewalks in town. Gallagher posed the question of which pedestrians and cyclists the Town should prioritize most: recreational users, people who choose to walk or bike instead of driving, or people who do not own cars. Commissioner Wagner said most of the demand in town is for recreational use, though Lipe said some areas could cater more to people without cars. Gallagher suggested applying for grants to improve the recreational trails. He displayed a map of the existing sidewalk network and suggested focusing efforts on areas surrounding schools and business districts rather than on specific roads; the Commission discussed how to handle sidewalks along school bus routes. ARPA funds are currently being used for sidewalk linkages on Dart Hill Road and near the church connecting along Ellington Road to Pleasant Valley Road and along Long Hill Road from Pleasant Valley to the entrance of the new school. Chair Pacekonis said completing the Sullivan Avenue and Deming Street sidewalks should be priorities. In response to a question from Commissioner Dexter, Lipe said Eversource determines the locations of streetlights in collaboration with the Town police. Gallagher also showed a map of the popular on-road bike routes and said the Cross Town Trail could serve as a central artery; he recommended places to connect the bike routes to the regional greenway system.

The public transit service currently has a loop on Main Street and Route 5, as well as one in the area of Evergreen Walk and the Town Center. Gallagher asked where else in Town there is enough density to justify transit service. Commissioners suggested that Sullivan Avenue might have more demand for bus service than Buckland Road; Gallagher showed a map of recommended bus routes based on a 2017 CTSA study. He said transportation wallets and micro-transits are possibilities for areas with less density. The freight rail serves some businesses in town, but Gallagher thinks it is underutilized in some locations.

3. Discussion of Potential Special Focus Area

Gallagher and Chalder's recommendation is to focus on the broader idea of growth management and addressing inconsistencies as to what areas to develop and what areas to conserve. Gallagher stressed a desire to ensure sewer policy and zoning align and said the open space strategy should be targeted accordingly. Commissioner Foley said many in town are concerned about meeting the 10% threshold for affordable housing, but he thinks this goal needs to take a backseat to improving the Town's existing infrastructure. Gallagher raised the possibility of establishing a P.A. 490 Local Option for Open Space to set criteria for properties that can qualify for tax breaks if they are not developed; the Commission discussed.

4. Next Steps/Schedule

The Commission tentatively scheduled their next session with SLAM for the December 12 regular PZC meeting. The next steps are to flesh out the future land use plan as part of the special focus area study, and to develop goals, objectives, and strategies outside of the special focus realm. The updated POCD will be adopted in May or June 2024 following a 65-day comment period.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Foley made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Vetere seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joshua Stern, Recording Secretary