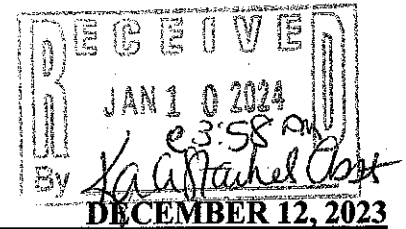


**TOWN OF SOUTH WINDSOR
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION**



MINUTES

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MEMBERS PRESENT: Stephen Wagner, Bart Pacekonis, Robert Vetere, Alan Cavagnaro, Kevin Foley, Michael LeBlanc (left at 7:19 p.m.), Stephanie Dexter

ALTERNATES PRESENT: None

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

REGULAR MEETING

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Pacekonis called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None

MINUTES: 11-28-23 Special Meeting; 11-28-23 Regular Meeting

The minutes were approved by consensus.

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

1. **Appl 23-44P, Berry Patch II Associated Limited Partnership** – request for a site plan modification including a lot line revision to reduce the overall parcel by approx. .3 acres, on property located at 440 Buckland Road, Buckland Gateway Development Zone

The Commission had finished acting on this item during the 6:30 p.m. Special Meeting.

2. **Appl 23-42P, The Metro Realty Management Corporation** – request for a special exception to Sec. 7.22 and site plan of development for a 55-unit apartment complex property located at 240 Deming Street and a portion of 440 Buckland Road (northerly side of Deming St. and easterly of Buckland Rd.), MAH Zone

The Commission had finished acting on this item during the 6:30 p.m. Special Meeting.

Commissioner Wagner made a motion to relocate the meeting to the Madden Room of the South Windsor Town Hall for their discussion with the consultants on the POCD. Seconded by Commissioner Cavagnaro. Motion passed unanimously.

Chair Pacekonis called the meeting back to order at 7:12 p.m.

Chair Pacekonis announced that he will step down as Chair of the PZC, effective immediately. He will continue to serve on the Commission. Vice Chair Foley served as Acting Chair.

Commissioner Vetere made a motion to amend the agenda to add Election of Officer as item 3 under New Business. Seconded by Commissioner Cavagnaro. The motion was called. Commissioners Vetere, LeBlanc, Pacekonis, Wagner, Cavagnaro, and Acting Chair Foley were in favor and Commissioner Dexter was opposed. The motion passed 6:1.

3. Election of Officer

Commissioner Dexter nominated Kevin Foley for Chair. Commissioner LeBlanc seconded the nomination.

Commissioner Vetere nominated Stephen Wagner for Chair. Commissioner Cavagnaro seconded the nomination.

Acting Chair Foley asked for additional nominations. Hearing none, he polled the Commission and five Commissioners voted for Wagner as Chair. The Acting Chair cast one ballot for the nomination.

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Chair Wagner recognized Pacekonis for his years of service and accomplishments on the Commission.

4. Plan of Conservation and Development with consultant SLAM

- **Project Schedule**

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

Commissioner LeBlanc left the meeting at 7:19 p.m.

The public hearing on adoption of the 2024 POCD will take place on or after May 30, after the required 65-day public comment period. The PZC and Water Pollution Control Authority will hold a joint Special Meeting January 16 to discuss growth management strategies. A second public workshop will be held in late January or early February, followed by a Special Meeting February 20 for final review of the draft plan. The Commission could then take action at the March 26 regular meeting to start the 65-day public comment period.

It was decided to start the January 16 Special Meeting at 6 PM.

- **Discuss Plan Format & Structure**

The Commission decided to keep the POCD document in landscape format.

- **Discuss Draft Planning Program**

Gallagher and Chalder presented the Draft Planning Program (**Exhibit B**) containing potential goals, objectives, and strategies for the 2024 POCD relating to conservation, development, and infrastructure. They told the Commission to discuss the proposed strategies and determine which ones to keep, soften, modify, and delete. Gallagher also intends to add a section to the beginning of the plan about the vision for the future, including the growth management strategies to be discussed at the January 16 meeting. There is also an introductory section about sustainability and resiliency, explaining how these concepts are incorporated throughout the plan.

Regarding the conservation element, the draft focuses first on the topic of natural resources, with objectives to maintain and enhance water quality and quantity and protect important natural resources. The Commission revised the strategy regarding undertaking a comprehensive drainage study, clarifying that either a Town-wide study or a study of targeted areas would be beneficial. They also removed a proposed strategy to split the Inland Wetlands Agency/Conservation Commission into two separate entities. There was discussion of the strategy regarding invasive plant species as well.

The draft then moves on to the topic of open space. Chalder noted that residents tend to define open space differently than the Open Space Task Force and other Town entities. Since residents often perceive privately owned, undeveloped land as open space, Chalder recommended amending the definition to focus on whether the land is preserved. In the survey, residents overwhelmingly expressed support for increasing the Town's contributions to the Open Space Fund; a referendum on setting aside funds for additional open space has been discussed as well. The Commission discussed the processes for preserving open space, with Chalder noting the possibility of connecting open spaces to create a Town-wide greenway system. He said the POCD has influenced subdivision development in town by prioritizing certain road connections and could steer open space connections in a similar way.

The Commission expressed support for the strategies the draft identifies with regard to open space. The OSTF Plan is to be added to the document. Michele Lipe asked how perceived open lands that are privately owned, such as golf courses, should be treated in the plan. Chalder said some of these locations could connect to preserved open space; the Commission and consultants discussed.

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Next, the draft identifies two objectives with regard to agricultural resources. Commissioners suggested combining strategies 4 and 7 of Objective A since both involve leases of Town-owned land to farmers; Lipe also mentioned agri-tourism. In response to a question from Commissioner Dexter, Lipe said she is not aware of Town acquisition of farmland ever having gone to a referendum. Chair Wagner said in some nearby areas, farmland is being used for solar farms. Commissioner Foley said he expects the public to be less supportive of this possibility as farmland in town is diminishing, though it was noted that solar panels are under the Siting Council's jurisdiction.

Chalder and Gallagher will discuss the topic of solar energy and may conduct a case study of recent solar developments in Simsbury. At the suggestion of Chair Wagner, a note was added to the draft to encourage solar and agricultural uses at the same sites.

With regard to ambience and the objective to preserve historic structures and landscapes, the Commission removed the strategy to consider designating Main Street as a village district. The other objectives for ambience are to preserve scenic resources and assets, enhance community design and community spirit, and support retention of undeveloped land. Chalder noted the PA-490 tax assessment program, which incentivizes landowners to retain undeveloped land. Another provision in the same statute allows for a local option program for parcels under 25 acres; this program requires a recommendation in the POCD and approval from the Town Council or a referendum. Some towns have designated specific properties, such as golf courses, to remain undeveloped. The Commission discussed the specifics of the program.

Mike Ouellette of Longmeadow Drive said that in Rhode Island, people can donate land or the development rights to it in order to keep it open in perpetuity. Chalder said this type of land trust would be a multi-party transaction and made a note to continue to discuss and refine the language in the draft about retention of land. The Commission also decided to soften strategy 3 under Objective C.

The second element in the Draft Planning Program is development. Gallagher said the Town has made significant progress with housing since the last POCD but is also facing new challenges, particularly the need to balance housing and conservation goals. He posed the question of how to steer housing toward the areas where it is most desirable and away from areas that might have value as open space. The draft identifies supporting a range of housing choices and expanding affordable housing opportunities as objectives.

Chair Wagner said he has heard some cities are encouraging the renting of individual rooms of houses. Gallagher said these units would only count toward the affordable housing quota if they were deed restricted to households making under 80% of the area median income. Commissioners also suggested incentivizing the owners of the trailer parks to convert them to affordable housing. Commissioner Cavagnaro suggested adding language to strategy 2 of Objective A to encourage locating multi-family developments near transit to prioritize sustainability and lessen strain on the roads. He observed that the Town is missing middle housing. Gallagher, the Commission, and staff discussed the need to protect smaller housing options.

The Commission reworded strategy 4 of Objective B to read, "Continue to encourage mixed-income housing through inclusionary zoning." Commissioner Cavagnaro asked about the possibility of working with land banks to redevelop existing properties into affordable housing. Gallagher will check whether the Affordable Housing Plan contains language about direct Town involvement in affordable housing and may add it to the POCD.

Gallagher reminded the Commission that when residents were surveyed for the 2014 POCD, encouraging new business development was a top community priority, but it was a much lower priority in the more recent survey. He said the Town should recognize the importance of its commercial-industrial tax base, which is larger than those of many nearby suburban towns. The Commission deleted a proposed strategy to consider adding

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economic development staff. In response to a question from Commissioner Foley, Lipe said there has previously been discussion of a Mastek grant for repurposing.

Mike Ouellette said that in Philadelphia, 10-year tax abatements have been granted to convert houses in certain areas into affordable housing without changing the shape of the buildings or the makeup of the neighborhoods. Gallagher said a portion of the monies in the housing trust fund could go toward rehabilitation projects.

Gallagher said the Commission had previously determined that the vision established for the Town Center in the 2014 POCD is still relevant; since the focus over the last 10 years has been on improving connectivity, he recommended a greater focus on streetscapes in the new plan. Chair Wagner suggested removing the language about bicycle parking standards from Objective A, strategy 3 as this issue is addressed in the regulations. A mention of Complete Streets was also added to Objective B, strategy 1, with Commissioner Pacekonis saying Complete Streets is especially important for State routes. Gallagher said the POCD is a starting point for funding for streetscapes, and there is typically some level of preliminary design before a grant application.

Regarding the Buckland Road corridor, the Commission had previously expressed support for largely maintaining its existing uses while being responsive to changes as they happen. Gallagher noted that the Buckland corridor offers a different product than the Town Center and other districts, reducing competition. Commissioner Pacekonis said encouraging additional housing in this area could place too much strain on the school system, though he expressed support for prioritizing age-restricted housing there. The Commission, staff, and consultants discussed, with Gallagher noting that the plan should contain some flexibility as conditions could change with regard to school enrollment in the next 10 years.

The Commission expressed support for the strategies listed for the Sullivan Avenue corridor. Their goal is to maintain the existing range of uses and improve aesthetics while exploring the possibility of a transition overlay zone where the industrial and commercial zones meet.

The Route 5 corridor is a regional employment and economic center; the Commission had decided at the previous workshop to focus on maintaining a strong business presence, improving aesthetics, and encouraging redevelopment and reuse. Gallagher said making Route 5 more conducive to bicyclists and pedestrians is a key issue, with Chair Wagner saying most cyclists would like an off-road bike path. The Commission expressed support for the proposed strategies for the Route 5 corridor.

The final element of the draft relates to infrastructure. With regard to community facilities, Gallagher noted that survey respondents expressed a desire for an indoor pool but acknowledged that it is not a high priority. Chair Wagner suggested amending this proposed strategy to refer to an aquatics center. Recreational fields were also added as a potential area of focus.

Gallagher then moved on to the topic of transportation. Chair Wagner said speeding is an issue in town and suggested adding language to establish the goal of a measurable reduction in vehicle speeds through changes to policies and roadway designs. He also suggested reviewing which intersections allow right turns on red. Gallagher said these strategies could be part of the Vision Zero and Complete Streets programs and added language to Objective A, strategy 1 accordingly. Commissioner Cavagnaro asked if Complete Streets proposes roundabouts or any other traffic flow measures; Lipe said it lists a variety of techniques, and the Local Road Safety Committee is to revisit Complete Streets to suggest updates.

The Walk and Wheel Ways Master Plan was recently updated with new priorities, which have been incorporated into the Town's working plan for sidewalks. Gallagher said significant improvements have been made related to walking and biking in town, and the hope is for priority maps highlighting specific areas to be ready in early 2024. The draft also lists strategies for encouraging public transit use. Regarding freight rail,

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Gallagher and Commissioner Foley stressed the importance of having a working relationship between the Town and the railroad owner.

Gallagher said utilities will be discussed further at the January 16 meeting. The main potential issue is the capacity of the Clark Street pump station, which the WPCA is studying. The proposed strategy to better align sewer service areas with zoning and land use policies will be discussed with the WPCA. Chair Wagner suggested adding a strategy regarding groundwater replenishment; Gallagher said this topic could be covered in the Natural Resources section. Wagner also expressed concern about supporting expansion of natural gas service, suggesting that the Town aim instead to increase solar power and enhance the electric grid capacity. Gallagher said it is also important to consider economic sustainability and that gas service can be useful while transitioning to green energy as it is more cost effective than oil. The Commission discussed.

Commissioner Dexter asked if there is a plan for streetlights in town, saying the lack of lighting in some areas makes them unsafe. Lipe said there is a map of existing streetlights, and the Traffic Authority works with the developer and Eversource to locate lights; she will check whether there is a written policy regarding their placement. There was also discussion of policies for the temperature of LED lights.

The final topic of the draft is hazard mitigation, with a number of infrastructure-related items to reduce damage from natural and man-made disasters. Lipe said Town staff are currently updating the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Chalder noted that the Town received accolades from CRCOG for its work on hazard mitigation.

Commissioner Dexter asked if the Commission had done a postmortem on the previous POCD. Lipe said the current review started with an examination of the previous plan.

- **Discussion of January 16 meeting goals**

The plan is for the January 16 Special Meeting to be a growth management workshop. The Water Pollution Control Authority will be invited to the meeting. It was decided to start the Special Meeting at 6 PM.

- **Next Steps/Schedule**

The schedule and next steps had been discussed earlier in the workshop.

5. Review of proposed By-Law changes

Commissioner Dexter made a motion to approve the proposed changes to the bylaws. Seconded by Commissioner Vetere. Motion passed unanimously.

BONDS: Callings/Reductions/Settings

<u>IWA/CC Bond</u>	<i>AMOUNT</i>	<i>REDUCTION</i>	<i>BALANCE</i>
21-32P, Whole Foods – E & S	\$20,000	\$20,000	-0-
21-32P, Whole Foods – Stormwater	\$20,000	\$20,000	-0-
21-44P, Shake Shack – E & S	\$15,000	\$15,000	-0-
18-23P, 150 Sullivan Avenue – Stormwater	\$10,000	\$3,000	\$7,000

Commissioner Cavagnaro made a motion to release the E&S and Stormwater bonds for Appl 21-32P. Seconded by Commissioner Pacekonis. Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Cavagnaro made a motion to release the E&S bond for Appl 21-44P. Seconded by Commissioner Dexter. Motion passed unanimously.

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Commissioner Cavagnaro made a motion to reduce the Stormwater bond for Appl 18-23P. Seconded by Commissioner Pacekonis. Motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS: None

APPLICATIONS OFFICIALLY RECEIVED:

Appl. 23-50P, Pete's RV T & C – request for renewal of a two-year temporary and conditional permit for the storage of up to 50 campers on property located at 317 Chapel Road, I-291 Corridor Development zone.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Dexter reminded the Commission of the holiday reception taking place next week at Oscar's All-American Grill.

CORRESPONDENCE/REPORTS: None

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Vetere moved to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Cavagnaro. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joshua Stern, Recording Secretary