

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
TOWN OF SOUTHTON
JANUARY 19, 2021

The Planning & Zoning Commission of the Town of Southington held a regular meeting on Tuesday, January 19, 2021 via WebEx teleconference. Robert Hammersley, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

The following participated:

Robert Salka, Jeff Gworek, Susan Locks & Peter Santago

Alternates: Caleb Cowles

Staff:

Robert Phillips, Director of Planning & Community Development

James Grappone, Ass't Town Engineer

Absent: Commissioner Christina Volpe

Alternates Theresa Albanese, Joe Coviello & Stuart Savelkoul

The Chair seated Alternate Commissioner Cowles for Commissioner Volpe.

4. Appointment of Steve Walowski as Commission Member to fill a vacated regular seat.

Mr. Salka made a motion to appoint Steve Walowski as a permanent member of the Planning & Zoning Commission. Mr. Santago seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Town Clerk Kathy Larkin administered the oath to Steve Walowski.

(Sworn, sworn)

Congratulations, take your seat Steve! Welcome aboard. We look forward to working with you in the coming months and appreciate your willingness to help us and serve your town.

The Chair seated Mr. Walowski and declared a quorum with seven members present.

5. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag was recited by all participants.

6. Moment of Silent Reflection

(Silent, Silent)

7. Approval of Minutes

A. Regular Meeting of January 5, 2021

Mr. Cowles made a motion to approve the Minutes from the last meeting. Mr. Salka seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

8. Business Meeting

A. Eleni Real Estate, LLC, site plan modification application for a two-story office/retail building, property located at 1615 West Street, in the WSB zone, parcel size 2.13 acres (SPR #1802) tabled from January 5

Mr. Bovino, on behalf of the applicant, requested a table. The Chair advised with no objection from commissioners, the item will stay on the table.

B. Mount Southington site plan modification application to remove existing ski school building and replace with 2.810 sf wo story building, property located at 396 Mount Vernon Road, parcel size 98.91 acres, in an R-80 zone (SPR #1809) tabled from January 5

Sev Bovino, Planner with Kratzert, Jones & Associates on behalf of the applicant presented. The property is located at 396 Mt. Vernon Road. It is in an R-20/25 zone and R-80 zone. The first 200' of the property is R-20/25. The total acreage is about 98 acres with multiple buildings.

One of the buildings located in the southeast corner of the property is used for a ski school. It is about 2,000, plus square feet. We propose to replace this building with a new one which is more in keeping with the New England style architecture and also to provide proper space for the ski school which will include the personnel that teaches the kids, space for 30 children normally using that, and additional storage for the facility for the ski area and employee office space.

The building will be slab on grade in the same spot. About 2,850 sf, including the decking. This building will have a second floor of 1,600 sf.

The use will be for a ski school, office and storage. In the summer months and it may be used for small parties and for the Fast Camp Program which is usually done at the Kelly School and now they'd like to go to the ski area because the school doesn't allow any fires on the property.

This is served by public water and septic system. No floor drains are proposed. No additional parking is needed because we are not adding additional employees. The number of children is 30. Th lighting will be full cut off. The roof water will be directed to an underground storage for recharge.

There will be no cooking in the facility. The small kitchen indicated on the plans will have a microwave and any kind of food will be heated and served on paper plates with plastic utensils.

We received wetlands approval and the fire department is okay with the application. We received staff comments, responded in writing and all the appropriate notes are on the plan.

I'll answer any questions at this time.

Commissioner Questions:

Mr. Gworek said his questions were answered at the end. (Fire Department, Health Department approval, all comments were responded to. And, wetlands approval.)

Mr. Cowles asked if the kitchen was a breakroom kitchen or is it for serving the programs? Mr. Bovino answered it is to heat food for the programs. Not to provide food for the general public. They have a restaurant where the barn is for that. Mr. Cowles confirmed it is for the staff. Mr. Bovino said Yes.

(Rendering showed on the screen)

Mr. Bovino explained it is a barn style building with a cupola on top. This is facing north. As you enter the gate and proceed south to go to the ski school, this is what you'll be looking at. Mr. Cowles asked if you could see it from across the pond or is it tucked behind the trees? Mr. Bovino answered said there is not a lot of trees, especially in the wintertime. You will be able to see it from the street.

Ms. Locks said all her questions had been answered.

Mr. Walowski said his questions had been answered.

Mr. Santago asked if this was demo and rebuild. Mr. Bovino said it is a replacement. Mr. Santago said a lot of people come to Southington for Mt. Southington. For me, anything we can do to enhance that, I'm all for it. I think it's a good thing. The rendering shows it is in keeping with the style of what's out there and we would want to have that. I don't have anything else.

Mr. Salka had no questions.

The Chair asked about the clearing of some trees in the southeast corner in response to a comment by the planning department. Mr. Bovino said there is a small clearing area in that corner, yes. The Chair asked how many trees are being talked about and will any be replaced? Mr. Bovino said not many standup trees, more underbrush. Probably two or three.

The building being constructed is slightly larger than what is there currently. No additional parking is required as we have no additional employees. We have 430 parking spaces and calculations require 172 spaces. We are providing way more than we need. We need the spaces during the busy times.

There are bathrooms proposed. There is a brand-new septic system design to serve the building so the kids don't have to walk to the other building. Bathrooms are ADA compliance.

In the kitchen, the sink is ADA compliant.

All planning and engineering comments have been addressed satisfactorily.

The Chair felt this enhances a town asset and he's happy to hear it will be servicing the Fast Camp Program which is a community asset, as well.

Mr. Salka made a motion to approve SPR 1809. Mr. Cowles seconded. Motion passed 7 to 0 on a roll call vote.

C. Town of Southington, site plan application for the demolition of existing pump station building, concrete pad, equipment and appurtenances, and the construction of a new precast pump station, related controls, concrete pads, fencing, storm water management facilities and landscaping, Plantsville Pump Station, property located at 806 South Main Street in a CB zone (SPR #1810) tabled from January 5

James Grappone, Ass't Town Engineer, presented briefly. This is an existing pump station that was built in 1973. It meets the useful life from an equipment standpoint. It's one of nine pumping stations that the town owns and maintains in its wastewater collection system.

It is located on a permanent easement at the rear of property owned by Volpe & Son Automotive on a permanent easement.

With me this evening I have Amy Sowitcky, Tighe & Bond's senior project manager and Joe Canas who is Tighe & Bond's principal engineer.

We recently received IW approval. And we are presenting this project for a replacement this evening.

Amy Sowitcky, profession engineer in Connecticut and I work with Tighe & Bond with Joe Canas here with me. As Jim said, this is just a wastewater pump station replacement project that is part of the 2014 facility plan that Tighe & Bond prepared for the town.

(Shared screen with site plan drawing)

Joe can flip through the comments that were addressed in writing.

Joe Canas, licensed professional engineer in the State of Connecticut. I am also a certified floodplain manager by the Association of State Floodplain Managers. I am a principle here with Tighe & Bond. We are working with the town on the site plan for the pump station.

There is an existing building on the site. Fairly small and looks like a shed. That building will be coming down. (Showed view)

Beneath that building is a pump which pumps the received sewage to the wastewater treatment plant. There is a whole lot more in that little shed than just being a shed. There is a lot of equipment inside.

The plan is to remove that building and relocate the pump. The pump is oval shaped (indicating). It is basically a big concrete chamber and a little bit sticks above grade with diamond plate hatches on the top (indicating).

What you will see is the concrete which will be flush with grade and a couple of vent pipes coming out of the ground as well as the two hatches.

In addition to the pump, we also have a control box. Electrical controls are basically in an aluminum cabinet on a concrete pad. We also have a generator which is powered by natural gas. That is above ground, also.

You see the shed, one control box and the generator. No new parking is proposed.

We are proposing some additional stormwater management because this site is right next to the Quinnipiac River to the west. We are in the riparian buffer there. We are providing some stormwater improvement as the stormwater just shoots off the site. We are doing some minor grading in the area and the stormwater will pitch towards a proposed catch basin (indicating) in the southwest corner. That will discharge to an underground infiltration chamber. That was sized to treat one half of the water quality volume which is a requirement based on the MS-4 Permit. We did dig a test pit out there to determine the restrictive layer and the infiltration rate. That was all accounted for in the design.

We propose an enhanced planting buffer behind the fence. There is a new fence that goes around this pump station to protect it. Behind that we are proposing a variety of different plants and shrubs to enhance the buffer there.

We are also adding a small paved area to accommodate turning movements. That's the only additional pavement being added. That is on the north end of the site.

Increase in impervious area of 575 sf. It is important to point out that all that additional pavement added as well as the existing pavement around the pump station is all going to be treated now as sheet flow directed to the Quinnipiac River.

We do not have any floodplain impact.

We did receive wetlands approval on January 7th, 2021.

We did receive staff comments that we responded to in writing. He quickly went through the comments and responses. (On file in the planning department) Electronic copies of the plan have been delivered to the town.

I am happy to answer questions.

Mr. Grappone commented it is a vital component of our wastewater infrastructure. It has basically reached its useful life and needs to be replaced. What we think is going to be out there is a lot less of an eyesore. Working with the Volpe's, they made the request for the additional pavement to allow for plowing operations to be better there and we're working with them with their concerns. With that, we offer it out for questions.

Commissioner Questions:

Mr. Gworek stated he had nothing much. Pretty straightforward. He liked the updated stormwater management. It's nice to have instead of runoff to the river.

Mr. Cowles asked the capacity of the underground tank. Mr. Grappone said 200 gallons per minute --- upper 200. Ms. Sowitcky said the capacity is over 500. But we will be pumping out as soon as the high levels are hit and it is in the 260's gallons per minute.

Mr. Grappone added this wastewater gravity sewer that comes into the station collects most of Main Street, and then travels down an easement through the Hearthstone property and then to the station to the rear of South Main Street.

Mr. Cowles asked if this represented an expansion capacity or just a simple switch old for new?

Mr. Grappone explained part of the scope of Tighe & Bond was to look at existing flow rates but also work with the planning department to see what future growth is out there. There's not much future growth in that area but I'm sure a little factor was added to that. That was part of the scope.

Ms. Sowitcky added we looked at future growth and we reviewed those with the existing station and the capacity.

Mr. Cowles said it is powered by a mechanical pump fed by a generator piped natural gas or propane tank? Ms. Sowitcky said the station is fed by electrical service by Eversource. But backup power is required and that will be via a generator which is natural gas.

As to the fence on the site, is it architectural or utilitarian chain link. Ms. Sowitcky said it will be chain link with black plastic on it.

Ms. Locks asked the average life span of this pump station. Mr. Grappone responded generally 30 years or so. So, it is well beyond its useful life. Pump stations are inspected on a weekly basis and documented how they're running. For redundancy there is pressure transducers that are out there for added protection in the event there are any issues with the station. Just to make sure there is no catastrophic failure.

Mr. Walowski had no questions.

Mr. Santago is if this was part of the existing budget. No additional taxpayer expense for this? Mr. Grappone said part of it is in the budget with respect to the wastewater collection budget which is separate from the town budget. Explained they're doing one pump station per year to keep the cost under \$1 million so we don't have to go out for referendum.

Discussion.

Mr. Salka asked about the security around the pump stations. Are there any cameras or anything that would reflect back and notify you if something is happening or if there are people trespassing? Mr. Grappone said they don't have cameras generally on the stations. But this set far back on the Volpe property and they go/in out quite frequently and even during the evening hours. The police department makes stops in the area. We've never had any vandalism. It is fully fenced in. There's lighting in the proposal. We feel the control is there.

The Chair further discussed the fencing. It's chain link with black plastic on the wiring. You won't see the slats. It's not metallic.

All planning comments have been addressed satisfactorily.

Mr. Salka made a motion to approve SPR 1810. Ms. Locks seconded. Moton passed 7 to 0 on a roll call vote.

D. 8-24 referral for the purchase of 766 South Main Street in the amount of \$40,000 (MR #560)

Mr. Salka commented this is downtown Plantsville. The Zommer Family has offered it to the town for \$40,000. Assessed value is \$66,000. As part of the contract, it is stated that this piece of

property --- we'll call it land acquisition versus open space --- it says it will be used as a mini part for the Town of Plantsville for the beautification of Plantsville.

I learned that on any open space property and this one we can talk specifically about; it's acquired by the town with town money. With the money that was in the last referendum. What that means is even though it says open space, that property will be initially used as open space and a mini park as in the contract. But if a developer was to approach the town and want to purchase the property and build a business or commercial building on that piece of property and the town council agrees with that --- the town council has the liberty of selling that piece of property to the developer at an open meeting of the town council. I was not aware of that. I would just assume open space was open space forever. As long as there is no state money --- if the state was to use some of their money or we were to use state grant money, it would be stipulated it has to be open space/passive recreation. In this case, that is not necessarily the case. I want you to be aware of that. I think it's important to know as we get some of these 8-24's before us.

At the committee meeting, Paul Chaplinsky put up four photos of what is envisioned by the town council for this piece of property. It will have a wall with some seating, plantings, for somebody to have a cup of coffee or sit down and just enjoy the environment.

(Pictures shown)

Within the wall is embedded a sign that says: Plantsville. A nice touch for that property downtown.

Commissioner comments:

Mr. Cowles said historically speaking, is there any site contamination issues there that we might be buying ourselves into? Mr. Phillips said he was not aware of any. Whenever the town is going to take possession of property, we obtain a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment to verify there is nothing to look at further in investigation. Mr. Grappone said as part of the due diligence of the town we will have a Phase I Environmental. It is part of the land acquisition process.

Discussion.

Mr. Santago explained why initially he had heartburn about this, but he had a legal question and that is now the town owns the property, car goes into the wall, have we increased our liability? Mr. Grappone commented. Any fixed object within the town's ROW is a liability issue. I believe according to the statute that we have immunity against that.

We have a grant for the beautification project of \$3 million+. The project will be bid sometime in the mid to late fall of this year. Part of that project, this allows us the opportunity to have a pocket park or an outside dining area which would be perfect for this area. It'll give a boost to that area of town. Explained others have already started upgrading their buildings. This will provide an emphasis on revitalizing this area.

Mr. Santago said if it can be used for the beautification of downtown Plantsville and enhance that area and maybe the other businesses are enhancing, he could see that for the town to be a good thing.

Discussion.

Mr. Santago talked about the enhancement of Plantsville with this parklet. I've come full circle.

Mr. Gworek asked to abstain from this vote. I've done environmental work for the town in the past and if they open up a bid and I put a bid in, can I abstain from this. Mr. Phillips advised he would be recusing himself. Mr. Gworek agreed and recused himself from this item.

The record will reflect Commissioner Gworek has recused himself from this agenda item. We still have a quorum.

The Chair commended the town council, open space committee, Commissioner Salka, Jim Grappone and Rob Phillips on this. I think they did a great job. This is a great opportunity for that section of town. He asked who is doing the design for this. Mr. Grappone said it Weston & Samson. The Chair asked if this parcel was factored into the design or is this a bonus added in should we decide and the town council decide to purchase this piece of property? Mr. Grappone responded it is separate from their scope. Public works designed and estimated a park there. What is included in the design is bench, decorative lighting, trash receptacles. Everything you see in downtown Southington you will see in downtown Plantsville with respect to this project. The Chair said that is a good thing.

Mr. Salka made a motion to approve MR560. Mr. Cowles.

Ms. Locks made a motion for a favorable referral of 8-24. Mr. Cowles seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

The Chair reseated Jeff Gworek.

9. Administrative Items

Nothing this evening.

10. Items to Schedule for Public Hearing

1. Class Act Autowash, special permit application for proposed car wash, property located at 1656 Meriden Avenue, 291, 307-309 Meriden Waterbury Road, in a B zone SPU 648) February 2

11. Receipt of New Applications

1. Class Act Autowash, site plan application for proposed car wash, property located at 1656 Meriden Avenue, 291, 307-309 Meriden Waterbury Road, in a B zone SPR 1812) February 2

2. Frank and Mary Fragola, site plan application to construct an age restricted "affordable" housing development for 30 unites under Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-30g et seq. property located at 295 Laning Street in an R-80 zone, parcel size 11.21 acres (SPR #1811) Tentatively scheduled for February 16th.

Also, a grandparent/parent apartment on (Inaudible) Straits which will be on the agenda February 16th for a public hearing.

And, Livewell SPU & Site Plan, on for special permit on February 2nd.

12. Executive Session to discuss pending litigation/real estate matters

Mr. Santago made a motion to go into executive session to discuss pending litigation / real estate matters. We'll include in the invite the PZC members, Town Attorney Jeremy Taylor and the two attorneys that have been involved in the pending litigation matter. Mr. Gworek is recused from this as he recused himself from one of the matters. Mr. Salka seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

(Meeting adjourned to executive session at 7:56 o'clock.)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Planning & Zoning Commission of the Town of Southington entered into executive session on Tuesday, January 19, 2021 via WebEx, immediately following their regular meeting in order to discuss pending litigation / real estate matters.

The following Commissioners participated:

Robert Salka, Steve Walowski, Susan Locks & Peter Santago

Alternates: Caleb Cowles

Also participating:

Staff: Robert Phillips, Director of Planning & Community Development
Jeremy Taylor, Town Attorney
Counsel involved in the matters

Absent:

Commissioner Christina Volpe
Alternates Theresa Albanese, Joe Coviello & Stuart Savelkoul

Recused: Commissioner Jeff Gworek

No motions or votes were taken.

Mr. Santago made a motion to adjourn executive session which Mr. Salka seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

(Whereupon, executive session was adjourned at 8:44 o'clock, p.m.)

REGULAR SESSION

Mr. Santago made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Cowles seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 o'clock, p.m.)

Robert A. Phillips
Acting Secretary