

**MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING
HELD BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
DECEMBER 8, 2008**

ROLL CALL:

Members Present: Eugene Sierakowski, Chairman
Joseph Diminico, Vice Chairman
Kevin Dougan, Secretary
Salvatore Mancini
Andy Kidd

Alternates: Eric Prause
Matthew Galligan
Adam Gootkin

Also Present: Mark Pellegrini, Director of Neighborhood
Services and Economic Development
Renata Bertotti, Senior Planner
Ginger MacHattie, Recording Secretary

The Acting Chairman opened the Public Hearing at 7:02 p.m. The Acting Secretary read the legal notice for the application when the call was made.

MOTION: Mr. Mancini moved to add item 4a to the agenda: Election of Officers. Mr. Diminico seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

SOUTH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH – 1208 & 1226 Main Street – request for special exception approval under Article II Section 4.02.02 of the zoning regulations for parking lot improvements at a place of worship in the Residence A zone – Special Exception (S-212)

Ms. Kristen Solloway, Professional Engineer with Fuss & O'Neill, spoke on behalf of the applicant. The applicant's property has an existing front yard with a large sidewalk. Currently there is no designated parking, however the yard is used as an informal parking area, she said. The applicant is looking to formalize the parking. Six spaces, five of which will be handicap accessible, are proposed for the front yard area. Access to parking will be from Main Street, and exit to Hartford Road. A sidewalk will be installed for church patrons.

Ms. Solloway said there is an existing parking lot on the north side of the church. The applicant

is looking to expand the parking there by a total of two handicap and three regular spaces. She said the existing fence will be relocated and the driveway will be widened to 16' for safer entrance. Ms. Solloway explained that during the review process, concerns were expressed about the driveway leading to Hartford Road. She stated that although this is not the best solution, it is an existing condition.

In response to a question from Mr. Prause, Ms. Solloway explained that sidewalks will be installed along the perimeter of the south parking lot. Cars will be able to pull into parking spaces and will not be required to back into them, she said. Ms. Solloway provided pictures to Planning and Zoning Commission members showing existing parking conditions.

In response to a question from Mr. Galligan, Ms. Solloway stated that the sidewalk will be angled.

Ms. Bertotti explained that Town staff expressed concerns with the application due to the proximity of driveways to the intersection of Main Street and Hartford Road. Since both entrances are close to the traffic light, the staff raised public safety and traffic issues. Staff requested verification that there is sufficient sight distance at the Hartford Road exit. In reference to staff concerns regarding the traffic and sight line issues, the applicant responded that this is an existing situation. Ms. Bertotti informed the Commission that staff questioned the ability to preserve large trees existing on the property. The applicant responded they will be able to preserve all but one tree. Town staff provided alternate parking designs that would alleviate some safety concerns, but the applicant did not feel the alternatives would work because of the activities currently conducted by the church. Other staff comments were minor and technical in nature, she said.

In response to a question from Mr. Sierakowski, Larry Fiano of South United Methodist Church explained that the location of the church was great when it was built in 1925; these days it is hard to make it work. If they had it to do over, they wouldn't build the church where it is. But, since it exists the way it does, there are only two areas of lawn and they are used for church activities for the youth. The alternatives provided by Town staff will take up the lawn areas. Being able to have youth events in those areas is very important to the church.

In response to a question from Mr. Kidd, Ms. Bertotti stated she is unaware of documented traffic issues at this intersection.

In response to a question from Mr. Diminico, Ms. Bertotti explained that both entrances are very close to traffic lights. Northbound traffic must cross three lanes on Main Street to enter the driveway, however these are the existing conditions, she said.

Mr. Sierakowski stated that these are the conditions as they exist today. He asked if the approval of additional parking spaces will make a distinctive difference in the traffic impact.

Ms. Bertotti explained that under special exception criteria, it is required that the traffic impact be investigated. The Traffic Engineer did not find there would be a significant difference.

The chairman closed the Public Hearing portion of the meeting at 7:23 p.m.

NOTICE: THE CASSETTE TAPE RECORDING OF THIS PUBLIC HEARING CAN BE HEARD IN THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT.

OFFICIAL TAPE NO. 1009, 1010