

**MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING
HELD BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
APRIL 2, 2018**

ROLL CALL:

Members Present: Eric Prause, Chairman
Andy Kidd, Vice Chairman
Michael Stebe, Secretary
Jessica Scorso

Alternates: Teresa Ike

Alternate Member Sitting: Julian Stoppelman

Absent: Timothy Bergin
Patrick Kennedy

Also Present: Gary Anderson, Director of Planning
Renata Bertotti, Senior Planner
Nancy Martel, Recording Secretary

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing at 7:08 P.M. The Secretary read the legal notice when the call was made.

WOODBIDGE MILLS, LLC – To revise Art. II, Sec. 22.04 to add multi-family historic mill conversion in accordance with the requirements of Art. II, Sec. 9.14.03 as a special exception use in the Special Design Commercial Business Zone. – Zoning Regulation Amendment (2018-014)

Mr. Steve Kowalski, manager and owner of Woodbridge Mills, LLC, presented the application. Mr. Kowalski explained that Woodbridge Mills, LLC is a private entity, a team of developers who recently purchased the property at 501 Middle Turnpike East. This is a historic property, he reported, formerly known as the Glastonbury Knitting Company. Mr. Kowalski noted that one of his teammates was present, Peter Bonzani, manager and owner of Hilliard Mills. Before taking possession of the property, the developers noted that, in the past, the property has never been well utilized. There were several trade studies completed, and the consensus was that the best use would be to redevelop it as residential independent senior housing. Mr. Kowalski explained this conclusion was reached through various determinations, i.e., it is a quiet area, it is next to the Woodbridge Farm, the Senior Center is two doors down, and there are a laundry facility, a supermarket and amenities nearby. He conceded that, when first looking at the property, it did not look like a mill because it is covered up with aluminum siding. The developers would like to return the building back to what it was 100 years ago, he said.

Additionally, according to Mr. Kowalski, the plan aligns with all the goals of Manchester. The Manchester Green Corridor Study from 2016 specifies the building as a prime candidate, he said. When the location was occupied, it was not fully utilized, he reported; there are areas of the

building that have not seen any use in approximately 50 years. He noted that he went through the goals of the Manchester 2020 Plan and observed that one of the intents was to conserve and restore Manchester's historic resources. This will be a historic building restoration. In addition, Mr. Kowalski pointed to concentrating development around transportation nodes and major transportation corridors. He explained the property is next to the bus route. Another point was fitting in with the goal of expanding housing opportunities and the plan is an excellent housing development opportunity, in his opinion. He noted the proposal is an excellent opportunity for the Town of Manchester Conservation and Development Plan utilizing a landmark building on the Manchester Green, which is not contributing at the moment but could with this development. The text amendment, he explained, would also benefit another mill building nearby, at 485 Middle Turnpike.

Mr. Stoppelman expressed his concern about parking. He also asked if the building in the back over the stream would be retained.

Mr. Kowalski explained that they are evaluating that at this time. There are some structural concerns and the developer needs to do due diligence to determine whether it can be saved, he said. He noted that there are plans in the event the back building must be removed for conserving the stream. When looking at the building as a whole, much is in good shape, though there are some structural concerns in the back building area, he reported.

Mr. Stoppelman asked about the parking plans.

Mr. Kowalski reported that they have a design where some of the addition near the parking lot area, which is not historically significant, would be removed, which would allow 35-40 parking spaces.

Mr. Prause questioned whether Art. II, Sec. 9.14.03 had been reviewed, noting that it is in-depth about the requirements needed to rehabilitate a historic mill building.

Mr. Kowalski stated that he has looked at that, noting there may be some variances required. The property is somewhat limited due to the building size vs. lot size, but with a few variances, they see no issue getting through those limitations, he said.

Mr. Prause explained that one of the first criteria is that the property needs to have been recognized by the U.S. Department of Interior, the State Historic Preservation Office of the State of Connecticut, or by the Town of Manchester in the Plan of Development as a historic mill structure. He questioned whether this qualifies as a historic mill structure.

Mr. Kowalski reported that, in his opinion, the Town of Manchester would recognize it as a historic mill structure.

Mr. Prause inquired of staff if there is a defined list of historic mill structures.

Ms. Bertotti responded that she believes the Town does have such a list and she further believes this building is part of that list.

Mr. Prause questioned how many other properties in the SDC zone would qualify for the historic mill designation.

Ms. Bertotti replied that, to the best staff can tell, there are two: the stated property and the old printer building at 485 Middle Turnpike.

Mr. Prause clarified that, even though the amendment would open up the SDC zone to historic mill conversions, there are only two properties that would benefit, with which Ms. Bertotti agreed.

Mr. Prause thanked the applicant for pointing out the growth management principles and linkage to the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development, which draws a line between what the goals were and what the developers plan to do.

Mr. Kidd observed that this is not an application for this specific location; it is a zoning regulation amendment application instigated by the applicant. He noted the value associated with the building but said it also affects a number of other locations, technically. Mr. Kidd questioned whether this was the best way to open up the ability for the applicant to move forward with their plans.

Mr. Anderson responded that was the Staff's opinion. Staff went through several options with the applicant and looked for a way they could move forward within the Town's regulations, he explained, and this appeared to be the best way.

Ms. Bertotti reiterated that the zoning district is very small, and the two buildings mentioned may represent 10% of the zoning district.

Mr. Kidd referred to the comment about the area being quiet, and noted that it is. He stated that the location is reasonable for the proposal, but pointed out the services in that area. The intersection is very unusual for pedestrians and Mr. Kidd asked the applicant whether there is a concern about that issue.

Mr. Kowalski noted that the situation needs to be addressed whether or not 20 people live there.

Mr. Kidd asked if the Traffic Engineer has reviewed this location. He noted that there is a better opportunity for the review when there is a formal application for the site.

Ms. Bertotti explained that the Traffic Engineer did review the matter and did not have comments regarding the zoning regulation amendment. The Engineer stated "no comments presuming if the revision is reviewed there is sufficient parking on site for redevelopment of 501 Middle Turnpike." He is talking about parking, she said.

Mr. Kidd commented that some of the building could be reviewed that is not historic in nature to open up some parking. He also assumed there is less parking required for elderly housing. Mr. Kidd questioned, if residents are being added, how that would be handled by the current structure of that intersection.

Ms. Bertotti noted that some commercial uses that would be allowed in the Special Design Commercial zone either as of right or as a special exception could very well generate more vehicle traffic than residential use would.

Mr. Kidd agreed that he is not as worried about vehicle traffic as he is the pedestrian traffic.

Mr. Stebe recalled earlier conversations held at the Senior Center regarding the Manchester Green Study. There were many ideas at that time, he said, but no one had a plan for that end of the intersections. The convergence of East Center Street, Middle Turnpike, and Woodbridge Street makes it treacherous crossing the street, though in his opinion that can be mediated. Mr. Stebe praised the idea of reutilizing this building, noting that a number of applicants have come before the Commission but ultimately ran into the issue of use due to parking issues for retail or restaurants as well as parking for residential. He reiterated that having the proposed revitalization, though sacrificing some of the non-historical areas, would bring more pedestrian traffic and would benefit that area. Mr. Stebe commented that the developer would need to work with the State to better time the crosswalks. He noted that he is in favor of pulling an existing set of code into this segment of zoning, which is already very precise. The detailed plans would need fine attention, but he looks forward to seeing those plans, Mr. Stebe noted.

Mr. Prause questioned Staff on any relief provided by a historic mill conversion that may be different for a regular application in the SDC.

Ms. Bertotti replied that certain things that would be allowed are off-street parking, loosening of setbacks, and the historic mill conversion.

Mr. Anderson explained that there is parking relief as well, perhaps in particular for elderly housing. He reported that, in Special Design Commercial, stand-alone residential cannot be built.

Mr. Prause questioned the unit sizes.

Mr. Anderson stated that they are outlined in the regulation.

Ms. Bertotti noted that they are in the regulations. She stated that they are similar to every other district; they do allow apartments similar to the mills in the Historic zone.

Mr. Prause said his assumption was that the apartment sizes seem smaller.

Ms. Bertotti reminded Mr. Prause that would be the minimum allowed.

Mr. Stoppelman said he assumed this would allow first-floor apartments, whereas in other districts, they would have been required to be second floor or higher.

Mr. Anderson agreed that would be true in the Special Design Commercial zone.

Ms. Bertotti explained that Staff has reviewed the proposal and does not have comments on the text amendment application. The proposal would meet the 2016 Manchester Green Study as well as several goals and objectives in the Plan of Conservation and Development, as detailed in the draft motions. The proposal is a use that is allowed under special exception, she reported, and the Commission will have the purview to review the application for unit sizes, pedestrian circulation, and safety. The text amendment adoption would only be the beginning of the process, according to Ms. Bertotti.

Mr. Stebe asked about the farmland to the rear of the property.

Ms. Bertotti explained that is held by the Historical Society.

Mr. Stebe questioned whether the Historical Society has given input or feedback to the Town regarding this issue.

Mr. Anderson noted that there is a member of the Historical Society at the meeting to speak to that.

Mr. Jack Prior, President of the Manchester Historical Society, introduced himself. Mr. Prior reported that, from a historical standpoint, the membership loves the idea of the property being preserved and brought back as the Glastonbury Knitting Mills. There would be no issue with tearing down the structure in the back, he stated, though he noted that the stream passes under the building, not behind it. Mr. Prior questioned the impact on the Woodbridge Farmstead; they have applied for and received museum status for the barn. He questioned whether it would affect augmenting the house as part of the museum. He observed that there are many crosswalks in the area. To reiterate, Mr. Prior stated, the Historical Society would be happy to see the building improved and restored close to the original.

Mr. Peter Bonzani, 642 Hilliard Street, introduced himself, stating that he is Mr. Kowalski's partner along with another gentleman. He added to the presentation, mentioning they are working with the State Historic Preservation Office to have the building listed on the State Register, and the plans are to follow their guidelines with the restoration. Mr. Bonzani reiterated that there is a structural engineer, Jim Grant, who worked on the Woodbridge Barn, reviewing the structure to the rear in the hope of saving it. There are no plans to disturb or alter the waterway, and they are looking forward to being neighbors with the Manchester Historical Society. He reported that he has worked with them at the Hilliard Mills for well over a decade.

Ms. Bertotti noted that a notification was sent to CRCOG because the Deming Street part of the zoning district is within 500 feet of the town line. CRCOG responded, stating that they "find no apparent conflict with the regional plans and policies..." and "the proposed regulations will provide for affordable housing opportunities which advance the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development's housing goal to increase the range of choice in housing for people of all incomes and all ages, but especially for those who have the least choice in achieving their locational preference." She summarized that CRCOG found the plan meets the goals of the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, as well as the Town's.

Mr. Stebe referred to the language regarding, whether ownership or rentals, having 10% use of residential spaces as affordable housing, and questioned how that would be accomplished.

Ms. Bertotti sought to clarify whether Mr. Stebe was speaking about the affordability rate and how that is maintained, or the actual ownership.

Mr. Stebe stated that the affordability rate is fine; it involves actuarial tables and household sizes and he understands that. His question was about who will decide the 10%, especially when the units will be random sizes, he said.

Mr. Anderson noted that Staff will have to review that information more closely. He stated he would refer back to the Cheney Mills. That is a requirement of this district and the special exception that would be included there.

MOTION: Mr. Stebe moved to close the public hearing. Ms. Scorso seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

The Chairman closed the public hearing at 7:40 P.M.

I certify these minutes were adopted on the following date:

April 16, 2018
Date

Eric Prause, Chairman

**NOTICE: A DIGITAL RECORDING OF THIS PUBLIC HEARING CAN
BE HEARD IN THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT.**