

**MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING
HELD BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
OCTOBER 19, 2020**

MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM

ROLL CALL:

Members Present: Eric Prause, Chairman
Patrick Kennedy, Vice Chairman
Michael Stebe, Secretary
Jessica Scorso
Jessica Poland

Alternate Members: Julian Stoppelman
Bonnie Potocki
Teresa Ike

Also Present: Gary Anderson, Director of Planning
Megan Pilla, Senior Planner
Nancy Martel, Recording Secretary

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing at 7:00 P.M. The Secretary read the legal notice when the call was made.

LUIS MORENO (continued from October 5, 2020) – Special Exception under Art. II, Sec. 16.15.02(c) to operate a place of worship in the Industrial zone at 104 Hilliard Street. – Special Exception (2020-067)

Mr. Luis Moreno introduced himself. Mr. Moreno explained that, subsequent to the last meeting, he provided more information as requested by Mr. Davis. He displayed a revised plan, and detailed the available parking, air conditioning unit, indoor layout, and handicapped bathroom facility.

Ms. Pilla reported that the revised plans satisfactorily addressed all Staff comments. She noted that an item of discussion at the last meeting was concern over the available parking, and after review by the traffic engineer, the proposed activity is small enough that the legal street spaces available will be adequate if the fenced-in area is not accessible. Ms. Pilla reiterated that, at the last meeting, the property owner stated that the fenced-in area is accessible to this group for parking. There are no outstanding Staff concerns.

Mr. Kennedy commented that, at the last meeting, there was discussion about buffer requirements. He questioned whether anything was done to plausibly meet that requirement.

Ms. Pilla stated that the applicant added a note to the revised plan about adding privacy slats to the existing 4 ft. chain link fence. Mr. Davis, the Zoning Enforcement Officer, was satisfied with that response.

There were no members of the public to speak, nor were any written comments received.

MOTION: Mr. Kennedy moved to close the public hearing on this application. Ms. Poland seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

CHICK-FIL-A – Request a Special Exception under Art. II, Sec. 24.02.01(d) for demolition of the existing site and construction of a new +/- 5,165 sq. ft. Chick-Fil-A restaurant with associated parking, drive-through lanes, and utilities at 1482 and 1524 Pleasant Valley Road. – Special Exception (2020-068)

Mr. Joey Fonseca, Assistant Project Manager, Bohler, introduced himself. Mr. Clint Mattson, Chick-Fil-A Principal Development Lead for the Northeast Region, introduced himself.

Mr. Fonseca displayed an aerial view of the site and explained the location of the proposal and the surrounding area. He showed the existing conditions view, detailing the history of creating the separate parcel, parking, two driveways, existing utilities and proposed tie-ins, and topography. He then showed an aerial view with the proposed layout.

Mr. Fonseca displayed a rendering of the proposed site plan. He stated that the plan is to demolish the existing building, and detailed the proposed building, outdoor seating, parking, drive-through, and trash enclosure. The restaurant will contain 104 interior seats and there will be 20 exterior seasonal seats. The hours of operation will be 6:30 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. and the restaurant will be closed on Sundays. The required 26 parking spaces are on site. Mr. Fonseca pointed out the trash enclosure and the drive plan for the garbage trucks.

Mr. Fonseca explained the drive-through operation as 24 ft. wide along the southeast and north sides of the building. The expected peak and off-peak traffic numbers and flow for the drive-through were reported. According to Mr. Fonseca, during peak hours, both drive-through lanes will be utilized and will have team members out within the drive aisle to take orders, receive payments and deliver food to minimize the amount of queuing to the drive-through operation. The proposal will decrease impervious areas by approximately 900 sq. ft., stated Mr. Fonseca. Consequently, storm water flow will decrease by 2%.

The architectural renderings were displayed and detailed by Mr. Fonseca, who explained it is a new style. A floor plan was previously submitted by the applicant. He stated that the traffic engineering firm prepared a traffic assessment memo, which was submitted with the application and to Mr. Jim Mayer, the Town Traffic Engineer. A traffic study showed no significant impact to the traffic through the development, according to Mr. Fonseca. The landscaping and lighting plan were shown and explained.

Mr. Fonseca addressed the Engineering comments. He stated that the majority of the comments were regarding utilities and coordinating with the Town Department of Public Works, which is

ongoing. Mr. Fonseca explained the traffic comments, dumpster enclosure, trash pickup logistics and frequency, and turning movements in detail. In addition, there was a comment about a contingency plan for the restaurant opening as it is a novelty in the area, and he pointed out that there are other locations in the area. Chick-Fil-A has a dedicated grand opening team that facilitates new store openings. They are dedicated to providing a traffic plan to mitigate any impacts off-site, according to Mr. Fonseca.

Mr. Mattson concurred with Mr. Fonseca that the grand opening team will be in place. If it is anticipated to be a bigger opening, they will have a contingency plan working with the owner of the shopping center and the Town to mitigate traffic and customers on-site.

Mr. Fonseca added that this is a suitable location, compatible with the surrounding plaza and its use, and noted that there is another drive-through in the plaza. Additionally, there is adequate parking on the parcel and certainly within the existing plaza. He referred to the traffic analysis performed, showing no significant impact to surrounding streets, and said that the site allows for adequate emergency access.

Ms. Potocki asked about the reduction in square feet for handling of storm water. She questioned whether the canopies were included in the calculations, which Mr. Fonseca confirmed.

Ms. Potocki inquired whether they considered any Low Impact Development (LID) techniques for the development. Mr. Fonseca replied that they are trying to eliminate the work around the perimeter to keep and, in fact, augment the green space.

Referring to snow removal, Ms. Potocki noted that there will be 26 parking spaces and asked where the snow will be moved to. Mr. Fonseca replied that, during large snow events, the operator will have the ability to have a contractor remove snow off-site. Mr. Mattson interjected that they have an agreement with the shopping center and the landlord, who will actually be responsible for removing snow from the site, and will be storing the snow in their usual location.

Ms. Potocki questioned whether the lighting will be LED. She further asked if they have done a luminaire study to prevent spillover. Mr. Fonseca responded that they are all LED, pole-mounted and building-mounted. He added that the luminaire study was submitted with the application package.

Referring to the Engineering comments, Ms. Potocki inquired whether the Department of Transportation (DOT) was consulted in review.

Ms. Erin Fredette, McMahon Associates, replied that the project will have to go through the Office of the State Traffic Administration (OSTA) process and she has reached out preliminarily to ConnDOT in an effort to begin the process. There has been no formal filing at this time, as they must go through the local process. Ms. Fredette stated that she would be very surprised if traffic would back up onto the Connecticut DOT right-of-way, but that will be part of their overall review.

Ms. Potocki stated that another concern is that, when exiting the drive-through, there are two lanes to help direct traffic. She voiced her worry about the traffic pattern when exiting. Mr. Fonseca explained their drive-through exit plans, and mentioned the plans for the outdoor team members.

Ms. Potocki questioned the proposed bike rack location. Mr. Fonseca pointed out the location where the bike racks will be located.

Mr. Stebe expressed his opinion that there will be trepidation over a drive-through at this location because of the level of traffic and difficult traffic pattern. He further stated that the proposed traffic flow will be very difficult and detailed the reasons for that. In his opinion, the Taco Bell has a much lower volume than a Chick-Fil-A. Mr. Stebe stated that he takes umbrage over the fact that team members will be serving food and directing traffic. The scenario would be quite chaotic, as they would be delivering food, taking money, and directing traffic; in his opinion, it is not realistic. He asked the applicant for more information about how this will function cleanly, given the restricted spacing of traffic on the access roads. Mr. Stebe acknowledged that, within the property, the traffic flow makes sense. Obviously, he stated, neither the Commission nor Chick-Fil-A has the power to have the owner of the entire plaza realign the parking and traffic flow on the perimeter portions and along the building frontages. He disputed where the traffic flow will emanate and is not in favor of adding another drive-through in a high traffic corner of the property.

Mr. Fonseca acknowledged Mr. Stebe's concerns. He reported that the majority of the operation will be a single drive-through; only during peak hours will there be a second. Having team members outside is more of a facilitation of the drive-through, according to Mr. Fonseca. Mr. Mattson reported that, during peak hours, the servers will be delivering to the customers but will not be directing traffic. If there is a concern about traffic, there will be an individual who is trained to direct traffic. He stated that they have drive-through consultants and drive-through directors that monitor the drive-throughs, in addition to dedicated people to monitor the drive-through. Mr. Mattson stated that they have seen this issue around the country as they have opened new locations, and they have trained their operators and directors to assist with the traffic.

Mr. Prause questioned the landscaping plan and whether a tree will be removed from the northeast corner of the property. He speculated that it may have been removed in the last year. Mr. Prause stated that he is very concerned about the traffic impact and the suitability of the location; he assumed that will be the difficulty at this meeting. He acknowledged that, in the past, there were two operating businesses on the lot and asked how the traffic volume will compare to those two locations. Mr. Prause assumed that Chick-Fil-A will have a higher throughput of customers per hour.

Ms. Fredette explained that they did review that as part of their assessment. During the Covid-19 pandemic, it is difficult to obtain accurate data. She stated that they did utilize industry-standard data through ITE in order to estimate the number of trips with the prior tenants, and compared it to an estimate using the same data for the Chick-Fil-A. Ms. Fredette stated that she appreciates the concerns, as the configuration of the plaza overall is less than conventional as it relates to

access. She went on to explain the estimated trips per hour, giving details of where the traffic will be drawn from. Restaurants within shopping plazas have a 30% internal capture rate based on ITE data, she said, and explained the pass-by effect. Ms. Fredette reported that they are not necessarily new trips to the plaza, but rather trips within the plaza. Acknowledging that the location will generate more trips, the actual increase is not estimated to be so significant that it will result in a significant impact to streets and intersections. She stated that, before submitting their traffic assessment, they reached out to the Town Traffic Engineer to talk about the inability to collect data. Ms. Fredette reported that he is interested in the management of the circulation on-site.

Mr. Prause requested clarification of Ms. Fredette's report of additional trips, which she explained in detail. He acknowledged that, when doing a traffic analysis of impacts to a road when there are already restaurants on-site, the level of service on an actual road may not change because the number of stops may not appreciably change. Mr. Prause stated that the traffic impact of the internal roads inside the plaza itself is the concern, not the impact to the signalized intersections.

Ms. Fredette commented that the key to the assessment is that Chick-Fil-A is a convenience type of trip, and they are doing their best to address site lines in the circulating roadway. She noted that, though the plaza configuration is not conventional, it has a number of options for cars to circulate through.

Mr. Prause questioned whether there was any discussion with Staff about adding any additional entrances or exits to the plaza. He acknowledged that this is outside the scope of this individual parcel.

Ms. Fredette stated that, from her perspective, there has been no discussion about adding entrances or exits. She speculated that that may arise during OSTA review because they are looking at the plaza as a whole as a traffic generator. Mr. Fonseca stated that they have not had that discussion to this point.

Mr. Kennedy asked whether the Chick-Fil-A in Glastonbury had any problems with queuing and Mr. Fonseca stated that there have been no reports of issues.

Mr. Stoppelman, referring to the additional car projection for the weekends, asked what percentage would be parked rather than drive-through.

Mr. Mattson responded that, typically, the drive-through accounts for 50-60% of customers, though he acknowledged that it is higher during Covid-19. He added that they have an agreement with the landlord for extra parking spaces.

Mr. Stebe asked for clarification about what a "trip" consists of, to which Ms. Fredette replied. He sought to stress the point that the number of cars is actually half of what is reported, as cars entering and exiting are reported. If the pad site were more adjacent to The Noodle Company or Five Guys, or on the other side of Taco Bell, observed Mr. Stebe, the traffic within the property

would not be affected as much. Mr. Stebe observed that the property is compressed at the proposed location and explained his position, noting that there is already a problem in that area.

Mr. Fonseca addressed Mr. Stebe's concern, stating that, if they were to provide signage and pavement markings to basically force drive-through traffic to take a left after delivery, traffic would be directed to the lower ring road, giving multiple paths to exit.

Mr. Stebe reported that there have been similar issues with franchises and detailed the solutions. In his opinion, the traffic pattern is the biggest issue.

Ms. Pilla stated that Staff has had many discussions with the applicant during Staff review and the applicant has addressed many of the comments. There are a couple of outstanding items: A memo from the Engineering Division, which Mr. Fonseca addressed, and a memo added today regarding the address of the parcel. It was determined during Staff review that the address recorded for the parcel, 1428 Pleasant Valley Road, is wrong; it is actually 1482 Pleasant Valley Road.

Mr. Prause noted that the application went before the Zoning Board of Appeals, and there was an issue with a variance related to the dumpster. He questioned whether that was resolved with this current application.

Ms. Pilla reported that the issue has been resolved. She stated that there will be no further variances required.

There were no members of the public on the call to speak.

Ms. Pilla reported several written comments and read from each, from the following residents:

1. Lauren M
2. Jack Lakowsky, 171 E. Center Street
3. Janay Waite
4. Andrea Olesnevich, 61 Ivy Lane, South Windsor
5. Alec Giggi, 93 Tracy Drive, Vernon
6. James Brassard, 29 Bilyeu Road, Manchester
7. Emily Kuntz
8. Ann Lovejoy-Johnson, Rector, St. Mary's Episcopal Church
9. Ashley Bailey
10. Aisha Mohammed
11. Ashley Odell, Nutmeg Drive

Mr. Prause reminded the Commission that the scope at this meeting is compliance of the application to the special exception criteria triggered because of the proposed drive-through, which he explained in detail.

Mr. Fonseca, referring to earlier comments, mentioned that adding signage, pavement markers or a combination of both are suggested possible traffic flow resolutions.

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

The public hearing was closed at 8:50 P.M.

I certify these minutes were adopted on the following date:

November 2, 2020
Date

Eric Prause, Chairman

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