

**MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING
HELD BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 20, 2021**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

In Person: Eric Prause, Chairman
Patrick Kennedy, Vice Chairman
Jessica Poland
Electronically: Michael Stebe, Secretary

ALTERNATES SITTING:

Electronically: Bonnie Potocki (for 2021-058, 059)
Teresa Ike (for all other applications)

ALTERNATES PRESENT:

In Person: Julian Stoppelman

ALSO PRESENT:

In Person: Gary Anderson, Director of Planning
Megan Pilla, Senior Planner
Electronically: Nancy Martel, Recording Secretary

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing at 7 PM. The secretary read the legal notice when the call was made.

MOTION: Mr. Kennedy moved to amend the agenda to remove Application 2021-060 for the International Central Gospel Church – CT Inc. Ms. Ike seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

TOWN OF MANCHESTER – For proposed activity including building additions, redesign of the parking lot and bus loop, and associated site improvements at Bowers Elementary School at 141 Princeton Street. – Special Exception Modification (2021-058); Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan (2021-059)

Mr. Randall Luther, TSKP Studio, introduced himself and reminded the Commission that there were three items they were asked to look at: snow removal, whether or not light fixtures were dark sky compliant, and whether or not they had considered or looked into raised plant beds that would intercept some storm water.

Mr. Michael Scott, Project Manager, TSKP Studio, introduced himself. According to Mr. Scott, they met with the Board of Education regarding snow removal, and the discussion about snow removal concluded that there is no issue with the front paved area. At the central paved area

there were three proposed trees identified that should be pushed back from the pavement to facilitate snow removal.

Mr. Luther stated that regarding light fixtures, they did review the light fixture package and all lights are dark sky compliant with two exceptions: There are two flood lights on the south side which are there for security purposes and they are motion activated. Underneath the entrance canopy, explained Mr. Luther, there is a pendant light fixture that lights down but also lights the canopy up. It is not technically dark sky compliant but the uplight is entirely captured by the canopy of the roof. There will be no light spillage.

Mr. Scott explained that they are waiting for final confirmation from the district regarding raised plant beds. The response was, while on paper it seems like a good idea, it does have to be calibrated back to the educational program that is being taught at the school. He reported that considering the timing of such programming with the growing season in Connecticut, school would not be in session. It was observed that currently in the playgrounds, the school has a couple of isolated planters that are used to supplement the educational programming. Most likely, those planters will more than suffice and the idea of building planting beds to serve an educational purpose would not support the educational piece of the program, and they would prefer to stick with the plantings and beds as depicted on the design.

Mr. Luther remarked that the original recommendation to continue the hearing was for Staff to complete review of revised plans. He commented that they did receive two memos from Town Staff related to the water tap on Henry Street. He added that the isolated C1.5 does pull in those remaining comments about the water tap.

Ms. Pilla responded that as Commission members might recall the primary reason to continue the public hearing from the last meeting was because Staff needed additional time to review the revised plans that had been received. Staff did so and as mentioned, there were a couple of minor comments relating to the water and utilities which the applicant addressed. The applicant submitted revised plans and the response was satisfactory. There are no more outstanding Staff comments and everything has been addressed.

Mr. Stebe referred back to the snow removal plan, on the southeast corner of the bottom lot where there is a plan to bank snow, and he questioned whether there is a storm drain grid in that area.

Mr. Van Hopson, SLR, stated that it is turf reinforcement which is a mesh that is equivalent to providing outlet protection. Any storm water velocities are slowed down coming down the bituminous swale.

Mr. Stebe praised the dark sky lighting. He asked to have the first grade and kindergarten wing displayed. The current raised beds the school is utilizing are along the easterly wall where the

playground and new basketball court are. That wall is where the current raised beds are that the school administration is referring to. It may be an item for the Board of Education to discuss in the future; i.e., barrels to catch rain. Mr. Stebe stated first and second grade projects are to plant those boxes and let them grow.

Ms. Potocki reported that in the packet, there was another memo dated August 23 on traffic. She did not believe that was in the last packet. Mr. Prause and Ms. Pilla could not recall whether it was in the last packet, but the traffic memo is from the original submission. Ms. Potocki assumed there was nothing new in the traffic analysis.

Mr. Luther responded there is no new traffic information.

Ms. Potocki questioned where the water runoff goes from the canopy over the front entrance. Mr. Luther explained that there will be gutters that will run along the edge of the roof and dump the water onto the flat roof or it will be picked up by internal roof drains and taken into the storm water system. Ms. Potocki asked about the pitch of the roof which Mr. Scott reported was 19 and 12. Ms. Potocki assumed the force of the water would go onto the roof if there is a high intensity rain.

Mr. Luther indicated the path of the rain water which would be carried to a downspout. While the pitch is steep, the tributary area is relatively small because of its steepness. There would not be a tremendous volume of water because the area it is covering is relatively small because of its steepness. It will be sized to accommodate a 100 year storm, though he realized that 100 year storms are occurring every 10 years.

Ms. Potocki questioned whether there is a concern about freezing rain or icing overcoming the gutter collection and freezing it.

Mr. Luther did not see that as being a real issue. The roof will be what is called a “cool roof.” It will be vented and he explained the advantages to that.

Ms. Potocki interjected that she would hate to see long icicles or the gutter falling off. She speculated on the wind shear force that could develop during a severe wind event.

Mr. Luther explained that they pay engineering consultants to calculate what the wind uplift would be on a roof and that wind speed and uplift is then put in the specifications. The roofing contractor must provide a roofing system that has been tested and passed at the wind speed and uplifts put in the specifications. There should be no problem with roofs blowing off, short of an installation defect. After a comment from Ms. Potocki about icing, Mr. Luther added that is basically a Board of Education maintenance issue. The Fire Department is very clear that all entrances/exits must remain clear of snow and ice at all times. The canopy’s purpose is to assist with keeping that area clear.

Ms. Potocki questioned how the Facilities group in the Board of Education works with Town Staff in terms of reviewing the applications. She asked if the Facilities group have their own consultants reviewing or is everything relying on Town Staff for engineering and design, or is the Facilities group doing a similar dual review.

Ms. Pilla reported that the Board of Education Facilities group makes an application to the Commission, just as any other applicant would. The same Town Staff who review all development applications reviewed these applications. Facilities works with their consultant, TKSP and SLR, to forward their design. In terms of review prior to these hearings, it is the same Town Staff reviewing.

Mr. Anderson added that the Town Facilities manager is actually the project manager for the Board of Education projects as well. It is not two separate processes; the Board of Education and Town Staff work hand in hand for reviews.

Ms. Pilla reported no additional comments from Staff.

Mr. William Farley, 21 Farmington Street, introduced himself. He presented his comments regarding the application as follows:

“Dear Members of the Planning & Zoning Committee: I want to start by thanking you for holding these public hearings and for helping with the Town’s investments in our schools. I am extremely grateful to the Town of Manchester for making education a priority and for working to improve our elementary schools. I am speaking tonight to request that some alteration be made to the plan for Bowers School. I live on Farmington Street, adjacent to school property, am a regular user of the school’s public spaces, and am the parent of two current students at Bowers. This makes me a multi-faceted stakeholder in the future of the Bowers’ property. Let me start with my “asks.” I am requesting that the committee consider making the planned parking lot significantly smaller or less invasive on the current green space next to the school or at the very least to provide mature growth vegetation and a physical barrier to protect the properties adjacent to the new parking area along Farmington Street. I’m hopeful that the committee will consider my first request. I understand the need for more parking at Bowers and I understand that we must account for the traffic situations on Princeton and Henry Streets. However, I think that the designers of this plan are undervaluing the open space that will be destroyed by the plan in its current iteration. The green space on the Bowers School property is the only such place that is available to members of our neighborhood community. It’s used year-round by town residents any time school is not in session. This includes in the winter when the hill near the school becomes an extremely popular sledding spot for neighborhood children. It’s also the primary place where Bowers’ students play and exercise during their school day. One of the wonderful aspects of living on Farmington Street is the sounds of children playing all day long that I

can hear from this very green space. This plan will remove most of this green space and replace it with an extremely large, luxuriant parking lot. This is, in my opinion, a huge mistake. That this will affect my own property value and those of my neighbors' is without a doubt. This plan puts very large, presumably maybe on-all-the-time street lights mere feet from my own property and my neighbors'. I ask that the committee please justify this very large amount of parking space, spanning multiple sides of the building. This seems like an extreme increase to me. I ask the committee to produce the justification for the amount of parking in a school this size. I would also ask the committee to speak to whether an environmental review has been completed about the impact of adding so much blacktop and removing so much green space. If so, will the committee make that publicly available? Finally, the committee must also accept that this will lead to significantly more light pollution for the school's neighbors and at a bare minimum they must rectify this with mature planting and/or physical barriers. For the wellbeing of Bowers' students and the broader community, I request the committee consider a plan that does not sacrifice so much of the school's open green space to blacktop."

Ms. Susan Muirhead, 173 Henry Street, introduced herself. She stated that she was an educator for 30 years, the last 11 of which was as a building administrator. Ms. Muirhead went on to detail her career. She also had a written statement she read into the record:

"In the current plan, Ms. Muirhead stated, the only open green space is behind a large parking lot. First, the need for the size of this proposed parking lot is in question. I've walked the street on a number of school days and times, both last year and this year, to see a few cars parked on the street. On average, there were about five cars on Henry Street and none on Princeton, and the new parking lot in the front of the school seems to address those few cars as it must be seen as an issue by some. Today, at 11:00, there were six cars on Henry Street, none on Princeton, and two open spaces in the parking lot. There is definitely a way to use the current bus loop to add more parking spaces. In my job, I visit schools in Hartford, New Haven and other urban districts. These are the types of schools I see where there is green space lacking. I have to ask if this is what we want to model ourselves after. Second, the school is a neighborhood community gathering place, has been important throughout the recent history, and has been important to Manchester, including recent renovations to other elementary schools and why Bowers is any different. Third, and most important, the number one priority of student safety is taught to every educator at the start of their career. The proposed large track of parking, replacing the current open green space, would no doubt cause potential harm to the students as they race to the only open green space with enough space for them to spread out and run as the students in my pre-K through 4 school and my middle school which was a joy to see daily.

“However, there is a large proposed parking lot between the school and the large open green space. This is a safety hazard with children having to go through the parking lot or all run in the small corridor space of the open green space by the fence. How will they get to the lower playground? Will this be classes of students running along crossing to the street? They’re going to have to cross the driveway. I can tell you by experience that the students walking in a straight line or not running ahead of their teacher is not a reasonable expectation of the students or of the teaching staff. Or, is the intent not to allow them to access the green space, as it appears that the parking lot borders the baseball field only. Which is the best use of this green space? Is the intent to eliminate the baseball field? If so, the public needs to be informed of this now before the plan goes through and if not, why not? That would most definitely cause harm as the students are in school for 180 days and the baseball players use it a few nights a week during the spring.

“That is the physical part of it. What is the emotional and social safety part of it? This is a time when students have the freedom to explore outside, get rid of pent-up energy, or any frustration from home or school, to reconnect with nature, to exercise their minds, to explore their social interactions and renew their physical and emotional health. This is all happening in a small courtyard or only on the playscapes. What is the purpose of the courtyard along the street? It’s hard for me to see how any of this benefits children. But you need not take the word of one educator of 30 years. Let me read from the experts in... additional research. From the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health in February, 2019, and it states ‘A growing body of literature points to the tantalizing possibility that green space around students’ schools could boost academic achievement. Recent experimental work in school settings echoes a large body of research on the restorative effects of contact with nature or underlying factors for success “in school including attention capacity and low stress levels. The use of greenery from classroom windows improves concentration and reduces both self-reported stress and heart rate whereas classrooms without green views do not. Teaching outdoors or in natural or agricultural areas can also aid in learning comprehension and retention. And learning in relatively green classrooms in school gardens and in natural context has been associated with high levels of student interest.’ It was interesting to note, by the way, what the architects talked about with the gardens.

“In the Journal of Pediatric Nursing from 2017, they state that ‘access to green space was associated with improved mental wellbeing, overall health and cognitive development of children. It promotes attention restoration, memory, competence, supportive social groups, self-discipline, moderates stress, improves behaviors and symptoms of ADHD and was even associated with higher standardized test scores.’ ”

“As a former science teacher, I would implore you instead of reducing the open space to instead utilize the current landscape to teach about nature and science as when I did when I was a teacher. My students were often employing nature as an outdoor classroom.

Better yet, increase the land mass of Bowers School with the wooded land behind it to include an outdoor classroom. We don't need indoor slides or pools or water-parks to enhance our children's academic achievement and wellbeing as they have in other schools. But we do need to educate the whole child and research is clear on that. Listen, I understand school budgets better than most. I understand the State funding restrictions to buildings. I understand deadlines as well but this should be a simple fix. We all also understand more clearly what the pandemic, the need for children to have a safe, healthy, and nurturing place to learn. If we do not invest in additional land, then at the very least, think of the current land to invest in our children and their wellbeing. The loss of a large tract of land for parking must be reconsidered for the additional few needed parking spaces. The students should always be at the forefront in any design of this new school project. If you ask yourselves the question, 'Is this in the best interest of the children?', I think you'll have the answer to this issue. I implore you to think of our children and their needs above anyone else's. Thank you for all you do for the time. Thank you for listening and considering our children in your decisions this evening."

Mr. Luther stated that in terms of the parking counts, as it came up with both members of the public, during the typical day, at any given time, there will be empty parking spots. However, that is not what is driving the parking count; the parking count is driven by the end of the day when all the parents come to pick up their children. He added that is the most vulnerable time for safety with children as they are all exiting the building and as parents are parked on Princeton Street, Henry Street, and in the parking lots. Mr. Luther reported they did traffic counts at the end of the day, and that was where the numbers came from, and are consistent with the plans for other renovated schools in town. He added that no one is a fan of parking lots, so when parking is provided, it is because it is required. At the last meeting there was a neighbor complaining about the parking congestion.

Mr. Luther continued that in terms of the amount of green space, again it is largely driven by parking requirements. He reminded the Commission that currently the asphalt along Henry Street goes right up to the school building, and they have eliminated that parking on Henry Street. However, they have created a wonderful outdoor garden space that serves both the cafeteria for outside dining and also serves as an outdoor classroom off the science room, the art room, and is a breakout space. The landscaped courtyard will be visible when circulating through the school. Mr. Luther pointed out that there is a clearly-marked path through the parking lot to the ballfield. The playground on Henry Street will no longer serve the school, but will be left as a community resource. The students' playground will be on the south side of the building and will be fenced.

Mr. Hopson addressed the landscaping comment regarding a buffer along Farmington Street. He stated there will be no removal of the existing buffer and several trees will be planted adjacent to the properties on Farmington Street. He added that the lighting plan shows there will be no nuisance lighting in terms of the adjacent properties.

Mr. Scott reported that the existing ballfield is not ballfield-compliant, and will be shifted to be made a compliant Little League field, which will be a community asset.

Ms. Muirhead believed that some of the Architect comments are very misleading. Additionally, she noted she was at Bowers for the past two years and worked closely with the administration. The comment that the administration is very happy, according to Ms. Muirhead, is not true. She also disputed the courtyard as being green space, which results in no green space, which is not something school administrations want. Ms. Muirhead lamented that the playground will disappear, resulting in the solitary upper playground, and explained the shortage of time for lunch and playground time. It was her opinion that the plan has not been carefully reviewed by educators, and she detailed her concerns and suggested remedies.

Mr. Farley noted that Ms. Muirhead spoke about many of his concerns. He added his opinion that there is a problem with breaking up the green space. The plans sent with the public announcement, according to Mr. Farley, depicted street lamps up against the fencing along his property.

Mr. Luther explained that they submitted photometrics for the site lighting as part of the application package. When the comment was made that there is no light issue there, that is because the photometrics revealed no light trespass onto the adjacent property.

Ms. Poland requested clarification about the journals Ms. Muirhead had cited and those were provided.

Mr. Prause noted the applicant spoke about safety in the parking lot. Another criteria of a special exception is environmental protection and conservation, and specifically that the proposed plans must provide for reasonable conservation of natural features to include trees and other environmentally sensitive portions of the site. In his opinion, the Commission is struggling with what consideration is being given to try to protect the green space.

Mr. Luther remarked that the site is very small, and compared to the other elementary schools, Bowers has the tightest site, though the enrollment is the same as for Keeney and Buckley. At the same time, he noted they are trying to keep the beauty of Princeton Street and those trees, and there are not many options for moving the parking. Mr. Luther explained that the superintendent is very much on board as is the Board of Education, and he will leave it to them to confirm that the project meets their educational specifications.

Ms. Potocki commented that the Commission does not have a letter from the Facilities Department with their opinion to include in the deliberations. In her opinion, there are other avenues for accommodating parking; i.e., staggering pickups. She questioned whether the ball field is needed.

Mr. Stebe inquired what alternative parking plans were entertained in the planning stage. He questioned whether there is room to slide the Little League field south by 15 ft. In that way, there is room for 60 spaces indented off of Henry. The swing sets are at least 50 years old. He noted his children went through the school, and recess is at the lower playground next to the big tree, the upper playground, and running up and down the hill. He stated the parking lot would be covering the current basketball court, which is planned to be replaced on the top. Mr. Stebe understands how they reached the parking space numbers they did, acknowledging the number of cars that are parked on Princeton and Henry at this time. He questioned how the parking lot at Waddell compares to the planned parking lot.

Mr. Luther replied that Waddell is a bigger school and the count is larger. Regarding other options considered, he stated they looked at leaving the parking lot on the north side (where the current parking lot is) as well as the potential to pick up a fair amount of spaces there, which would allow a reduction in the size of the parking lot that loops around the ball field. However, that would be just moving the pavement around; it is the same green space though they are moving it. Mr. Luther remarked that it would largely eliminate the outdoor classroom. In terms of pulling parking off Henry Street, generally they have stayed away from that as an option from a safety point of view. Cars backing out into a public street can be done but is frowned upon. Mr. Hopson interjected that there is a zoning restriction that parking spaces must be a minimum of 10 ft. from the property line.

Mr. Luther acknowledged that the swing sets are very old but the playground adjacent to it is quite new and they were informed that removing the recently-installed playground would make the community very unhappy.

Ms. Potocki speculated whether a horseshoe loop off of Henry was considered for dropoff.

Mr. Luther replied that they had not looked at that. Queuing cars in a line takes a lot of real estate and you would not be able to accommodate anywhere near the necessary number of cars. The result would be a queue backing out on Henry and backing out on Princeton. Mr. Luther noted that in initial conversations about renovating Verplanck and Waddell, the administration had decided they wanted to move toward a different model. They did not like the cars queued up in a line for 180 cars, and preferred designated spots to get better control in site circulation. He restated that it is a school project and the town spent a lot of money to get what they want.

Ms. Potocki reiterated her suggestion of staggering dismissal times, to eliminate 180 cars.

Mr. Stoppelman interjected that you cannot stagger the release times because of the school buses. Driving down the area streets confirms that the current situation is really dangerous and not easily solved without more parking.

Ms. Poland noted the comments about the sledding, and questioned that location which Mr. Prause explained.

Mr. Stebe confirmed the exact location of the sledding. He acknowledged that these students need to move. He noted that 80% of the use of the large parking lot will be for parents to park and pick up their children, and then leave. There are 100+ spots necessary for staff, which can be accommodated by a couple of spaces on the front and then the northern half of the parking lot. He questioned whether they can dual purpose the asphalt by creating 4-square spots which could be used for parking during dropoff and dismissal. Mr. Stebe explained that the children will not be outside playing at dismissal time. In his opinion, there are other ways to accommodate spaces for the 30 minute dropoff and dismissal times without disturbing the drainage function. He acknowledged that the sledding hill would be lost but there are 10 other sledding hills in town. In his opinion, playgrounds are necessary and they need to be put higher on the list.

Mr. Kennedy stated that the discussion has veered off to a great extent on items that are not under Zoning's purview. Whether there is enough green space is not really Zoning's decision. The core function of the Commission is the safety factor and they are addressing the issue of parents parking on the street. In his opinion, the conversation has wandered off into areas outside the Commission's jurisdiction.

Ms. Muirhead reported she lives on Henry Street and is very well aware of the traffic issues. She cautioned the Commission about the need for 180 spaces for safety reasons during dropoff and dismissal times. She countered the architect's comments with her opinions which she explained in detail. Ms. Muirhead gave her opinion that there are other ways to resolve the issue. She additionally stated that parents would prefer to park on Princeton and Henry so they can quickly leave after they have picked up their children.

Mr. Farley remarked that Mr. Stebe's idea about utilizing space along the northern end of the property at Henry Street was a good one. The argument against that, stated Mr. Farley, is that there is a playground that was put in by the community. His understanding was that with State funding for these projects, the Town is required to replace all the playgrounds. If it is a requirement, shifting some of the parking toward the edge of Henry may create an open space that would connect the back of the school on the southern end with the rest of the green space to create a thru-way of green space.

MOTION: Mr. Kennedy moved to close the public hearing. Ms. Poland seconded the motion and Mr. Prause, Mr. Stebe, Ms. Ike and Mr. Stoppelman voted in favor. Ms. Potocki voted nay.

PAREDIM ACQUISITION LLC – For conversion of a hotel to a multi-family market-rate rental development at 191 Spencer Street. – Special Exception (2021-064)

Attorney Dorian Famiglietti, Kahan, Kerensky and Capossela, introduced herself. Attorney Famiglietti stated the application is a culmination of many months of work, both with this Commission and the Staff, to create the framework to allow the conversion. The final site plan has been developed in accordance with the regulations. Attorney Famiglietti detailed the site plan and the planned conversion; i.e., access, abutters, number of buildings and their uses and planned renovations as well as the plans for the landscaping.

Mr. Ozzie Torres, Meehan & Goodin, presented the site plan and explained the details of the existing parcel. The surrounding area was pointed out, and he noted there is approximately 4 ft. of drop from one end of the site to the other. There are currently seven buildings on the parcel with 116 parking spaces. Mr. Torres explained the utility connections, adding that the storm system is within the parcel with no connection to Spencer Street. He added that the drainage is exfiltration done onsite, and there is no impact to the abutting properties. There are approximately 14 drywells underground which go around the building, and he detailed each noting that the subsoil is very sandy. The lighting was noted, explaining they will have very little impact on the abutters. He went on to explain the current and planned landscaping.

Attorney Famiglietti confirmed they are proposing an increase to the dwelling unit count. Presently there are 104 hotel rooms and there will be an increase of 6, by transforming Building 7, for a total of 110 proposed apartment units. She added that with all the rain this summer, there was no drainage concern or problem with overflow at the site.

Mr. Torres reported the proposal would increase the parking from 116 spaces to 154 spaces. The circulation will be one-way clockwise, and he detailed the parking and the 24 ft. aisles and showed that they have situated the accessible spaces in areas that are flush with the pavement. They will not change the drywells to manholes; they are just changing the tops to manholes for better drainage. He went on to explain the details of which areas needed to be paved, and explained where they will install the pervious pavers in an attempt to reduce the impervious surface. He pointed out the new water quality unit that will collect the water from the added pavement to the north. The rest of the pavement still slopes to the existing storm system. The water quality unit then ties back into the existing drywell system which is a long line of 20 ft. deep drywells, and two more will be added.

Mr. Torres reported a good permeability rate of 26” per hour which means the soil is very good for absorbing water and the system has been working for years.

In his opinion, Mr. Torres stated that the permeable pavers have reduced the increase in impervious surface to about 3,500 square feet for the rear portion. Everything within the parcel and around the buildings will have grass areas that absorb water. The pool area will be renovated to change the material to pervious patio, reducing the impervious surfaces.

Attorney Famiglietti interjected that there will be a one-way traffic circulation pattern around the entire site. There will be two-way traffic on the southerly end because there will be a gate upon entry and a gate upon exit. She added that in the southwesterly corner of the plan, there is an arrow pointed to the mailbox location. At the northwesterly end of the site, she pointed out where the dumpster will be. Attorney Famiglietti also showed a couple of snow stockpile areas, which they hope will be a large enough area to catch routine storm events. There is an area in the northeasterly corner of the site as well as the southeasterly corner of the site that may be used for plowing snow. She reported they may be required to truck snow off of the site in large storm events.

Attorney Famiglietti referred to the increase to 154 parking spots, and reviewing the recently approved regulation and the number of parking spaces required, in Sec. 9.14.05, Item C8, Vehicle Parking, it does require 1-1/2 spaces for each unit. However, if it is within a half mile of existing mass transit, and there is at least 50% or more one-bedrooms or efficiencies, the minimum parking ratio is one space per dwelling unit. They contemplate excess spaces that may not be used for tenant parking.

Mr. Mark Vertucci, Senior Transportation Engineer at Fuss & O'Neill, as well as a Registered Professional Engineer in Connecticut and a Professional Traffic Operations Engineer, introduced himself. Mr. Vertucci reported he did prepare a traffic impact statement for the hotel, which was dated September 16. He stated the residential development will share access with the existing Popeye's, Subway and Starbucks. The access is good off Spencer Street with a traffic signal, giving the driveway its own green light. There is a left turn arrow into the site for eastbound traffic.

Mr. Vertucci reported they did traffic counts on September 8th, during morning and afternoon peak periods of traffic, roughly 7 to 9 AM and 4 to 6 PM. They counted the signalized intersection site access as well as the actual entrance to the hotel from the back of the Starbucks lot to quantify the number of cars going into and out of the hotel. Mr. Vertucci stated the count indicated there are about 33 trips in the peak hours of the morning, and 63 trips in the afternoon peak hour that are accessing the Hawthorn Suites today. In order to compare that to the 110 residential units, they projected rates based on the ITE Trip Generation Manual, which is an industry-accepted resource. For the low-rise multi-family use here, the manual projects 52 morning peak hour trips and 64 afternoon peak hour trips, for a net increase of only 19 trips in the morning peak hour and an increase of only one trip in the afternoon peak hour.

Mr. Vertucci stated they conducted a capacity analysis just to confirm traffic operations at the signalized intersection of Spencer Street, Hillstown Road and the site driveway intersection. The analysis indicated the intersection operates on Level C (A-F), and the proposal will not change the level of that intersection. Queues on the site driveway show no substantial change with the proposal of less than a car length. He added that the turn lanes into the site have plenty of

capacity. Mr. Vertucci reviewed the latest safety analysis. At the request of the Town Traffic Engineer, they expanded the search criteria, and the analysis indicated there were only about two crashes that involved vehicles actually turning into and out of the site driveway. Most of the crashes identified were at unsignalized commercial driveways on Spencer Street and Hillstown Road. Site distances were also measured and with the traffic signal, the need is somewhat diminished, but there are some people that make a right turn on red. For the right turn on red, when those vehicles pull forward to about 10 ft. from the edge of the road, they can see over 700 ft. looking east and about 800 ft. looking west, which exceed the criteria for safe egress.

Mr. Stebe sought to be refreshed about the details of the Spencer Street intersection. He questioned whether there were any concerns with turning in and out with the current drive-thru traffic flows, namely Popeye's and Starbucks.

Mr. Vertucci stated that when they counted the hotel entrance, the counts were actually higher than what the ITE Trip Generation Manual would project for a hotel of that size. It will not be a substantial change between the traffic currently, and what it will be with residential development. On the positive side, Starbucks peaks in the morning when the other businesses are not generating any traffic. In the evening, Starbucks does not generate much traffic, but there is a bit more at Popeye's and Subway, but those vehicles are headed out while the residents would be headed in. After a question from Mr. Stebe, Mr. Vertucci pointed out the stop signals. Mr. David Parisi interjected that there is a proposed gating system for the parking lot.

Ms. Potocki, referring to the traffic analysis, noted that Spencer Landing is across Spencer Street and has not yet been occupied, which Mr. Anderson confirmed. She pointed out that Dollar General will be across Spencer Street also. She speculated on whether those were considered in the traffic analysis and also questioned the snow management plan if there was no space on the property.

Attorney Famiglietti reiterated that if there is no more space for the snow, the excess would be removed from the site.

Ms. Potocki asked if any ponding of rainwater is expected.

Mr. Torres explained that the area around the drywells is sloped. He reiterated that the storm water will be absorbed rather quickly into the soil, and the parcel has always had good drainage. After a question from Ms. Potocki, Mr. Torres reported they plan to resurface and restripe the property.

Ms. Poland referred to accessible parking near the buildings, and asked if the spaces were specific to each building.

Attorney Famiglietti stated that the accessible units will have accessible spaces in close proximity to the building. She added that there are a couple of spaces near Building 7 which will be the amenity area for guests or visitors.

Mr. Parisi remarked that there are three accessible units in Building 1, a number of units in Building 5 and Building 6 and they are proposing to build additional handicapped spots at Building 7.

Attorney Famiglietti commented that the site obviously meets the minimum lot sizes. They are not proposing any new buildings, though they are doing modifications to Building 7 which will be within the height requirement. All of the buildings meet the minimum floor area set forth in the regulations. She restated that all the new drainage must conform to Town standards and Mr. Torres explained that the existing system works fine for the property. Attorney Famiglietti pointed out the utilities available at the site. The traffic flow on the property has been discussed, she added, as well as the snow removal. The only thing that does not meet the criteria is the requirement for an interior landscaped area of 20 sq. ft. per space; in the regulation that was adopted in Sec. 10b, there is a waiver requirement for that. She detailed for the Commission that garbage, storage, lighting, recreation areas, dog run and barbecue areas have been discussed and meet the regulations.

Attorney Famiglietti stated that the plan is in compliance with the general criteria for special exceptions. She went on to point out the individual regulation requirements and how the plans are in compliance. In her opinion, the conversion will be an improvement to the area.

Ms. Potocki noted that this plan has gone through emergency services review, and questioned the location of the closest fire hydrant.

Mr. Torres responded and pointed out each fire hydrant.

Mr. Prause stated that the plan will be a big improvement. He questioned the dumpster/recycling areas and speculated whether one would be enough for all the apartments.

Mr. Parisi explained that they do not foresee a compactor on the site as they are larger and given the existing conditions that are being worked through, they are trying to preserve as much of the existing flow and structure as they can. He stated that given their experience with comparable-sized properties, they can develop a refuse area that will include any necessary recycling and primary dumpsters to service the company.

Mr. Prause questioned where the recycling area would be placed. His opinion was that with 110 units, they will run into problems. It was always his experience when living in various apartment buildings in town that there were always trash difficulties. Mr. Prause also asked if there will be

an office onsite. He additionally questioned whether there will be designated parking spots for each unit.

Mr. Parisi responded that the recycling would be adjacent to the dumpster. The entire combined recycling and primary refuse would be surrounded by fencing. He assured Mr. Prause that they can add or increase capacity if it becomes necessary. Mr. Parisi reported the office will be in Building 7 and staffed 5 to 6 days per week, and they will have 24/7 on-call maintenance. He stated they offer their maintenance person the option to live onsite. The assigned parking is undecided, and will be based on the residence base that evolves.

Mr. Prause noted the location of the mailboxes and questioned whether there will be parking at that location. He speculated on whether other areas were considered for the mail. A designated crosswalk may remind residents that people walk back and forth for their mail.

Mr. Parisi explained that it is tucked off to the side. He acknowledged that some of their residents drive by and pick up their mail, but many of their communities have many walk-ups to the mailboxes. This is designed to satisfy both situations. The layout makes it very easy for the postal worker to deliver the mail.

Attorney Famiglietti acknowledged the Chairman's comment, and noted there will be room enough to parallel park without blocking traffic.

Ms. Poland questioned whether they have considered putting the mailboxes inside Building 7 and have an area for packages.

Mr. Parisi reported there will be a secure location package system within Building 7. The decision not to install mailboxes within Building 7 was because it would be cumbersome for the mail carriers and residents.

Ms. Pilla stated they received revised plans from the applicant last week in response to the first round of comments from Staff review, particularly Engineering. She noted they are still reviewing the revised plans and the responses to those comments. Ms. Pilla did follow up with Staff today and all concurred that there are no additional comments but are reviewing to ensure all previous comments have been addressed. She suggested including the comments as a modification, even though they have probably been addressed in the plan. If included as a modification to an approval, the Commission would keep moving forward until they are all addressed.

There were no members of the public to speak.

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

The Public Hearing meeting was closed at 10:05 PM.

I certify these minutes were adopted on the following date:

October 04, 2021

Date

Eric Prause, Chairman

NOTICE: A DIGITAL RECORDING OF THIS BUSINESS MEETING CAN BE HEARD IN THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT.