
Virtual Meeting. To view a recording please visit
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MINUTES

Members Present: M. Harper, Q. Kessel, E. King, C. Rittenhouse, J. Silander,
M. Soares, and W. Ouimet

Members Absent:

Alternates Present: M. Davis

Alternates Absent:

Staff Present: J. Kaufman

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Soares called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Members present for CC are M. Harper, Q. Kessel, E. King, C. Rittenhouse, J. Silander, and M. Soares, and alternates M. Davis. Alternate M. Davis is seated for absent member W. Ouimet.

Agriculture Committee members present include Stacy Stearns, Terry Wollen, Melissa Tindall, Chris Kueffner, and Nancy Rawn.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Silander MOVED, King seconded approval of the 17 February 2021 minutes as presented.

Motion PASSED unanimously

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

- No members of public present

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

A. W1619- Application of J. Prete for site development associated with the installation six Smart Farm greenhouses, parking, on site septic system and other associated building amenities on property located at 438 Browns Road, Assessor's Parcel ID 27.55.13

John Prete, Applicant, introduced the project to the commission and committees via a slide presentation. Mr. Prete intends to purchase the Martin farm and enhance it with the proposed project.

Ryan Chmielewski, Licensed Architect, on behalf of client John Prete, spoke to project footprint and siting within the parcel to avoid wetlands and prime agricultural soils, and utilize existing farm roads.

Presentation ended at 7:33 pm and opened for questions.

Is the water system design for a 100-year storm sufficient? Mansfield received 6 inches of rain in 5-day period in 2020. Mr. Chmielewski will check with civil engineer. Currently to specifications.

What is the material between the buildings with respect to absorption? Stone trenches along each building, directs water to retention basins. Infiltration at the basins.

Is building spacing pre-determined? Could the distance between buildings be decreased to achieve smaller footprint? Distance between buildings is the minimum to avoid buildings shading buildings; cannot reduce distance further.

How will buildings be heated when heat is needed? Patented battery under the organic floor (soil), under sand, there is a system in place.

What about energy consumption? Energy need is ~2,000,000 kwh/yr.

Lighting – how many hours will supplemental lighting be used per day and what color? What about light pollution? Can the horizontal shades also be used to reduce light emitting from the greenhouses when lighting in use? Yes, horizontal shades are used to avoid plants getting too much sun as well as in winter to keep heat in and reduce light emission out of greenhouses. Lighting for about 2 hours each morning and evening in winter, and only with shades in place.

Site lighting is dark-sky compliant, downward facing. Also lighting at access doors and as required by code. Applicant suggested using a sensor on outside lights so they only come on when needed and to reduce light pollution further.

Application indicated Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDDB) area of concern. Any info on that? Awaiting full report from State. Applicant is aware of Acidic White Cedar vegetation type.

Conversation with Department of Agriculture regarding the easement? Yes, because footprint is not on prime farmland it is ok with respect to easement.

Soil management and amendments...referred to slide with list of amendments.

Light type, duration, frequency, relative to plant growth? Hundreds of sensors per greenhouse monitor this and more.

Irrigation is by a mister and only to roots, no overwatering. Water for washing produce is recaptured, treated, and reused for watering.

Who is organic certifier? Bay State in Rhode Island.

Produce available at farmstand – is it the Red Barn Creamery? Yes.

What activities will be conducted outside the greenhouses? Haying will continue. Blueberries need work: trimming, organics. Considering expansion to strawberries. Expand honey. All this work will be by the Prete family.

Kaufman clarified this is a special permit application due to work in the URA, as well as agriculture and parks committees. Each commission and committee should submit their own comments.

Question about what has been learned from Sacketts Harbor project carrying forward to this project. Fabric is guaranteed for 10 years, known in-use lifespan is 18 years on one site.

Conservation Commission discussed the project. Noted the NDDDB report is pending from state.

Soares observed the project is within the URA, maintaining 75' distance from wetland edge. Stormwater is within specs. Overall disturbance in URA will be graded at 2-to-1 slope. Discharge points are in URA, as far upslope as they can be.

Soares MOVED, Kessel seconded that the project is not likely to have a significant impact provided appropriate erosion controls are in place during construction and removed after the site has been stabilized completely, and the stormwater management system meets state and local guidelines. CC notes the NBDB review is pending and that any recommendations from State regarding NDDDB are followed.

Motion PASSED unanimously.

Agriculture Committee left the meeting.

B. Special Permit Application of Capstone Collegiate Communities, LLC and J.E. Shepard Company (Applicants)/DDS Associates, LLC and Benjamin Brown (Owners) for a 358-unit multi-family residential development (The Villas at Four Corners) at 1621 Storrs Road & Middle Turnpike, Assessor's Parcel IDs 9.23.1, 9.23.7 and 9.23.8. (PZC File 1369)

Soares clarified the IWA review is completed. This item is now specific to planning and zoning, conservation easement, and such.

Parks and Natural Resources Committee members present: Jim Morrow (Chair), Quentin Kessel, Tom and Sue Harrington, Miranda Davis, Vicky Wetherell, Juliana Barret, Kenneth Feathers, Charlotte Pyle

Thomas Cody, Attorney, Robinson & Cole, Hartford, CT, representing the applicant.

Geoffrey (Geoff) Fitzgerald, Civil Engineer, Bohler Engineering, West Hartford, CT..

Mohamed Mohsen, Architect, Niles Bolton Associates, Atlanta, GA.

Thomas (Tom) Ryan and Laura Knosp, Landscape Architects and Planners, Ryan Associates, Waltham, MA.

Amanda Wallis, Executive Vice President – Development, Capstone Collegiate Communities, LLC, Birmingham, AL.

David Fresk, Co-Applicant, J.E. Shepard Company, South Windsor, CT.

(?Scott Harley?)

Presentation began at 8:21 pm lead by Geoff Fitzgerald, followed by Mohamed Mohsen with 3-D model of the buildings and overview of amenities. Thomas Ryan gave overview of natural and public amenities including the path through the easement.

Questions (at 8:52 pm)

Why doesn't the easement extend all the way to the CVS parking lot/property line? Is the easement boundary finalized? Extending the easement to the CVS boundary will provide benefits to natural resources and residents in their units. Easement extent is not finalized and will be revisited by the applicant.

Buildings along path will be removed and plantings to revegetate.

Will there be any non-native plantings? No, it is a native pallet with some varieties.

Wetland planting list includes some species, e.g., black cherry and juniper, that are intolerant of wet soils. The species mentioned are pioneer species and will be used on upland areas.

Wetland is a bit of a misnomer. More of a pioneer mix.

Concern for tree planting up to edge of wetland. What precautions will be taken to avoid disturbance to wetland from excavation to plant?

Will woody vegetation follow guidelines of 30/20/10 percent recommendations? Will check.

Root cellar protection, restoration, rehabilitation concerns. Protection is often synonymous with reducing public attention to it. The plan calls for increasing visibility of the root cellar. Also, restoration and rehabilitation is often not done correctly – the masonry work and materials in particular. Removing trees and roots may affect stability of the root cellar. Root cellar should be professionally measured, surveyed, and documented prior to any work being done. Geoff clarified that the root cellar plan was reviewed by state archeologist and that it will be fenced with a wrought iron ornamental fence, made of aluminum. Questioner noted that the new state archeologist is also an historian. This is an historic site as well, and should be subject to additional review by a qualified historian.

Impervious paving?

Efforts to minimize light pollution? Lighting plan included in packet.

How are they addressing the items under Item 1 Intent in the Special Provisions for Multi-Family and Group Dwelling Development? E.g., meeting the needs of all residents, of all ages, not just students? Mohsen shared unit specs, including family units with storage. 25% of 2-unit and 3-unit are meeting family friendly requirements with larger bedrooms and larger common spaces.

Are any units designated affordable housing, workplace housing? And what is there distribution? Cody: requirements in regulations are being satisfied with respect to affordable and workplace housing.

How many units will be handicap accessible? Meet the minimum requirements. All buildings with elevators will have type b and some buildings will have type a (fully accessible and adaptable).

Question about comments submitted 3/15/21. Applicant has not completed response to the comments.

Applicants are requesting a density bonus for the amenities. Parks and Natural Resources should discuss if what the applicants propose meets the density bonus. And consider public access to the amenities. Cody: PB-3 zoning allows density bonus. Structured parking gets 12 beds per acre. Additional density bonus sought is 3 bedrooms per acre for the amenities available to the public. In total, asking for about half of the maximum density bonus for public amenities.

How will public know they are welcome to use the amenities? And that residents need to keep the parking available to the public? Signage with enforcement is recommended. This project will have onsite management that could provide enforcement.

Easement extends to Storrs Road, but not where the trail is. Should the easement cover the trail as well? Applicant will consider including trail in easement.

The southwest corner of the property provides a natural footpath connection to Discovery Drive for people heading to campus. On-site management of foot traffic may be needed to discourage travel through the vernal pool and its upland area.

Comments from CC for PZC consideration:

- 1) Extend the easement along Middle Turnpike to the eastern border with CVS,
 - 2) Contact the current State Archeologist and a Historian regarding preservation and restoration of the root cellar,
 - 3) Response from Applicant to comments submitted 3/15/21 is pending,
 - 4) Extend the easement along 195 to include the trail in the easement. Also, move trail away from off-site residence to the north,
 - 5) Address parking for public to access trail,
 - 6) Encourage development that meets the needs of all residents, of all ages, not just students
- PNR will hold a special meeting to discuss their comments.

REPORTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS

- None

COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were noted:

A. Permit Application for the Use of Pesticides in State Waters

- a. 840 Wormwood Hill Road

B. UConn Landfill Long Term Monitoring Report

- a. Long Term Monitoring Plan Fall 202 Semi-Annual Sampling Round
- b. Letter of Transmittal

FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Conservation Commission is scheduled for 21 April 2021.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 10:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is written in a cursive style and appears to read "Ced Rtt".

Chadwick Rittenhouse
Secretary