

SPECIAL MEETING

DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present: S. Ferrigno, L. Aldrich, N. McKenney, V. Souter-Kline
Staff Present: C. van Zelm
Others Present: None

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Ferrigno called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m.

2. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

No comments received.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JANUARY 25, 2023

The Subcommittee will vote on approval of the January 25, 2023 minutes at a future meeting.

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS AT MEETING

A. Special Permit Application of J. Schmitz, BL Companies (Applicant)/Yamei Development LLC (Owner) for 116 multi-family residential units and 12,000 square feet of restaurant/retail space at 1659 Storrs Road and 625 Middle Turnpike, Assessor's Parcel IDs 8.15.2 and 8.15.11

Ferrigno said this proposed project would be slightly north of Hops 44 and the nearby gas station and would extend to the north end of The Standard. Three buildings – two residential and one commercial – are proposed. He noted that the applicant team gave a presentation at the last EDC meeting.

Souter-Kline noted that the development would connect The Standard and UConn; she and Ferrigno said it could help meet the needs of the student population. Souter-Kline asked if the development is intended as a restaurant space and wondered if the parking could accommodate a restaurant. Ferrigno said the development is not currently envisioned as a restaurant space; if the project is approved, adding a restaurant would require a revision of the special use permit. Aldrich asked about establishing a bus route to this and other apartment complexes. Ferrigno said the WRTD bus line currently stops across the street from the nearby gas station and the Meadowbrook Gardens apartments have their own shuttle to and from UConn. McKenney said buses do not run to the Four Corners area often.

Van Zelm displayed the minutes from the previous EDC meeting and Ferrigno outlined the major points from the presentation. He said the proposal is consistent with the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development, which identifies the Four Corners area as a place of focus for development. McKenney, Souter-Kline, and Aldrich expressed support for the proposal, with McKenney saying more retail at this end of town would be beneficial. Members discussed what kinds of restaurants would be most congenial with the area.

Ferrigno will draft a letter to the Planning and Zoning Commission after this meeting and have the other members reply to van Zelm with any comments. Souter-Kline emphasized the importance of sidewalk connections.

B. Special Permit Application of CMC Storrs SPV, LLC and BPOZ Cedar Swamp, LLC for 262 dwelling residential units, 164 traditional apartments, 46 townhouses, 51 mansion-style, and 1 single-family home at 497 Middle Turnpike, 17 Cedar Swamp Road, and three parcels fronting on Cedar Swamp Road, Assessor's Parcel IDs 8.14.19, 8.14.18, 8.14.14-2, 8.14.14-3, 8.14.14-4

Ferrigno said this proposed development is at the former location of the golf course and would consist of Class A apartments intended for faculty and other long-term tenants rather than college students. He said it has been rare for developers to state an intention to rent to people other than students and that quality housing for professionals is an unfilled niche in Mansfield.

Souter-Kline expressed support for the application. McKenney said there is a need for housing for professionals but questioned how much is necessary, noting other approved and proposed developments near Four Corners. Ferrigno said the majority of apartments in town were built between the 1950s and 1970s and there is a desire for newly built apartments. McKenney said adding multiple housing developments in the same area would increase car, bike, and foot traffic and asked if there would be bike trails nearby. Ferrigno said sidewalks are planned connecting The Standard with other developments. He said a critical mass of developments will eventually be reached, especially given the limits on water and sewer capacity, but in the meantime, an increase in the supply of apartments could lead to a decrease in rental prices.

In response to a question from McKenney, Ferrigno said this proposal contains three different styles of apartments. He noted that both proposed developments would contain affordable and workforce housing and said both would cause little to no impact to residential neighborhoods, noting that the Cedar Swamp Road applicant purchased the nearest residential home and that there is a wide buffer between the location and the next nearest abutter.

Souter-Kline expressed hope that an influx of people from a new development would help support businesses in Downtown Storrs and other multi-use districts, but she and Ferrigno expressed concern about how much demand there is in town for commercial spaces. Van Zelm noted that Playa Bowls has signed on to lease space in Downtown Storrs and there has been progress toward filling some other available spaces.

The Committee decided by consensus to authorize a letter to the PZC in support of both developments. Van Zelm recommended that the letter address the issue of buses. Ferrigno suggested that multiple apartment complexes could be connected by one bus route.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications.

6. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next regular meeting of the Subcommittee is scheduled for August 17, 2023.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:08 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Joshua Stern
Mansfield Downtown Partnership Administrative Assistant