

WINDHAM PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
Thursday, September 23rd, 2010
Minutes

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM by Chair Paula Stahl. Other members present were Claire Lary, Dawn M. Niles, Daniel M. Lien, Jean Chaine, Vic Rayhall, and Juan Montalvo. Also present were Town Agent James Finger, Zoning Officer Matt Vertefeuille and Recorder Kathleen Wright.

II. Approval of Minutes - August 26th, and September 9, 2010

A motion to approve the minutes of August 26, 2010 was made by Ms. Niles, and seconded by Mr. Montalvo. The vote to approve was unanimous.

Mr. Chaine said that at the meeting of September 9th, he was uncertain whether or not it was an official discussion on the request from the Public Works Committee. Ms. Niles recalled that she was sure that the discussion took place before the meeting was called to order.

A motion to approve the minutes of September 9th, 2010 was made by Ms. Niles, and seconded by Mr. Chaine. The vote was in favor of approval, with three abstentions: Mr. Lien, Mr. Montalvo, and Chair Stahl.

III. New Business – DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

1. Public Hearing - Windham Medical Associates LLC– seeking a Special Permit to establish a 30,000± sq. ft. professional medical office building with related accessory uses located behind the Hospital owned by Windham Community Memorial Hospital/Hatch Hospital Corp. with an address of 605 Valley Street, but more commonly known as 112 Mansfield Ave., Willimantic in an R-6 (RPO) District in accordance with Section 26.3.2 of the Windham Zoning Regulations.

Chair Stahl opened the Public Hearing.

President and CEO of Windham Hospital, Dick Brvenick, said this project is very important to the hospital and has been much considered and discussed. Windham Hospital is part of Hartford Healthcare. The project has gone under the scrutiny of the Windham Hospital Board of Directors, the medical staff, and Hartford Healthcare leadership. The project is key for long term ability to attract physicians. The project is good for Windham and the 19 surrounding towns served by the hospital. For example, surgeons, orthopedic surgeons, oncologists, and pulmonary specialists will use the new building. Some physicians already in the Hatch Wing of the Hospital will relocate to the new building; as a secondary benefit, the new building is viewed as a way to free up space in the hospital. People will be able to walk between buildings. Mr. Brvenick introduced Edward Bussiere, Facilities and Construction Director for Windham Hospital, and David Sessions, President of Casle Corporation, to answer technical questions.

Chair Stahl pointed out that the Public Hearing's purpose is to establish whether the medical building will be an appropriate use for the area, and later in the meeting the board will take receipt of the application.

Mr. Montalvo asked if a building of this magnitude will make costs of healthcare go down or up. Mr. Brvenick said this is not a capital project. It will improve accessibility to healthcare and decrease dependence on the emergency room; it will help keep costs down by delivering health care as early as possible.

Chair Stahl asked the applicant to talk about construction traffic issues and address overall layout and zones.

Mr. Sessions said Casle Corporation has had experience building 18 buildings for Hartford Hospital. He introduced the master planner, Mr. Philip E. Doyle of LADA, PC, Land Planners of Simsbury, CT. Mr. Doyle referred to an informal presentation made to the P&Z in January, 2010. He has now submitted the application and supporting materials to the board. With Mr. Doyle were Kevin Clark, Civil Engineer, of Clark Engineering, Granby, CT, Michael A. Gallante, Vice President of Frederick P Clark Associates, Inc., Fairfield, CT, and John W. Manners, AIA, of Casle Corporation, Avon, CT. Mr. Doyle showed an aerial photo of the site to describe the zoning. The site is in an RPO zone; the hospital is on a site of 37 acres. Mr. Doyle described the boundaries and various zones of the hospital property. The hospital itself is in a B2 zone. Some surrounding zones are designated RPO. He said that we propose to locate our new building in an RPO zone. Mr. Doyle referred to a letter his staff provided to the Commission regarding a provision in the zoning code, Section 26.3.2, relating to 4 office standards:

- a. Minimum lot size is compliant.
- b. Location of parking and access will be commented on by Mr. Gallante
- c. Required setbacks are compliant.
- d. Regarding residential appearance, use, or character, Mr. Doyle showed on the map surrounding professional buildings and 2 churches and he said that our neighborhood is not a residential neighborhood. All access comes through the hospital. The closest house is 400' away from the proposed building.

Mr. Gallante addressed traffic issues. He showed graphics and tables and described in detail the process to analyze the hospital's traffic flows and access issues, both current and with projections into the future. His study of the roadway system included traffic counts at different time periods in the day last March, and studies of the intersections in the area, which are all stop sign controlled, and of the various driveways. He developed peak hour volumes and referred to DOT data. He applied a growth rate and considered developments that might occur to understand what may develop in the future. He used statistics from ITE to estimate new traffic developed by the new building. In the morning he estimates 69 new vehicle trips will be generated, and in the afternoon there will be 104. Mr. Gallante described further details in the analysis process including a history of reported accidents in the area from the Police Department, and he found that the impact of the new building will be insignificant and mitigation is not necessary and the building can be accommodated by the road system.

Mr. Chaine asked if the study was done during the peak time of ECSU. Mr. Gallante said the traffic count was conducted when school was in session. Mr. Chaine asked about the future impact if two more buildings under consideration are built. Mr. Gallante said the study is for just the one new building, and if the other buildings are built, more traffic studies will be required. Mr. Chaine asked about how it is determined to install a traffic control, and Mr. Gallante said the State decides according to volumes.

Mr. Doyle addressed a proposed construction road. He said that we have the master plan, which includes 2 more buildings on the site. The State is not allowing any more master plan approvals in situations like this. The State will only look at the building we are now proposing.

Mr. Gallante and Mr. Doyle talked about internal traffic flow and presented two proposals.

- A construction access road into the property to avoid interference with the existing parking lot will come in from the rear, which would ultimately be the through-road on the master plan.
- Currently congestion at the Shea Wing is caused by an awkward loop, a remnant approved in 1991. We propose to rebuild that access and put in a separate access that we believe is safer.

Mr. Doyle said that if we receive our approvals, our goal would be to start construction in November, but all this relates to these internal traffic circulation issues.

Mr. Montalvo asked about access from Quarry St. Mr. Doyle said there is no solution like that available now. Mr. Chaine said an overall concept is that residents are squeezed by professional offices in RPO zones and it seems an injustice to the residents that are there. Is there a ratio established for the balance between residential and office structures? Mr. Vertefeuille said there is no ratio and we need to look at this as we are rewriting the zoning. Ms. Niles was concerned about fire access. Mr. Gallante said the campus has 3 access points and the fire chief has reviewed plans, including consideration of the radius of fire trucks. Ms. Lary asked if the construction access road will be permanent. Mr. Doyle said yes, it will be built with gravel but it will be paved if the second building is built.

Chair Stahl closed the Public Hearing and reopened it again when a member of the audience asked to speak. Mr. Henry Crane asked if the new building will enable any man on the street to get care.

Chair Stahl closed the Public Hearing at 8:15 PM.

MOTION made by Mr. Montalvo to grant a Special Permit to establish a 30,000± sq. ft. professional medical office building to Windham Medical Associates LLC in an RPO Zone with conditions: 1- separate the construction traffic from the patient/patron parking areas, and 2 - return to the PZC with the final site development plan for approval. Mr. Chaine seconded the motion. The vote to grant the Special Permit was unanimous.

2. Windham Medical Associates LLC– Final Site Development Plan for 30,000± sq. ft. professional medical office building with related accessory uses located behind the Hospital owned by Windham Community Memorial Hospital/Hatch Hospital Corp. with an address of 605 Valley Street, but more commonly known as 112 Mansfield Ave. – Take receipt.

Mr. Clark said we have worked with the Town staff on all the utility connections. There are several detention basins already at the site. We will try to solve water issues at the point where they develop by installing several detention type systems. Water now drains off in several

different directions. We propose an open detention basin that will drain into the existing system. We also propose two underground buried pipe systems, 3 - 4' in diameter to store storm water and reduce peak flow. Also we propose a storm water treatment like a Vortech system and also a rain garden treatment. An existing sanitary line comes into the site and we propose to extend that into the site and past the building. We are working with the Town Water Department to extend the water line to the tank to prevent issues on fire flows. Fire hydrants will be installed as required. We are preparing the final storm-water management report. Mr. Doyle said our intention is to have all storm-water reports in to the Town next week.

Mr. Montalvo asked what percent of the labor force will be Windham trades people. Mr. Sessions said plans will be sent out to bid and we will endeavor to find good trades people to work on the project. Chair Stahl said next month we will have a full development plan and reports for review. The board agreed to take receipt.

At 8:35, Mr. Vertefeuille, Mr. Lien and Mr. Rayhall excused themselves from the meeting.

3. Recommendation to Town Council on the Ordinances regarding sidewalks

Mr. Chaine submitted a letter with his recommendations for the board's consideration regarding sidewalk ordinances, which the board may consider and subsequently offer to the Town Council.

His letter included the following recommendation:

It seems to me that no waivers, while a laudable goal to sidewalk property for pedestrian safety etc., in areas where no sidewalks exist on the street or road on which that lot exists, and only one single home lot size property is changing the land use for construction of a single family home, that some accommodation should be available for relief from the 13-161 (b) and (c).

Mr. Chaine suggests the following using 13-166 as a model.

(c) There can be no waiver of the requirements of subsection (b) of this section. (Ord. of 5-10-71; Ord. of 3-8-83) unless (d) applies.

(d) When a change in land use for the purpose of construction of a single family home on a lot that abuts a street or road in Willimantic, where that street or road currently does not have sidewalks or curbs on either side of said property, that in lieu of fulfilling Sec 13-161, a waiver will be considered to apply Sec 13-166 assessment fee. That fee will exempt this property from future assessments that may be applied for construction of sidewalks, curbs and drive ramps authorized by Willimantic.

There was a discussion of the recommendations.

Chair Stahl said we do not have the power to change sidewalk ordinances, but we can make a recommendation to the Town Council. Mr. Chaine was not sure if a developer might use the waiver for 1 property at a time and not develop sidewalks. There was a discussion of the assessment fee and betterments. Planner Finger said there are conflicts in this ordinance with the subdivision regulations. Plus there are conflicts in the description of the work to be performed regarding sidewalk widths, etc. This ordinance was written 30 years ago. He described the costs of sidewalks for any one who builds, which amounts to a double burden when the posted bond is included. There was a lengthy discussion on how to avoid excessively burdening homeowners with costs for sidewalk improvement or installment, while keeping costs off the backs of the

taxpayers, and making sure that developers do not abuse the option of waivers. Planner Finger reminded the board that developers must come before the commission. The board discussed conflicts in the ordinance with the newest 2009 version of the subdivision regulations.

MOTION was made by Ms. Niles to recommend to the Town Council to add in a section D as written and allow section C to have waiver requirements as written and to remove language inconsistent with the subdivision regulations. Mr. Montalvo seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, in favor.

There was a discussion of dedicated funds, the cemetery fund and the general fund. Planner Finger said regarding a dedicated account, that he would urge Ms. Niles to pursue that on her own.

IV. Old Business – DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

1. Revisions to Zoning Regulations

Chair Stahl asked the board to think about how to take the list of uses created at the Special Meeting on September 9th and make a regulation out of it. She suggested looking at towns like Freeport, Maine and taking those regulations as a starting point.

V. Routine Business - DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

1. Correspondence

A Letter of Transmittal was received from the Town Manager regarding a HUD grant requesting \$65,000 to hire a regulations writer.

2. Miscellaneous

VI. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Chaine, and seconded by Mr. Montalvo.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Kathleen Wright, Recording Clerk

September 30, 2010