

**PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
DRAFT MINUTES
PUBLIC HEARING / GENERAL MEETING
January 24, 2023**

Place: Room 206, Darien Town Hall

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MEMBERS ATTENDING:
Olvany, Reilly, Barsanti, Balgach, Nedder

STAFF ATTENDING: Ginsberg, Doneit
Recorder: Syat
Channel 79

Chairman Olvany opened the meeting at 7:32 P.M. and read the first agenda item.

PUBLIC HEARING

Continuation of Site Plan Application #264-B, Land Filling & Regrading Application #541, Darien Board of Education, Holmes Elementary School, 18 & 32 Hoyt Street. Proposal to renovate and construct additions to Holmes Elementary School, including eliminating temporary portable classroom buildings, renovating and expanding the library, constructing classroom additions, a new main entrance, and outdoor courtyard/classroom, correctly sizing general and special subject classrooms, upgrading building systems, and adding parking spaces to existing parking areas; and to perform related site development activities, including adding landscape plantings, restoring and adding to hardscape areas, and installing stormwater management. The subject property is situated on the west side of Hoyt Street approximately 90 feet north of its intersection with Phillips Lane and is shown on Assessor's Map #25 as Lots #144, #145, and #146 in the R-1/3 Residential Zone and the Municipal Use Overlay Zone (MU). *PUBLIC HEARING OPENED ON: 11/29/2022. DEADLINE TO CLOSE HEARING: 1/24/2023.*

Architect Erik Kaeyer noted that the ARB had submitted a letter dated January 19, 2023. Mr. Olvany mentioned that revised plans had been received. Mr. Kaeyer reviewed his Powerpoint presentation, including site logistics throughout the multi-year construction period. He said that there would be a net increase of 20 trees as shown on the submitted Planting Plan. They expect to start work on the project in the summer of 2023. There will be new construction fence installed, as well as a new transformer. The construction trailer is shown on site in the logistics plan. They hope to complete the project in fall of 2025.

Professional engineer Joe Canas of Tighe & Bond said that he has reviewed and addressed the comments received from peer review engineer Todd Ritchie of SLR since the last public hearing in November 2022. He has also met with the engineers from Darien DPW. The Board of Education has scoped and cleaned the pipes beneath the athletic field. He said that the project complies with Section 880 of the Regulations. He said that the principal change that they made was to shift the proposed underground chamber system, so as to pull it further from the school and the anticipated construction activity. The size of the proposed system remains the same. Mr. Canas then showed a slide of the proposed underground chamber system and the proposed change in impervious cover. He noted that overall, there is an increase of 0.12 acres of new impervious surface as a result of this project. He showed a watershed map of the property, noting that there are five small watersheds on the three subject properties (which will be combined). They have designed the system to reduce the

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peak flow off of the site—a chart reflecting that reduction was shown. They have analyzed up to a 100 year storm. He also noted that there would be a reduction in overall volume of flow coming off of the site in all storms (2, 10, 25, 50 and 100). He referenced a natural depression on the northern part of the site. Mr. Olvany mentioned that there used to be a single-family residence on the Curtis property, which was demolished a few years ago. Mr. Canas agreed, noting that the project exceeds the stormwater design standards, which require that only up to a 50 year storm be analyzed. They are reducing runoff in all directions AND reducing the peak flow. Mr. Olvany noted the presence of a natural berm in the rear (west side) of the property. Mr. Canas showed the drain near the soccer field on the plans, as well as the proposed fill near the Curtis property, and the natural depression on the north part of the property. Mr. Balgach asked about the existing pipes on the property.

Professional engineer Todd Ritchie of SLR mentioned that he had submitted his comments dated January 24, 2023. He also referred to his prior letter dated January 18, 2023.

Mr. Craig Yannes of Tighe & Bond said that additional signage and details were added to the most recent version of the plans. Parking spaces to the north of the property will be “staff only”, so as to minimize impacts of traffic during pickup and dropoff. They have assumed no significant increase in traffic overall. Mr. Olvany noted the presence of a crossing guard in the area. Mr. Yannes responded that they have not proposed any changes to the location or number of crossing guards. He said that busses should pull all the way up to use the entire bus loop, which is now to the south of the building. He said that they are also moving the sidewalk on the north part of the site.

Mr. Greg Del Rio of Hardesty and Hanover was the peer reviewer for parking/traffic. He reviewed his letter dated January 23, 2023. He said that all of his comments had been addressed.

Mr. Ginsberg explained that the proposal is premised upon the combining/merging of the three existing lots—the Hindley school lot; the former Curtis property; and the now-vacant lot north of the school.

Mr. Richard Grimm of 11 Lake Drive said that a lot of trees will be cut as part of this proposal, and it is now densely wooded. The grade on the north part of the property is quite steep. His concerns were the proposed service road and associated retaining wall, and new parking. He noted that the proposed parking has shifted from the first iteration of the plans. He had a safety concern with the service road, and he said that the additional parking is not needed. Mr. Olvany said that there is a staircase leading from the site to Lake Drive. Mr. Olvany said that it would be important to manage deliveries using the service road while school is in session. Mr. Grimm believed that the service road is unnecessary.

Mr. Chris Price, co-Chair of the HHR Committee, said that the Education Specifications given to his group require 95 on-site parking spaces. It was noted that a gate for the service road is possible, and deliveries can come through the bus loop. The plan would then reflect 360 degree access around the school. Mr. Kaeyer then showed on a plan the trees to be removed as part of this application. They will also be relocating the backup generator. This will be done near the start of the project. It will be about 100 feet from the nearest property line.

Ms. Nina Marian of 2 Lake Drive said that her concern is the new parking spaces being proposed.

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She also mentioned that the service road is unnecessary, and was worried about possible conflicts with deliveries and child dropoff and pickup.

Mr. John O'Neill of 25 Phillips Lane said that his concern is runoff, as the soil needs to be porous. He lives downhill from the school, and the stairs are near his property. He asked about the depth of the proposed Cultec units. Mr. Canas responded that they will be installing new grates to the north and south, and that they can add another drain in front of the stairs near the western property boundary. He said that they did perform test pits to understand the soil suitability on-site. He said that the proposed Cultecs are durable. Mr. Canas confirmed that a Stormwater Management Plan was prepared, and notice of such would be filed in the Darien Land Records.

Ms. Susan Calabrese of 41 Lake Drive then voiced her concerns. She said that she lives downhill, and has a portion of a pond on her property—she has lived there for 50+ years. She reviewed water flow in the neighborhood generally, and was concerned about drainage and water flow.

Mr. Grimm of 11 Lake Drive again mentioned his concern with the proposed parking on the north of the site. Mr. Price said that it is important that the additional parking remain in the plans. Mr. Grimm questioned the logic of the additional parking, especially in the northern area.

Mr. Canas said that he had spoken with the engineers in DPW about water flow in the vicinity.

There being no additional comments from Commission members and none from the public, Mr. Balgach made a motion to close the public hearing on this matter. That motion was seconded by Mr. Nedder, and was approved by a vote of 5-0.

At about 9:13 p.m. Chairman Olvany read the following three agenda items:

GENERAL MEETING

Mandatory Referral #1-2023, Board of Selectmen, Hindley Elementary School, 10 Nearwater Lane. Proposal for substantial improvement to Town property.

Mandatory Referral #2-2023, Board of Selectmen, Royle Elementary School, 133 Mansfield Avenue. Proposal for substantial improvement to Town property.

Mandatory Referral #3-2023, Board of Selectmen, Holmes Elementary School, 18 & 32 Hoyt Street. Proposal for substantial improvement to Town property.

Mr. Olvany noted that three draft reports had been prepared by staff. Mr. Olvany and Mr. Balgach had some minor corrections to each of the three referral reports. Mr. Ginsberg summarized the CGS 8-24 process, noting the time frame for a report from the Commission, and the applicable review standard. Commission members agreed that the schools are in need of physical improvements and that the proposed improvements are consistent with the Town Plan of Conservation & Development and town policies. Mr. Nedder made a motion to approve all three reports. That motion was seconded by Ms. Barsanti, and approved by a vote of 5-0. Those three reports read as follows:

**DARIEN PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
C.G.S. SECTION 8-24 MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT
MANDATORY REFERRAL #1-2023
HINDLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 10 NEARWATER LANE
JANUARY 24, 2023**

Mandatory Referral #1-2023, Board of Selectmen, Hindley Elementary School, 10 Nearwater Lane. Proposal for substantial improvement to Town property.

The Darien Planning & Zoning Commission has reviewed the one-page December 21, 2022 memo from Town Administrator Kathleen Clarke Buch regarding the proposal to renovate and construct additions to Hindley Elementary School, including eliminating temporary portable classroom buildings, replacing the library/learning commons, correctly sizing general and special subject classrooms, upgrading building systems, and adding parking spaces to the bus loop; and to perform related site development activities, including adding landscape plantings, restoring and adding to hardscape areas, and improving stormwater management.

In support of the proposal, the Town Administrator submitted a number of pages from Chapter 12 of the 2016 Town Plan of Conservation & Development (pages 115-117, 124).

The 2016 Town Plan includes the specific policy on page 124 as “Upgrade existing elementary schools (and eliminate portable classrooms) as opportunities present themselves.” On page 116, the 2016 Town Plan notes that there have been portable classrooms in use, and those “...should be phased out for security and other purposes.”

The Commission hereby finds that the proposed additions and alterations to Hindley Elementary School is fully consistent with the 2016 Town Plan of Conservation and Development.

**DARIEN PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
C.G.S. SECTION 8-24 MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT
MANDATORY REFERRAL #2-2023
ROYLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 133 MANSFIELD AVENUE
JANUARY 24, 2023**

Mandatory Referral #2-2023, Board of Selectmen, Royle Elementary School, 133 Mansfield Avenue. Proposal for substantial improvement to Town property.

The Darien Planning & Zoning Commission has reviewed the December 21, 2022 one-page memo from Town Administrator Kathleen Clarke Buch regarding the proposal to renovate and construct additions to Royle Elementary School, including eliminating temporary portable classroom buildings, replacing the library/learning commons, correctly sizing general and special subject classrooms, upgrading building systems, and adding parking spaces to existing parking areas; and

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adding landscape plantings, restoring and adding to hardscape areas, and installing stormwater management.

In support of the proposal, the Town Administrator submitted a number of pages from Chapter 12 of the 2016 Town Plan of Conservation & Development (pages 115-117, 124).

The 2016 Town Plan includes the specific policy on page 124 as “Upgrade existing elementary schools (and eliminate portable classrooms) as opportunities present themselves.” On page 116, the 2016 Town Plan notes that there have been portable classrooms in use, and those “...should be phased out for security and other purposes.” The 2016 Town Plan also notes that significant HVAC issues exist at Royle School.

The Commission hereby finds that the proposed additions and alterations to Royle Elementary School are fully consistent with the 2016 Town Plan of Conservation and Development.

**DARIEN PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
C.G.S. SECTION 8-24 MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT
MANDATORY REFERRAL #3-2023
HOLMES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 18 & 32 HOYT STREET
JANUARY 24, 2023**

Mandatory Referral #3-2023, Board of Selectmen, Holmes Elementary School, 18 & 32 Hoyt Street. Proposal for substantial improvement to Town property.

The Darien Planning & Zoning Commission has reviewed the one-page December 21, 2022 memo from Town Administrator Kathleen Clarke Buch to renovate and construct additions to Holmes Elementary School, including eliminating temporary portable classroom buildings, renovating and expanding the library, constructing classroom additions, a new main entrance, and an outdoor courtyard/classroom, correctly sizing general and special subject classrooms, upgrading building systems, and adding parking spaces to existing parking areas; including adding landscape plantings, restoring and adding to hardscape areas, and installing stormwater management.

In support of the proposal, the Town Administrator submitted a number of pages from Chapter 12 of the 2016 Town Plan of Conservation & Development (pages 115-117 and page 124).

The 2016 Town Plan includes the specific policy on page 124 as “Upgrade existing elementary schools (and eliminate portable classrooms) as opportunities present themselves.” On page 116, the 2016 Town Plan notes that there have been portable classrooms in use, and those “...should be phased out for security and other purposes.” The 2016 Town Plan also notes that significant HVAC issues exist at Holmes School.

Thus, the Commission finds that the proposed additions and alterations to Holmes Elementary School is fully consistent with the 2016 Town Plan of Conservation and Development.

At about 9:20 p.m. Chairman Olvany read the following agenda item:

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Deliberations ONLY on the following:

Site Plan Application #283-A, Darien Board of Education, Royle Elementary School, 133 Mansfield Avenue. Proposal to renovate and construct additions to Royle Elementary School, including eliminating temporary portable classroom buildings, replacing the library/learning commons, correctly sizing general and special subject classrooms, upgrading building systems, and adding parking spaces to existing parking areas; and to perform related site development activities, including adding landscape plantings, restoring and adding to hardscape areas, and installing stormwater management. *DECISION DEADLINE: 2/7/2023.*

Chairman Olvany then referred to the “green sheet” prepared by staff. It was noted that there is new parking to the east and west and a new sidewalk near the western parking spaces. Those will be used for “staff only”. The Dumpster will be near that location. The majority of the new development will be towards the north. The parking spaces were part of the Education Specifications. It was noted that the two peer reviewers, Hardesty & Hanover and Redniss & Mead both “signed off” on the proposal. Mr. Olvany mentioned that all three schools will be under construction at the same time. Mr. Olvany asked about possible shut-off on the lights in the parking lot, but Commission members agreed it may be prudent to have those lights on for safety purposes.

Ms. Barsanti noted the importance of drainage maintenance. Mr. Ginsberg said that having annual written evidence from the Board of Education would be logical. Appendix G of the submitted report by the applicant outlines required annual maintenance. Staff to draft a resolution for the Commission’s review at an upcoming meeting.

At about 9:31 p.m., Chairman Olvany then read the following agenda item:

Site Plan Application #286-A, Darien Board of Education, Hindley Elementary School, 10 Nearwater Lane. Proposal to renovate and construct additions to Hindley Elementary School, including eliminating temporary portable classroom buildings, replacing the library/learning commons, correctly sizing general and special subject classrooms, upgrading building systems, and adding parking spaces to the bus loop; and to perform related site development activities, including adding landscape plantings, restoring and adding to hardscape areas, and improving stormwater management. *DECISION DEADLINE: 2/7/2023.*

Mr. Olvany said that there is a very small amount of net new impervious surface proposed as part of this project. The bus loop extension is good. He noted the need for LTA/Connecticut DOT review/action on the proposed curb cut on Boston Post Road. Mr. Balgach believed that the new curb cut (with a right turn only out) will be an improvement to existing traffic flow. Mr. Balgach then suggested cleaning up the vines and overgrowth near the chain link fence along the eastern property line near the Church. Another option would be to replace that chain link fence.

Commission members confirmed that peer review engineer Craig Flaherty of Redniss & Mead said that the proposal met Section 880 of the Zoning Regulations. They are decreasing flows. Mr. Balgach said that the Board of Education must maintain the stormwater management system both on their property and within the easement area adjacent to their property, consistent with the submitted maintenance plan. Mr. Olvany said that there is a drywell system in the parking lot,

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which is not being touched, which should be in the maintenance plan.

Staff was asked to draft a resolution for the Commission's consideration at a meeting in February.

At about 9:54 p.m. Chairman Olvany read the following agenda item:

Approval of Minutes

November 15, 2022

Mr. Balgach made a motion to approve the November 15, 2022 meeting minutes as written. That motion was seconded by Ms. Barsanti, and approved by a vote of 5-0.

November 29, 2022

Ms. Barsanti made a motion to approve the November 29, 2022 meeting minutes as written. That motion was seconded by Mr. Nedder, and approved by a vote of 5-0.

December 6, 2022

Ms. Barsanti made a motion to approve the December 6, 2022 meeting minutes as written. That motion was seconded by Mr. Reilly, and approved by a vote of 5-0.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Olvany provided the Commission with updates on the following:

BMW of Darien; Corbin District; Federal Realty/Darien Commons; sale of Bertucci's Restaurant; Noroton Heights Shopping Center; development on Long Neck Point Road; Ziegler's property on Long Neck Point Road; Pear Tree Point School subdivision lots; demolition permit for Subway Restaurant building on Heights Road; a recent League of Women Voters meeting; Birdcode; Compleat Angler; the OpenGov permitting system; and potential redevelopment of 2 Squab Lane.

It was noted that the next upcoming meetings have been scheduled for January 31 and February 7.

There being no other business, Mr. Reilly made a motion to adjourn the meeting. That motion was seconded by Mr. Balgach, and approved by a vote of 5-0. The meeting was adjourned at 10:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeremy B. Ginsberg AICP
Director of Land Use