



**TOWN OF WINCHESTER  
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
Town of Winchester Town Hall 338 Main Street - 2nd Floor – P. Francis Hicks  
August 23, 2021 – 7:00PM  
Regular Meeting Minutes**

**1. ROLL CALL:**

Chairman George Closson called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

Mr. Closson noted that the following individuals were present: John Cooney, Peter Marchand, Willard Platt, Craig Sanden (7:05PM), Alternates Troy LaMere, Charlene LaVoie, and Feliks Viner. Mr. LaMere was initially seated for Mr. Sanden.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None.

**3. AGENDA REVIEW:**

**MOTION:** Mr. Marchand, Mr. Platt second, to modify the agenda to add Item *B. Discussion of Winchester Land Trust Request for Letter of Support RE Acquisition of Land on Danbury Quarter Road;*

*Motion approved with Mr. Closson, Mr. Cooney, Mr. Marchand, Mr. Platt, and Mr. LaMere being in favor.*

Mr. Sanden was seated in place of Mr. LaMere at this point in the meeting.

**4. OTHER BUSINESS.**

**A. Discussion with Phil Doyle RE 80 South Main Street – Reconciliation of Construction Field Changes (Winsted Medical Associates Building).**

Phil Doyle appeared before the Commission regarding this application. Mr. Doyle reminded the Commission about the construction of the medical office building, noting the Certificate of Occupancy had been issued in late May/early June. He noted that a Certificate of Zoning Compliance was currently being sought. He noted the soils on the site were those remaining following the 1955 flood, necessitating the assistance of geotechnical engineers as there were a series of retaining walls and a helipad included in the design. Mr. Doyle noted that a larger generator was required by the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health. Several trees were moved as a result due to this change and a slope failure on the side of the property with the gas station. Mr. Doyle noted that there was also a parking island that had been omitted which would be installed soon. He noted that 16 grasses will be replaced along with 50 pachysandras.

The date of the most recent plan was identified as August 23, 2021.

**MOTION:** Mr. Closson, Mr. Marchand second, to approve the site plan as amended so that a Certificate of Zoning Compliance could be issued; unanimously approved.

**B. Discussion of Winchester Land Trust Request for Letter of Support RE Acquisition of Land on Danbury Quarter Road.**

Winchester Land Trust (WLT) President Jen Perga appeared before the Commission regarding this initiative. She explained that the WLT had an opportunity to purchase 60 acres through an Open Space Grant from the State of Connecticut. Ms. Perga indicated the subject parcel to be located between Rugg Brook Road and Old Waterbury Turnpike. She noted that it abuts water company land and one of the largest holdings of WLT. This acquisition will add to the wildlife corridor in Winchester Center.

Mr. Closson opined this proposal to be in harmony with both the 2011 Plan of Conservation and Development and 2021 Plan of Conservation and Development draft.

**MOTION:** Mr. Sanden, Mr. Marchand second, to support the efforts of the Winchester Land Trust in their pursuit of the acquisition of land on Danbury Quarter Road; unanimously approved.

**5. NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. PZC#20-06 Special Permit Location: 175 Main Street Applicant: Winsted Central, LLC Owner: Alam Mohammed and Moshin Raza Proposal: Covert Mixed-Use Building to Multi-Family Building.**

**MOTION:** Mr. Sanden, Mr. Marchand, to schedule a public hearing for Application PZC#20-06 Special Permit Location: 175 Main Street Applicant: Winsted Central, LLC Owner: Alam Mohammed and Moshin Raza Proposal: Covert Mixed-Use Building to Multi-Family Building for the September 13, 2021 regular meeting at 7PM; unanimously approved.

**6. PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

**A. PZC#21-03 – Special Permit Location: 351 North Main Street Applicant/Owner: Hedgerow Properties, LLC Proposal: Convert Mixed-Use Building to Two-Family.**

**MOTION:** Mr. Marchand, Mr. Sanden second, to close the public hearing on Application PZC#21-03 – Special Permit Location: 351 North Main Street Applicant/Owner: Hedgerow Properties, LLC Proposal: Convert Mixed-Use Building to Two-Family; unanimously approved.

The unanimous consensus of the Commission was to modify the agenda to take *Old Business Application #21-03* at this point in the meeting.

**B. Public Hearing on 2021 Plan of Conservation and Development.**

**MOTION:** Mr. Sanden, Mr. Marchand second, to open the public hearing on the Plan of Conservation and Development; unanimously approved.

A PowerPoint presentation was presented by Mr. Closson. He commented on the efficacy of the 2011 POCD, explaining that the 2021 POCD is intentionally similar. Mr. Closson indicated that the current draft was compiled after a year of receiving input from various boards and commissions and the community.

Mr. Closson reminded those in attendance that the Town continues to have empty mill buildings that need to repurposed and noted that the protection of undeveloped land remains a priority.

Mr. Closson noted the number of zones had been reduced significantly because of the 2016 Zoning Regulations changes. In reviewing multi-family housing, Mr. Closson noted that owner-occupied multi-family housing is typically the ideal.

Mr. Closson noted that the Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOG) has cautioned on the use of the term “character” as it relates to a neighborhood or communities in that it should not be used as a means of keeping people out of an area. He indicated that the Conservation areas assist in protecting property values, especially in the rural residential areas.

Each chapter of the POCD was reviewed with a brief synopsis of the subject matter shared. Mr. Closson reported that a conversation he recently had with the Board of Selectmen centered around the parking on Main Street and the lack of marked striping to delineate spots. Additionally, he remarked on the need for improvements to the sidewalks in the downtown area.

The hearing was open to the public.

Jen Perga, representing both the Winchester Land Trust and the Highland Lake Watershed Association, read aloud a letter wherein it communicated the board of directors' support of the draft POCD, especially where it protects water resources, natural resources, ridgelines, implementation of low impact development techniques, and future acquisition of open space.

A resident, whose name and address was not caught by the clerk, also spoke about the difficulties encountered in gaining affordable elderly housing for her brother, reporting that there are two to three-year waiting lists.

Candy Perez of 605 West Wakefield Boulevard reminded this Commission that the Board of Selectmen wanted to be sure that the charts and statistics are up to date. She disagreed with the position of the earlier speaker regarding elderly housing in town, relaying information she had about an acquaintance and indicated that the data does not support a lack of elderly housing here in Winchester. Ms. Perez noted investment firms are purchasing the multi-family homes here in town.

Linda Groppo of 18 Cherry Street shared her concerns with Main Street, particularly with an uptick in applications seeking to convert mixed-use buildings to multi-family housing.

As Mr. Closson polled the Commission on the draft POCD, each shared their thoughts. Mr. LaMere remarked on the high cost of rental units for young people here in town. Mr. Platt commented on the hobbyist interest in Winchester, noting the positive changes evidenced by Whiting Mills and the artists and craftspeople occupying that space. Mr. Marchand recalled his time on this Commission in the early 1980s when approvals were first beginning for mill building conversions into apartments and other commercial uses. He looked forward to a time when this will be expanded. Mr. Closson agreed, noting the sewer capacity is available. Mr. Sanden shared his observations that the 2011 POCD must have been instrumental in the forward motion of the growth in town. He shared his surprise with the uptick in elementary school population. Mr. Closson pointed to that trend as another example of why the walkability in town is so crucial. Mr. Cooney shared his overall satisfaction with the balance being sought between development and conservation. He hoped to see increased civic engagement in the future. Ms. LaVoie reflected on the history of the town over the past thirty years, noting that this draft of the POCD is a tweaking of a very relevant former plan while at the same time acknowledging accomplishments of recent efforts. Noting that he was relatively new to town and that it was his first meeting, Mr. Viner noted that he was looking forward to the future of this town.

It was noted that the legal ad for this public hearing had been advertised in the Republican American on August 9, 2021 and August 16, 2021. Additionally, it was noted that the draft had been provided to the COG for their suggestions and recommendations. Most of those recommendations had been incorporated to the current draft, according to staff. Finally, it was noted that the draft POCD had been submitted to the Town Clerk's office and made available on the town's website in several different locations, too.

**MOTION:** Mr. Closson, Mr. Marchand second, to close the public hearing on the 2021 Plan of Conservation and Development; unanimously approved.

## **7. OLD BUSINESS:**

**A. PZC#21-03 – Special Permit Location: 351 North Main Street Applicant/Owner: Hedgerow Properties, LLC Proposal: Convert Mixed-Use Building to Two-Family.**

**MOTION:** Mr. Marchand, Mr. Sanden second, to deny Application PZC#21-03 – Special Permit Location: 351 North Main Street without prejudice; unanimously approved.

**B. Review and Discussion on 2021 Plan of Conservation and Development.**

Mr. Closson suggested that draft include all of the maps that were requested, including the planning map. Mr. Marchand noted that the recommendations provided by the COG should also be included but for the inclusion of an implementation plan.

**MOTION:** Mr. Marchand, Mr. Sanden second, to approve the 2021 Plan of Conservation and Development that includes the recommendations of the COG as discussed and include the maps with an effective date of August 25, 2021; unanimously approved.

**8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: August 9, 2021**

**MOTION:** Mr. Marchand, Mr. Sanden second, to approve the August 9, 2021 Minutes; unanimously approved.

**9. COMMUNICATIONS:**

No communications were reported.

**10. STAFF REPORT:**

Staff reported that the new Zoning Enforcement Officer Michael Stankov will soon be undertaking the follow-up with expired excavation permits pursuant to the request communicated from this Commission.

**11. ADJOURNMENT:**

**MOTION:** Mr. Platt, Mr. Cooney second, to adjourn; unanimously approved. The Commission adjourned at 8:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Pamela A. Colombie  
Recording Clerk