



**TOWN OF WINCHESTER
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**

Town of Winchester Town Hall

Held Remotely (Via Zoom)

and was streamed live on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCT1ffiBjMTBQM5OEXSgKlqg/videos>

August 24, 2020 – 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: Peter Marchand, Art Melycher, and Alternates John Cooney and Will Platt.

Mr. Martinez and Mr. Sanden were absent excused. Mr. Cooney and Mr. Platt were seated for them.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT:

No comment was received.

3. AGENDA REVIEW.

No changes were made to the agenda.

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS.

A. PZC#20-23 – Special Permit Location: 15 Hinsdale Avenue Applicant: Winchester Public School Owner: Town of Winchester Proposal: Hinsdale School Renovation and New Construction, Including Restoration and Daylighting of the Gilbert Home Brook that Flows in a Culvert Under a Portion of the School.

The legal ad was read into the record with it being noted as having been published the requisite two times in the Republican American, on August 10, 2020 and August 17, 2020. Staff reported receiving the Certificate(s) of Mail, serving as evidence that notice of the public hearing had been provided to the abutting property owners. Additionally, staff reported that while the proposal was currently still before the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, the proposal had been reviewed by the Architectural Review Committee two times and had received a positive referral to this Board for approval on August 20, 2020. Staff comments from Department of Public Works Jim Rollins, Police Chief William Fitzgerald, Building Official/Zoning Enforcement Officer Marc Melanson, and Fire Marshal Steve Williams had also been provided for the record, according to staff.

Professional Engineer Donald W. Smith, Jr., accompanied by Superintendent of Schools Melony Brady-Shanley, appeared before the Commission regarding this application. Other members of the design team present were Architect Paul Jorgenson and Landscape Architect Steve Wynn.

Mr. Smith shared an overview of the plan, focusing on the areas of development between Williams Avenue and Spencer Street, along Hinsdale Avenue. He reminded the Commission that the project includes demolition of approximately 11000 square feet over the Gilbert Home Brook. He explained that included the cafeteria and kitchen. Mr. Smith noted that the main entrance/bus drop-off area in the back of the school will remain. He pointed out the area where seven buses can queue for drop-off/pick-up. Mr. Smith noted that the existing paved play area is being removed and replaced with parking. A maintenance building proposed for some future date was shown on the site plan, too.

Mr. Smith noted that the existing parking area to the east will remain and be repaved. He noted that it will be set up for a future EVC (electrical vehicle charging station), as part of school requirements. Mr. Smith

indicated that two spaces are designated for that purpose. In that area, two handicapped parking spaces are proposed, according to Mr. Smith. He reported that a new playscape will be located to the north of the parking lot for children, aged five to twelve. Mr. Smith noted that the existing swing set and play apparatus will become a 7000 square foot play area with a rubberized play surface. Closer to the building, a play area for pre-K and kindergarten is planned.

Mr. Smith noted a 7900 square foot one-story building addition is planned for the parking area closer to the building on the east. He reported that the proposed site plan will result in 1000 square feet less of impervious surface than existing conditions. All the existing pavement will be removed and replaced. Where the existing building is being removed, a ten-car parking lot will be added to the Spencer Street side of the site. With this added parking, the parking count will increase to 51 regular spaces and 3 handicapped spaces. While the Zoning Regulations allow 25% building coverage, the Hinsdale campus will result in 18.1%.

Mr. Smith reviewed the traffic flow, noting that it will be as it was before with a one-way driveway coming in from Spencer Street, limited to busses during drop-off/pick-up times. As far as parents dropping off, those cars will enter the site from Williams Avenue and circle up through the parking area, according to Mr. Smith. He noted that the on-site queuing was provided for twenty-eight cars.

Mr. Melycher questioned the location of the third handicapped parking spot. Mr. Smith explained that the third handicapped spot was located near the dumpster/generator location. He noted that those are near the overlook plaza near the brook. Mr. Smith noted that the stairs leading from Hinsdale Avenue will remain. The distance from the handicapped parking spots was discussed. Ms. Brady-Shanley confirmed that any visitor to the building requiring assistance would be provided with it. Mr. Smith confirmed that the route to the building complies with the Accessibility Standards.

Mr. Smith noted that the survey revealed that part of the school's driveway encroaches onto the Spencer Street neighbor's property. He noted that as part of this plan, the encroachment will be corrected but that in order to do the necessary work with the box culvert, a temporary easement from that neighbor will be needed. Mr. Smith reported that it still needed to be worked out with the neighbor. He described the weir that will be created so that in a 100-year flood event, the portion of brook that cannot go through the culvert will overflow over that section of foundation wall into the parking lot.

Mr. Closson questioned the screen wall that will require maintenance. Mr. Smith noted that a landscaping plan had been created.

Ms. Brady-Shanley reviewed the three secured accesses to the building.

Mr. Smith reviewed the proposed drainage. Mr. Closson questioned whether the integrity of the existing pipes has been verified. Mr. Smith indicated that no camera work had been done on the pipes. He noted that the Department of Public Works had snaked one catch basin and cleared a blockage. Mr. Melycher agreed that cameraing the system ought to be undertaken. Ms. Brady-Shanley indicated that she would consult with Town Manager Bob Geiger to see if the Water and Sewer Department could assist in this regard. Mr. Closson indicated that the 30" inlet structure just north in the Gilbert Home Brook gets obstructed with debris which contributes with flooding. Mr. Smith agreed that this is an area that will need to be maintained and noted that in advance of predicted large storms, maintenance personnel should be reviewing the area and making sure it is clear of debris.

Snow clearing was briefly discussed.

Mr. Smith reviewed the sanitary sewer lines, noting that there will be no changes.

Mr. Smith noted that a variance application is to go before the Zoning Board of Appeals for the monument sign. A variance for height and total square footage of the sign was being sought, according to Mr. Smith. Mr. Marchand questioned whether the sign would be illuminated. Mr. Jorgensen indicated that there would be no illumination.

The regulation related to the 35' landscape buffer was discussed. It was noted in staff review comments that a variance was necessary to avoid adding the buffer.

Mr. Platt questioned whether the roof water could be diverted from where it enters the wetlands. Mr. Smith noted a new line would have to be generated. Mr. Smith noted that the wetlands exists above the pipe that is underneath that area. He explained that the water that floods the area is backwater due to the elevation of the water trying to get into the box culvert. Mr. Smith explained that the box culvert does not take the water from a 100-year storm. The flooding has not been currently eliminated on the property, but it has been reduced from what it could be under the 100-year storm event.

Mr. Closson questioned whether low impact development techniques have been employed. Mr. Smith noted that the impervious surface on the site has been reduced. He noted that while they hadn't provided peak flow control, there had been water quality improvements added. The hydrodynamic separator will provide that improved water quality over a standard catch basin, according to Mr. Smith. He noted that stormwater galleys had been added for the proposed new parking lot.

Mr. Jorgensen reviewed the proposed building plan, including the elevation drawings. He noted that the majority of the exterior is red brick with accent metal paneling. He noted that solving the flooding at the site and adding a modest addition, the building will be the right size for the district. Mr. Jorgensen noted that the main entrance, located behind the building, will be fortified with a combination of ballistic and blast-resistant glass in aluminum frames. He noted that the family resource center is just to the left as you walk through the entrance and the mechanical room is located in back corner area. Mr. Jorgensen reported that all the plumbing fixtures will be replaced as well as the lighting. He explained that the project will include new flooring. All the interior surfaces will be painted, too.

Mr. Jorgensen noted that a new wall will be built near the plaza overlook area, the space located at the top of the stairs leading from Hinsdale Avenue. He showed the metal panel that is designed to compliment the movement of water of the brook. It was noted that the elevation of the floors in the new addition will be slightly higher so that the bathrooms will flow out by gravity rather than needing a pump station.

Mr. Jorgensen reported that all the exterior doors and windows will be replaced. He noted that a sign will be installed over the entrance. The addition part of the building will not have any exterior illumination, according to Mr. Jorgensen.

Mr. Closson questioned whether there were rooftop mechanical units. Mr. Jorgensen confirmed. Mr. Closson questioned whether there was any shielding of the units as part of the proposal. Mr. Jorgensen indicated that there was currently no proposed shielding but noted the units will be located in the center of the roofs so as to minimize what can be seen. Mr. Closson questioned whether the Architectural Review Committee had discussed screening the units. Mr. Jorgensen indicated that there was no request from them to do so. Mr. Closson suggested Mr. Jorgensen return with possible shielding options to the units. Mr. Melycher agreed.

Mr. Jorgensen shared the photometric plan, reminding the Commission that there was no exterior illumination proposed on the side of the new addition. Mr. Melycher questioned the amount of lighting near the handicap parking spots. Mr. Jorgensen indicated that a light pole could be added to that area.

The proposed signage was reviewed, including the wall sign on the main entrance and the monument sign at Hinsdale Avenue. Mr. Melycher noted that he was very pleased with the proposed monument sign.

Mr. Platt questioned the security upgrades proposed for the secondary entrances. Mr. Jorgensen noted that while the State of Connecticut requirements for secondary entrances are less than what they are for primary entrances, this project will include upgrading the glass. The hardware will be high-security locks consistent with the district, according to Mr. Jorgensen.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Closson, Mr. Jorgensen confirmed that the building will be updated with its heat and air conditioning. He noted that all of the air exchanges required in the code will be met. Mr. Jorgensen reported that there was a lot of discussion in the early design phase about dehumidification because the building has suffered over the years with moisture problems. He indicated that the belief is that most of the problems were from the brook beneath the building. However, the renovation will include proper air exchanges, according to Mr. Jorgensen. He reminded the Commission that the project included all new finishes which will rid the building of any latent moisture still currently in the building. It was noted that operable windows are included in the design.

Mr. Marchand questioned whether the proposed generator will be sized to operate the entire building. Mr. Jorgensen explained that this was in discussion currently, noting that typically the generator is sized only for emergency functions such as the kitchen, the heat, and emergency lighting. He noted that typically school is out when there is this type of situation. Mr. Melycher questioned whether Hinsdale School would function as an emergency shelter. Ms. Brady-Shanley reported that there had been some discussion in town about utilizing the school as such but noted that request had to be weighed against the budget limits of this project. Mr. Jorgensen reported that unless this building is planned to be a shelter center, it would not be fit with a generator to run the whole building. He confirmed that there are no showers proposed for this building.

Screening of the dumpster was discussed. Mr. Smith noted that the plans will have to be reviewed to relocate the dumpsters so that they are more than fifteen feet away from the building.

Mr. Wynn reviewed the proposed landscape plan. He noted that where the building is being removed, the brook will be opened up. Mr. Wynn reported that a couple of dogwood trees and evergreen ground coverings are proposed for the area near the monument sign. Armstrong maple trees will be added to flank the driveway entrance on Spencer Street, according to Mr. Wynn. Along the parking spaces in the new lot, an inkberry will be added. Low evergreens and hybrid Witch Hazel plantings will be included near the main entrance to the building as well as near the secondary entrance. The islands in the main parking lot will see their trees replaced, according to Mr. Wynn. He explained that the slopes along the brook will be too steep to mow so a conservation seed mix have been planned for that area. He explained that maintenance for that area will require personnel with a weed wacker once or twice a year to keep that area from getting out of control.

Mr. Closson questioned how the trees along the upper side of the driveway, near where there is a parking area, will work with the proposed sixteen-foot light poles. Mr. Wynn noted that this still needed to be addressed and indicated that he will have to work with the light designers of Mr. Jorgensen's team.

The hearing was open to the public.

Mark Douglass of 115 Williams Avenue shared his concerns with the lighting of cars pulling from the lot and questioned whether there would be a landscape buffer in the field going up towards the Gilbert School. He also shared his concerns with lighting for the field, noting that cars have driven onto the field in the past.

Mr. Jorgensen indicated that the field near the playground will not be lit. Mr. Smith noted that there are no proposed changes in the ballfield, explaining that there is a wetland corridor up along those houses.

Joseph Holbrooks of 44 Spencer Street spoke in favor of the play structure being relocated further away from his property and supported the addition of trees being added in the parking lot. Mr. Holbrooks questioned the stormwater drainage off the parking lot into the Gilbert Home Brook. Mr. Smith noted that the water will be draining through a new storm drain and outlet.

Mr. Closson polled the Commission regarding Mr. Melanson's position that a variance is necessary as there is no 35' landscape buffer between the school and the neighboring properties proposed. The consensus was that the applicant should seek a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals from the landscape buffer requirement.

MOTION: Mr. Marchand, Mr. Platt second, to continue the public hearing to the September 14, 2020 regular meeting; unanimously approved.

5. OLD BUSINESS.

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As the public hearing had been continued, no business was discussed.

6. NEW BUSINESS.

None.

7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: July 27, 2020 Regular Meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Marchand, Mr. Platt second, to approve the July 27, 2020 regular meeting Minutes; Motion passed with Mr. Closson, Mr. Cooney, Mr. Marchand, and Mr. Platt while Mr. Melycher abstained.

8. COMMUNICATIONS.

None.

9. STAFF REPORT:

It was noted that the Winsted Medical Center recently announced their target date for opening as January 18, 2021.

10. OTHER BUSINESS:

A. POCD Discussion.

Mr. Closson noted that he has received sections from commissioners and would forward the same to staff. He indicated that he hoped to be able to meet in person soon to review putting together the 2021 update.

B. Short Term Rentals Regulation Workshop – POSTPONED.

No business discussed.

12. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: Mr. Marchand, Mr. Melycher second, to adjourn; unanimously approved.

The Commission adjourned at 10:15PM.

**Respectfully submitted,
Pamela A. Colombie
Recording Clerk**