



**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>

**July 27, 2020 – 7:00PM**

**Regular Meeting Minutes**

**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman George Closson called the meeting to order at 7:07PM.

Mr. Closson noted that the following individuals were present: Peter Marchand, Jerry Martinez, Craig Sanden (7:16PM), and Alternates John Cooney and Will Platt.

Art Melycher was absent excused. Mr. Platt was seated for Mr. Melycher and Mr. Cooney was initially seated for Mr. Sanden until his arrival.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

No comment was received.

**3. AGENDA REVIEW.**

No changes were made to the agenda.

**4. PUBLIC HEARINGS.**

**A. PZC#20-24 – Special Permit Location: 430 Main Street Applicant: George Noujaim Owner: Wendy and Mike Winsted, LLC Proposal: Mixed Use Building – Light Manufacturing and Office, Small Format on First Floor, 3 Apartments on Each Second and Third Floors.**

The legal ad was read into the record with it being noted as having run the requisite two times, July 21, 2020 and July 24, 2020, in the Republican American. Certificates of mail, serving as evidence that notice of the public hearing had been sent to the abutting property owners, were submitted. Staff also reported that the Architectural Review Committee had reviewed the application and had provided a positive referral on the proposal, noting that the applicant would be using the same materials for the façade as he had on his bistro. It was noted that he had communicated to that group that he would be utilizing a brush stainless steel, mirroring what he has next door. Additionally, it was noted that neither the Fire Marshal nor the Building Officer/Zoning Enforcement Officer had concerns with the project.

George Noujaim appeared before the Commission regarding this application. He explained that the proposal is to move the wholesale food operations next door to the bistro at this location. Mr. Noujaim noted that half the first floor would be used as kitchen, storage, shipping/receiving, and refrigeration while the other half would be utilized for offices. Mr. Noujaim reported that his products will be distributed both in New England and nation-wide.

Mr. Closson questioned what the plans were for the back area where cars currently park. Mr. Noujaim noted that the cars will be removed as he will need the space for a walk-in cooler/freezer along the outside of the building. Mr. Closson questioned whether there was any added lighting planned. Mr. Noujaim confirmed that there would be some lighting. With regards to refuse, Mr. Noujaim indicated that he will have a lot of recycling and will be using two containers that will be enclosed with fencing. Mr. Closson explained that the Commission has been requesting black chain link fencing with black slats and a height to be both at least six-feet tall and one foot over the highest dumpster. Mr. Noujaim confirmed that this was acceptable to him, too.

Mr. Cooney questioned whether there was a total of six apartments in the second and third floor. Mr. Noujaim indicated that he was not certain about the total number of units but understood that there were apartments above.

The hearing was open to the public. No comment was received.

**MOTION:** Mr. Marchand, Mr. Platt second, to close the public hearing; unanimously approved.

## 5. OLD BUSINESS.

### **A. PZC#20-23 – Special Permit Location: 15 Hinsdale Avenue Applicant: Winchester Public Schools 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. (Public Hearing Scheduled for August 24, 2020)**

Mr. Closson commented that the Register Citizen has published twice that approval had already been granted on this application by the Commission and reminded those viewing that a public hearing has been scheduled for August 24, 2020 for this special permit application.

### **B. PZC#20-24 – Special Permit Location: 430 Main Street Applicant: George Noujaim Owner: Wendy and Mike Winsted, LLC Proposal: Mixed Use Building – Light Manufacturing and Office, Small Format on First Floor, 3 Apartments on Each Second and Third Floors.**

**MOTION:** Mr. Closson, Mr. Marchand second, to approve Application PZC#20-24 – Special Permit Applicant: George Noujaim Owner: Wendy and Mike Winsted, LLC Location: 430 Main Street Proposal: Mixed Use – Light Manufacturing and Office, Small Format on First Floor, 3 Apartments on Each Second and Third Floors, subject to the following:

1. In evaluating this application, the Planning and Zoning Commission has relied upon information provided by the applicant and if such information subsequently proves to be false, deceptive, incomplete, and/or inaccurate, this permit shall be suspended, modified, or revoked.
2. This application is consistent with the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development.
3. The application meets the criteria and standards of III.J. Common Regulations (Special Permits and Special Exceptions).
4. Refuse collection will be housed in a chain link enclosure with slats. The Commission recommends black slats, black chain link fencing, and black posts. The fence will be a minimum of six feet tall and at least one foot higher than the highest container.
5. Any exterior lighting in this area will be 90° full cutoff;

*Motion passed with Mr. Closson, Mr. Cooney, Mr. Martinez, Mr. Marchand, and Mr. Platt voting in favor.*

Mr. Sanden was seated as a regular member for the remainder of the meeting.

## 6. NEW BUSINESS.

### **A. PZC#20-25 – CGS 8-24 Location: Whiting Street Applicant: Town of Winchester Department of Public Works Owner: Town of Winchester Proposal: CGS 8-24 Referral – Improvements to Whiting Street Including Sidewalks, Drainage, Paving Portion.**

Representatives from Weston Sampson including Professional Engineer Lisa Slonus, Registered Landscape Architect Ryan Chmielewski and Engineer-In-Training Nick DePalmero, appeared before the Commission regarding this application. They were accompanied by the Town of Winchester Director of Public Works Jim Rollins and Project Administrator Bart Clark.

Ms. Slonus led the discussion, detailing the project area, explaining the grant program that the project is funded under, the goals of the project, existing conditions, and the improvements planned. Noting that Whiting Street lays between Route 44 and Holabird Avenue and runs along Still River, Ms. Slonus noted that the

southeasterly portion is comprised of single-family homes while the northerly portion includes historic mill buildings, the American Mural Project, and the mill apartment building. She reminded the Commission that the community college also surrounds the general project area.

Ms. Slonus reported the project's funding coming from the Responsible Growth and Transit-Oriented Development Grant. She noted that just over \$500K was awarded through this grant administered through the State of Connecticut Office of Policy Management as well as Connecticut Public Transportation. She noted that among the focused objectives were traffic calming, connectivity, reconstructing pavement in the area, and improvements to water quality and drainage. Secondary improvements are related to pedestrian lighting and potentials for green infrastructure, according to Ms. Slonus. She noted that future goals include major intersection improvements at the Route 44 intersection and any major improvements to invasive species along the river.

A PowerPoint presentation was presented by Ms. Slonus. She noted that the project should be reviewed in four sections: the Route 44 intersection, the southerly most section of Whiting Street, the middle section of the roadway, and the northerly most section of Whiting Street.

Ms. Slonus noted that there are almost two additional intersections, through the proximity of Strong Terrace, near the intersection of Route 44 and Whiting Street. Reviewing photographs of Whiting Street as part of the presentation, Ms. Slonus observed the poor condition of the pavement of Whiting Street as well as the lack of sidewalks for pedestrians in the southerly section.

Proposed improvements as part of this plan include continuing the sidewalk from the northerly section of Whiting Street all the way down to Route 44 as well as drainage improvements and water quality improvements through deep sumps with new catch basins. A consistent width for pavement and narrowing of pavement in general for traffic calming purposes are included. Additionally, pavement reconstruction for the entire length of the project are planned.

Ms. Slonus noted that a sidewalk would be added to the southerly section of Whiting Street on the river side. A short retaining wall along the banks of the river is also part of the proposal, according to Ms. Slonus. She noted that an open-rail guide system, similar to the one along the Holabird Avenue Bridge, is proposed to provide for an open vista of the river. The middle section of Whiting Street will be narrowed from 27-30 feet to 22 feet, according to Ms. Slonus. Sidewalks will be added to the easterly side of the road along with two raised crosswalks, according to Ms. Slonus. She explained that the crosswalks will be elevated to the same height of the sidewalks which will provide more emphasis and visualization of pedestrians crossing the roadway. Ms. Slonus noted that the crosswalk itself will also function as a speed table. She noted that no changes are proposed for the parking for the mill. A ramp was included in the design for the apartments that will be ADA compliant.

Final design will be wrapped up in the fall followed by an administrative approval, according to Ms. Slonus. She projected bidding and construction to occur in the Spring of 2021 with construction completing in the Fall of 2021. Ms. Slonus noted that plantings and lighting would be included as part of a future phase.

Discussion occurred regarding the bus access to the American Mural Project. Regarding the proposed width of the road near the apartment building, Ms. Slonus indicated the road will retain the minimum width of twenty-two feet. Mr. Marchand questioned why the sidewalks are on alternate sides of the road. Ms. Slonus explained that if the sidewalks were pushed onto the side with the apartments, easements would need to be secured. Mr. Rollins noted that the decision was also made from a safety perspective to avoid a parking lot near where cars back out into the road from a parking area. Mr. Marchand questioned whether a traffic count was done for that parking area and shared his doubts that the traffic is less than that of the drive areas of Whiting Mills and American Mural Project. Ms. Slonus confirmed that no traffic count was undertaken.

John Wiarda of 16 Superior Street shared his concern regarding a tenant of Whiting Mills, MOMIX, noting that they access the site with tractor trailer trucks. Ms. Slonus noted that the access points will be reviewed by Weston Sampson and those property owners.

Mr. Martinez questioned how the intersection with Route 44 will be impacted with the addition of the low retaining walls to be added along the river. Ms. Slonus reported that the proposal includes a buffer area of two feet between the retaining wall and the shoulder line, with the sidewalk abutting the roadway which shall be twenty-two feet in width. Mr. Closson questioned whether the Whiting Mills sign will remain at this corner. Ms. Slonus confirmed that it would.

Amy Winn of the American Mural Project questioned whether there were safety concerns when turning onto Whiting Street when traveling east from Route 44 with the addition of a sidewalk. Ms. Slonus explained that there might be a de-escalation lane added when the intersection is addressed. Ms. Winn shared the same concern with trucks or busses accessing Whiting Street from Holabird Avenue. Ms. Slonus noted that as the road would typically be considered a local street, the engineers will review their design again considering the tractor trailer trucks and buses. She explained that the bump-outs off the sidewalk near the apartment building will reduce the length of the pedestrian crosswalks which reduces exposure time to a potential vehicle conflict.

Mr. Wiarda shared what he has seen with tractor trailer truck traffic in this area.

Jean Paul Blachere and Eva Blachere, of Whiting Mills, LLC, shared their disappointment that a sidewalk was not added on their side of Whiting Street. They also noted their preference for the conversion of the road to a one-way street as a means to enhance safety in this area.

Mr. Closson recalled that there had originally been discussion surrounding the road converting to one-way. He questioned why the two-way traffic flow was opted for as part of these improvements. Mr. Clark reported that the Fire Department and Police Department had deemed one-way traffic as an impediment to providing appropriate fire and police protection. Noting that there was a fire department located on Holabird Avenue, Mr. Closson opined that it should alleviate those concerns and suggested that the owners of Whiting Mills and American Mural Project ought to be included in a discussion in this regard.

Mr. Closson questioned the previous proposed pedestrian bridge from the community college which would function to connect Park Place to Whiting Street. Mr. Clark confirmed he had seen this as a concept in the files but reported that the State has not furthered that proposal. A location for the crosswalk has been included in these plans that would be favorable should the State ever decide to undertake a pedestrian bridge, according to Mr. Clark.

Mr. Rollins noted that while his department would have preferred the one-way option, there was resistance met from other departments (fire, police, and ambulance). He indicated that converting Whiting Street to one-way would not solve the problems associated with the Route 44 intersection. He noted that there would likely be resistance from the residents of Strong Terrace. Mr. Closson reiterated that he could not understand the concerns from public safety over converting Whiting Street to one-way. At Mr. Closson's request, Mr. Rollins agreed to return to public safety and obtain a written narrative regarding the reasons behind the choices made and share them with the property owners in this area. Mr. Rollins noted the added congestion that would result on Park Place West from a one-way Whiting Street. Ms. Slonus pointed out challenges with funneling all traffic to the Holabird Avenue intersection, noting the existing site distance constraints there because of the existing geometry at the approach and the existing bridge. Mr. Rollins noted that there are also some challenges with tractor trailer trucks going either left or right from the intersection of Holabird Avenue and North Main Street.

Mr. Platt questioned the garage doors that are street-side in the Mill building. Mr. Blachere reported that the doors are not used for a garage currently and that they would be changed if they agree with the road's design.

Mr. Marchand questioned whether public safety or the college has reviewed the design. Mr. Cooney noted that he travels in this area and agrees that the road is tight between the mill building and the apartment building.

Mr. Closson requested that Mr. Rollins plan an additional meeting with the design team, this commission, the parties from Whiting Mills and American Mural Project, the community college, and representatives from public safety.

**MOTION:** Mr. Closson, Mr. Martinez second, to approve Application PZC#20-25 CGS 8-24 Referral Applicant: Town of Winchester Department of Public Works Owner: Town of Winchester Location: Whiting Street Proposal: CGS 8-24 Referral and to forward a positive referral to the Board of Selectmen in reference to the proposed improvements to Whiting Street including sidewalks, drainage, and paving portion as presented at the July 27, 2020 regular meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission, with the stipulation that we have an additional meeting called, to be coordinated by Director of Public Works Jim Rollins, to get life-safety departments involved to discuss so that the project moves to the next stage;

*Motion passed with Mr. Closson, Mr. Martinez, Mr. Platt, and Mr. Sanden voting in favor while Mr. Marchand was opposed.*

#### **7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: July 13, 2020 Regular Meeting.**

**MOTION:** Mr. Marchand, Mr. Sanden second, to approve the July 13, 2020 Minutes as amended;

*Motion passed with Mr. Closson, Mr. Marchand, Mr. Platt and Mr. Sanden voting aye while Mr. Martinez abstained.*

#### **8. COMMUNICATIONS.**

No communications were received.

#### **9. STAFF REPORT:**

Staff reported that there is a lot of development occurring in town with various renovation projects and several new homes. Mr. Marchand questioned what was happening in terms of zoning enforcement with violations. Staff reported that when Zoning Enforcement Officer Marc Melanson is out, she signs off on zoning permits where appropriate so that projects are not delayed. Mr. Sanden questioned whether the COG offers services for fill-in zoning enforcement officers.

#### **10. OTHER BUSINESS:**

##### **A. POCD Discussion.**

Mr. Closson suggested that at the first meeting in August, the POCD will be the focus.

##### **B. Short Term Rentals Regulation Workshop – POSTPONED.**

No business discussed.

#### **11. ADJOURNMENT:**

**MOTION:** Mr. Marchand, Mr. Sanden second, to adjourn; unanimously approved. The Commission adjourned at 8:58PM.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Pamela A. Colombie**  
**Recording Clerk**