



Town of Hamden

Planning and Zoning Department

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February 17, 2023

Planning and Zoning Commission Minutes

The Planning and Zoning Commission, Town of Hamden, held a Public Hearing and Regular Meeting on Tuesday, February 14, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was held in the Legislative Council Chambers, Memorial Town Hall, 2372 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT.

Commissioners in attendance: Brack Poitier, (Chairman), Michele Mastropetre, Jay Cruikshank, Richard Pearce, Joseph McDonagh, Shenae Draughn, Richard Bauer.

Staff in Attendance: Eugene Livshits, Town Planner; Christopher Soto, Assistant Town Planner; Camile Deans Administrative Assistant to Commissions, Atty. Tim Lee, Assistant Town Attorney; Genevieve Bertolini, Stenographer.

Chairman Poitier called the meeting to order at 7:01p.m.; Ms. Deans read the Agenda and Public Hearing item into the record, the panel introduced themselves and the Chairman reviewed the procedures for the Public Hearing and Regular Meeting.

A. Public Comment Session

Chairman Poitier read the details of the public comment session proceedings then called for any public comments.

- **There were no public comments.**

Amendment of September 24, 2022 Minutes.

Mr. Soto, Assistant Town Planner informed the Commission that there was an error in the September 13, 2022 minutes and the minutes should be amended accordingly. The minutes stated that the 8-24 Review-22-421 Town Center Park Donation and Installation of Brick Pavers and Benches was tabled to the September 27, 2022 Planning and Zoning Commission meeting, however that is incorrect. During the September 13, 2022 meeting the 8-24 Review- 22-421 Town Center Park Donation and Installation of Brick Pavers and Benches the Commission voted unanimously to send a favorable recommendation to the Legislative Council.

Commissioner Mastropetre began to make a motion however she was corrected by town attorney Tim lee. He informed her that first she had to make a motion to add the item to the agenda, after which she will make a second motion to amend the minutes.

Commissioner Mastropetre made a motion to add the item to the February 14, 2023 Planning and Zoning

Commission Agenda. Commissioner Bauer seconded the motion to add the item to the Agenda. All commissioners present voted in favor.

Commissioner Mastropetre made a motion to approve the amended September 13, 2022 Planning and Zoning Commission meeting minutes. Commissioner Bauer seconded the motion. All commissioners present voted in favor.

B. Annual Elections

1. Election of Chairman

Commissioner Joseph McDonagh moved a motion to re-elect Chairman Brack Poitier for another term, Commissioner Mastropetre seconded the motion, all commissioners present voted in favor.

2. Election of Vice Chair

Chairman Poitier nominated Commissioner Joseph McDonagh for vice Chair, Commissioner Mastropetre seconded the motion. All commissioners present voted in favor.

3. Election of representatives to the SCRCOG Regional Planning Commission

Commissioner McDonagh nominated Commissioner Cruickshank, Commissioner Mastropetre seconded, and all commissioners present voted in favor.

4. Appointment of Liaison to Traffic Authority

Commissioner Draughn nominated Commissioner Robert Cocchiaro, Commissioner Pearce seconded, and all commissioners present voted in favor.

C. Public Hearing

Public Hearing opened at 7:07p.m.

Item 1.

Item 1.

Special Permit and Site Plan 23-1363 14, 20 Gorham Ave, 44 Circular Ave, 33, 39 and 43 Helen Street School (college) to Child Day Care and Elementary. Guidepost A LLC Applicant

The applicant gave out a packet describing the prospective details of the school to the commission.

Brian McCann Attorney at Pullman and Comley, introduced himself and the rest of the team, Matthew Knopf Senior Project manager at Higher Ground Education and Matt Baldino Assistant Project Manager at Solli Engineering. Attorney McCann gave an explanation of the site details, 1.59 acres and the specific

site zones which are a T-5 and R-5. He also pointed out that the location has been used before as a college level arts school since 1963. He pointed out that although the site has separate parcels it has been used as one campus and one economic unit, including three residential buildings on Helen Street. There are four classroom education buildings on site that will also be adapted. They will be doing primarily interior with some exterior and site modifications.

Attorney McCann noted that there are three variances that runs with the land;

14 and 20 Gorham Ave received in 1956

39 and 43 Helen Street received a 1975

39 and 43 Helen Street received a 1983

Attorney McCann introduced Matthew Knopf who spoke more about the Guidepost program. Mr. Knopf introduced himself and the different programs that Guidepost offer. He spoke about the different locations locally and internationally, the mission and growing Montessori Education in different communities. He also explained that Montessori education is centered on individual child, they pay close attention to demographics, wait lists and other factors to determine the markets/communities where they put their programs. He also explained the importance of materials they use in building their classroom and also the outside areas example using all natural wood and safe playground materials. He stressed the importance of natural light and that they would like to increase the amount of windows. Mr. Knopf explained the pickup and drop off system and there will be a pick up and drop off window of 2/12 window, which will disperse the pick-up window.

Attorney McCann introduced Matt Baldino who explained the site layout, design and traffic study. They will be modifying the court yard area to turn into a playground. They used the parking requirements for daycare and elementary use. They anticipate that parents will park and walk their child into the school, which will allow one space for every staff member and one space for children. The required parking space is 44, while the space they have is 46 so they have exceeded the required. They will also be updating light fixtures and replacing the fence at the southern and western property line. He also explained with the addition of two playgrounds they will decrease the impervious surface on the overall site. He also explained that in regards to landscaping they will be maintain as much as possible, they will be removing those that are overgrown or dead. They will be removing the guard house at the entrance to potential trees which will provide potential shade for the children. He explained that the specifics of the streets example Gorham is a one way so people would make a right in then exit on Circular Ave and the spread out of the drop off hours and that they would not anticipate too much congestion.

Commissioner Mastropetre asked how many children will be attending. Mr. Knopf said 193 with 19 staff, Commissioner also asked about student buses, Mr. Knopf informed her they do not use buses.

Commissioner Pearce asked about security measures, Mr. Knopf explained that they have key pads and the parents will be given the codes, they also use commercial ring cameras with spotlights at each doors, also in addition the playgrounds are surrounded by 6 foot fencing. They also have an electronic system called smart care that students are registered in.

Commissioner Draughn asked if parents would be entering on Gorham and Circular, Mr. Knopf replied yes. She also asked if they did a traffic study to which he replied yes. Mr. Baldino further explained that they have done a trip generation assessment which compares previous use, and compares data which is used to anticipate the amount of vehicles that will be generated within peak hours. He further explained what the data looks like example the most traffic is generated between 7-9am. They also looked at the

previous use where the students were college students who would either drive or be dropped off as opposed to the school being infant and elementary which will increase traffic.

Commissioner McDonagh wanted to clarify if the parking lot on Circular Ave would be designated for parents. Mr. Baldino said they are not specifically designating that lot for parents or staff. R. Knopf also said that they would direct the staff to park in the front lot. Commissioner asked Mr. Knopf to explain the specific use of the building, he also asked if the main entrance is where 90% of the children will be coming in. He explained that yes they will be coming in the front entrance. He also explained on the map where they will be putting a second entrance. Commissioner also asked him about the entrance at building C and who will be using that building, Mr. Knopf explained that it will be a mix, he pointed out that the main entrance is building A, he also explained that if the need arise they would explore drop offs on Gorham Ave where a staff member takes the child and checks them in. He then explained the use of the building, building A is a lobby the school office and a staff kitchen also children house classroom. Building B a two story building is infants and children and the second floor is older students. Building C also a two story they will only be using the first floor for programming and the second floor remain as is. He explained building D on the map which is a three story they will be using only the first floor for GMA, he explained that the building isn't really conducive to a classroom space, they also looked at removing it which is expensive so they will keep it and add windows.

Commissioner McDonagh wanted to know if all the elementary kids will be in one building or multiple, Mr. Knopf explained that if the need arise for elementary it will only be in one building which he referred to on the map.

Commissioner Cruickshank had a clarification re the correct calculations of the parking spaces according to Connecticut standards the ratio of staff to children did not equal to the amount of spaces that they were proposing. Mr. Knopf said he couldn't speak to that but he could circle back with the correct information.

Commissioner Mastropetre wanted to know if parents will be walking the kids to their room and the issues this will cause with traffic backing up if there is a way to enter from Helen Street the team responded that they tried but it couldn't happen.

The Chair asked Mr. Christopher Soto Assistant Town Planner to read the staff report.

Staff Report

Mr. Soto read a copy of the staff report.

Commissioner McDonagh wanted to add to Commissioner Mastrepetre's concern regarding the traffic on Circular Ave, he added that the team may want to analyze that aspect. He suggested having more than one options for drop off and pick up.

Mr. Baldino restated the traffic study information, access to the site and accessibility of the parking lots, he also added that he could do a bit more research of the traffic in the area. Commissioner Cruickshank asked what would be the intended use for the two houses/residents on the property, Knopf informed him that they are currently being leased and they would maintain the lease.

Attorney McCann also updated the group that he looked up the statue for the student to teacher ratio he

read the statue to the commission. Commissioner Mastropetre asked if the statue was different if it was operated as a daycare or elementary school. Attorney Tim lee said he will speak to the Attorney to get that clarification for next meeting. Mr. Knopf also explained about the requirements and accreditation of the school and how that might differ in a Montessori than a typical school, he also explained that they will start with a phasing and depending on the need for elementary then they will move forward with that. Commissioner Draughn suggest that because the residential areas will be impacted maybe they could look on something else on Helen Street and also to take a look at peak hour just to see how the traffic flows.

Commissioner Cruickshank asked if there were any comments from the Fire Marshall or the Police Chief. Mr. Soto read the comments from the Fire Marshal: Submit egress, sprinkler and fire alarm plans upon pre approval. No comment from the fire chief.

Mr. Livshits asked how long they will take to get the updated material, Attorney McCann said he could by the next meeting.

Commissioner McDonagh made a motion to continue to the meeting on February 28, Commissioner Mastropetre seconded the motion. All commissioners present were in favor.

D. Regular Meeting

Site Plan 22-1363

*Special Permit and Site Plan 23-1363 14, 20 Gorham Ave, 44 Circular Ave, 33, 39 and 43 Helen Street School (college) to Child Day Care and Elementary. Guidepost A LLC Applicant
Continued to February 28, 2023.*

Chairman Poitier reviewed the minutes Commissioner Mastropetre motioned to approve, and all were in favor.

E. Old Business

1. Review minutes of January 24. 2023 Regular Meeting. The minutes were confirmed with no corrections by Commissioner Pearce. Commissioner McDonagh Seconded the motion.

F. Adjournment

Commissioner Draughn made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Pearce seconded the motion.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:24pm.

Submitted by: _____
Camile Deans, Administrative Assistant to Commissions