

**REVISED MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting – Tuesday, January 9, 2024, at 7:00 P.M.
Main Meeting Room – Simsbury Town Hall
933 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070**

I. CALL TO ORDER – Chair Leavitt-Smith called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL

Present: Town Planner, George McGregor; Planning Chair, Erin Leavitt-Smith; Planning Secretary, William Rice; Planning Commission Members: Joseph Campolieta, Donald Colantonio, and Julie Eaton; Planning Commission Alternate Members: Marcus Furze, and Angel Goldman.

Absent: Planning Commission Member, Holle Beum; and Planning Commission Alternate Member, Nicholas Criscitelli.

Seating of Alternates

Commissioner Furze was appointed as a regular member for tonight's meeting.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

December 12, 2023

Commissioner Eaton stated that she was marked as absent but that she was not sworn in as a Planning Commission Member at the time of the meeting.

MOTION: Secretary Rice made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Campolieta, to approve the Minutes of the December 12, 2023, Regular Meeting, as amended. The motion carried unanimously. (6-0-0).

III. NEW BUSINESS – Referral for POCD Conformance from the Zoning Commission

Application ZC #23-38 of SL Simsbury LLC, Owner, Holden Sabato, Applicant, for a Type-4 Master Site Development Plan (MSDP) pursuant to Section 5.0.B.4 of the Hartford-Simsbury Form-Based Code (HSFBC) for the construction of a 580-unit residential development at 200 Hopmeadow Street (former Hartford Insurance property-south) (Assessor's Map F17, Block 154, Lot 009-2) Simsbury, CT 06070. Zone HS-FBC.

Paul Vitaliano, Civil Engineer at VHB stated:

- The development has walkability, with a 12-foot-wide multi-use trail, and has variety in housing: apartments, duplexes, and single-family homes.
- The apartments, which are the most-dense buildings, are perpendicular and closest to Hopmeadow, at approximately 315 feet, with the duplexes and single-family homes towards the western and southeastern parts of the property.
- Form-based code has a recommendation of the landscape being 200 feet, but they are asking for a deviation of 150 feet, because they are about 10 feet off for the parking lot.
- The reduction in the parking lot contributes to the 7-acres of green space that will be added to the property.
- There will be removal of invasive species.
- They have an affordability quota of 10%.
- There is a prioritization of the view of Heublein Tower and Talcott Mountain, with maintaining the view from the current entrances of the property.

Commissioner Furze commented that he was concerned about the residents' view within the development being compromised by the height of the four-story buildings.

Mr. Vitaliano assured him that within the site the views are even better than the view from the street.

Mr. McGregor presented how the application is congruent with the POCD Policy Guidance:

- Land Use: E: "Promote appropriate use of the former Hartford Insurance site using the "form-based code" or other approach."
- Housing: 9.1: "Increase the number of affordable housing units in Simsbury."
9.2: "Seek ways to help meet the diverse housing needs of present and future residents."
- Conservation: 4.1: "Protect water quality and other significant water-related resources."
4.2: "Protect significant land-related natural resources."
4.3: "Protect other significant natural resources."
4.4: "Preserve and enhance biodiversity and ecological health."
5.1: "Preserve important areas as open space."
5.2: "Strive to create an open space system with inter-connected trails and other amenities."
5.3: "Manage, maintain, and enhance open space areas."
6.1: "identify and protect the resources, "sense of place", and quality of life that contribute to the overall ambience of Simsbury."

6.2: "Protect historic and archeologic resources and celebrate their contribution to community ambience and sense of place."

6.3: "Support the preservation of working farms and the availability of farmland soils."

6.4: "Preserve and enhance the scenic characteristic of Simsbury."

- Economic Development: 8.1: "Promote economic development in Simsbury I order to provide jobs, goods and services, and net tax revenue."
 - A: Seek to retain existing businesses and support their growth and expansion in Simsbury, support and promote tourism, and attract new businesses to Simsbury.
 - B: Strive to maintain Simsbury's strong financial situation and reduce the tax burden on property owners by continuing to grow the grand list, diversify the tax base, and attract uses that pay more in taxes than they require in services.
 - C: Encourage economic development that harmonizes with Simsbury's "sense of place" and the natural environment, and surrounding structures and uses."

Commissioner Campolieta strongly urged planting of native plants and not have a lot of ornamentals.

Mr. Vitaliano responded that they will replant trees, minimize lawns, create a more natural environment (could be a storm water feature), have denser vegetation, maintain as much as the berm and dense landscaping along the frontage as possible, and even have a dead end to respect the vegetation and wetlands.

Commissioner Goldman complimented Simsbury's education system with it being a driving force behind families moving into town, and predicted that the projected number of school-age children was probably not accurate.

Mr. McGregor responded that the school board predicted around 130 students.

Commissioner Goldman stated that the numbers presented look more reflective of properties that would be sold not rented. He also did not agree with it being only rental residential, explaining that commercial property would generate the majority of tax revenue, and without it the burden on the town will be far greater than what would be received in revenue.

Secretary Rice stated that community input has consistently expressed not wanting more apartment buildings, but rather developments that offer enhancements the whole community can benefit from.

Commissioner Eaton stated that the specific complaints about the residential developments have been the density and height of the buildings.

Commissioner Colantonio stated that it being solely rental property is inconsistent with the POCD advocating for diversity of housing if there is no option to own the real estate.

Secretary Rice stated that it is not consistent with the POCD in being purely residential.

Mr. McGregor stated that there have been lifestyle trends that show how people make purchases and work are different than they were, and mixed-use developments with commercial spaces are not being occupied.

Holden Sabato, Development Director at the Silverman Group, stated that in the North site a commercial building has been left vacant for three years, which speaks to the concern of retail in the South site.

Chair Leavitt-Smith stated that she was concerned about the four-story apartment buildings, considering the North has three-story buildings.

Commissioner Goldman was concerned about the new traffic generated and safety with the entrances being behind wooded areas and on curves.

Mr. Vitaliano responded that the Department of Transportation stated that the site could handle over 1,000 residential units, and that the north entrance is both right and left out, but the south entrance is only right out.

Mr. McGregor stated that the Board of Education is concerned about the cost of special needs services disagreed with the applicant's fiscal impact study's finding of the cost of services per pupil.

Secretary Rice stated that the amount of affordable housing units is consistent with the POCD.

MOTION: Secretary Rice made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Campolieta, that on balance the **Application ZC #23-38** of SL Simsbury LLC, Owner, Holden Sabato, Applicant, for a Type-4 Master Site Development Plan (MSDP) pursuant to Section 5.0.B.4 of the Hartford-Simsbury Form-Based Code (HSFBC) for the construction of a 580-unit residential development at 200 Hopmeadow Street (former Hartford Insurance property-south) (Assessor's Map F17, Block 154, Lot 009-2) Simsbury, CT 06070. Zone HS-FBC is consistent with the 2024 Simsbury Plan of Conservation and Development, with the following recommendations: the introduction of a mixed-use non-residential element, consideration of the preservation of scenic

182 hillside and ridgeline to include reduction of story height from four to three, housing
183 diversity to include ownership options, and consideration of a public benefit to enhance
184 a sense of place. Commissioner Furze abstained. The motion carried unanimously. (5-
185 0-1).

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187 Secretary Rice recognized the residents of Simsbury who are not in support of the large-
188 scale apartment complex.

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190 **IV. GENERAL COMMISSION BUSINESS**

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192 **Tariffville Planning Process Draft RFP/Project Scope**

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194 Mr. McGregor provided a document explaining the intention of enhancing Tariffville
195 and the process interested proposers can follow.

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197 The Planning Commission approved the document, allowing it to be posted for the
198 public.

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200 **V. ADJOURNMENT**

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202 **MOTION:** Chair Leavitt-Smith made a motion without objection to adjourn the
203 meeting.

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205 Chair Leavitt-Smith adjourned the meeting at 9:20 P.M.

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207 Respectfully Submitted,

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209 Amanda Blaze
210 Commission Clerk