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Cc:

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ZONING COMMISSION MINUTES
SPECIAL WORKSHOP
JUNE 15, 2009

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Barney called the Special Workshop of the Zoning Commission to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room at the Simsbury Town Offices. The following members were present: Alan Needham, Garrett Delehanty, Ed Pabich, Madeline Gilkey, James Gallagher, Scott Barnett and Bruce Elliott. Also in attendance were Director of Planning Hiram Peck, Commission Clerk Alison Sturgeon and other interested parties.

II. WORKSHOP TO DISCUSS TOWN OF SIMSBURY'S ZONING REGULATION REVISIONS
(continued from meeting held on 6/01/2009)

Mr. Peck stated that as the Commission goes through the regulation revisions, they would like to have experts come in to talk about certain topics. He stated that reading traffic reports are difficult but important as part of the development process.

Mr. Daley of Milone & MacBroom stated that they have full traffic analysis capacities in their firm. As part of his presentation, he will be explaining the components of a traffic study. He stated that there are four documents that they rely on for conclusions. The first is the DOT Highway Manual. They look at this for roadway design. The second is AASHTO, which they use for road and trail/park design. Another resource is the ITE Trip Generation. This book tells any how many trips are generated for any land use. This is how traffic engineers anticipate the traffic that is generated. Information regarding assisted living and active adult facilities has recently been added to this book. In the past, they had to generate these numbers themselves as best they could. Another resource is the ITE Parking Generation, although they often use Town's regulations for this information. The Urban Land Institute - Shared Parking is another document that may be used. All of this information is presented to Commissions; the Commission then makes the determination whether they are

comfortable with that parking demand for that particular use.

Regarding the accumulative effect of traffic, Chairman Barney stated that he does not understand why they do not look at everything else in the neighborhood and what it is generating. Mr. Daley stated that there are some studies where they are beginning to look at regional CRCOG studies that are looking at a more global issue. He stated that other than the regional planning authorities, no one is requesting that type of cumulative analysis.

Chairman Barney questioned if traffic studies were mostly boilerplate. Mr. Daley stated that there is some interpretation done. There is a standard format that engineers go through and although there is some professional judgment, it is somewhat of a cookie cutter. This has been developed this way so Commissions can compare traffic reports to make sure they are meeting the same standard.

Commissioner Needham questioned if traffic reports tell the current level of service and what level they may become. Mr. Daley stated that they do state those levels of service. Traffic engineers will do the study. If there are any problems with the level of service not being as good, changes need to be made. The Commissions do not see the changes of possibly a bi-pass lane or extra turn lane being put in; they only see the revised plans that reflect those changes.

Ms. Gilkey stated that on Saturday mornings, Simsbury is filled with parents traveling up and down Route 10 taking their children to sports activities. Mr. Daley stated that the majority of studies look at weekdays during peak hours. Retail businesses and churches may be looked at differently in terms of days and hours. If an engineer knows up front that the Commission wants to see other data, it is very easy to accommodate this if it is known at the beginning of the project.

Chairman Barney questioned if there was a model traffic regulation available. Mr. Daley stated there was not. The majority of Towns are silent on the need for a traffic study in their regulations. The reason why traffic studies are usually done are because of timing issues. Traffic studies take about 4-6 weeks to complete. When a traffic study is started, the engineer will look at that Town's Zoning Regulations or possibly have a checklist or that Town may have special procedures. Mr. Daley stated that there are different levels of traffic studies. They range from a simple letter regarding sight lines to very detailed studies. He stated that most communities do refer to the DOT standards for sight lines. He stated that he believes Simsbury has a reference in the Subdivision Regulations about sight line requirements; he does not believe they are in line with the new DOT standards. Ms. Gilkey stated that Simsbury's requirements are greater. Mr. Daley stated Simsbury's requirements are greater, although they are

measured differently.

Mr. Daley stated that the quality of a good traffic study is working with the Town staff, including the Town Planner, Town Engineer and Police Department.

Mr. Daley stated that every site is unique. The next step of a traffic study is going into the field and understanding the issues. Field reconnaissance includes: traffic control; lane uses; illumination; roadway geometry; constraints (bridges, buildings, right-of-ways); sight lines; nearby land uses; and site characteristics. All of these things formulate how the engineer will proceed with the traffic study.

Mr. Daley stated that the circle radius of impact may increase regarding the type of business. This is something that the Commission needs to consider. Many times this will get considered by the State Traffic Commission; they are very thorough with their review process.

Regarding a site that may have multiple uses, Mr. Needham questioned if it is routine to divide the traffic for this purpose. Mr. Daley stated that this should always be done. The breakdown of square footage and allocate the uses should be done. Some uses have different peak hours. The Commission should see a breakdown of trip generations. Although the tenants of a building are not known, worst case scenarios need to be looked at.

Regarding data assembly, Mr. Daley stated that the next step is to find out how many cars are going by the location. There are several ways to get traffic counts. The DOT already has traffic counts for State roads. Also, manual turning counts are necessary. Traffic counts can be gotten by ATR (Automatic Traffic Recorder) tubes. These devices can be left out for 24-48 hours. They will count the speed of traffic and they can also do vehicle classifications and give a daily distribution. ATRs are used for larger projects. Mr. Daley stated that pedestrian counts are more of a specialty. They are needed more for urban areas, but may become critical near trails. Vehicle classification, accident data and speed data are also sometimes needed. Some of this information can be gotten from the DOT or from local Police Departments.

Regarding site plan evaluations, Mr. Daley stated that as designers start to design a project, the traffic engineers start to identify the issues. These should come together and plans should be revised. He stated that driveway and access management are critical issues. Loading and service vehicles are also issues that need to be considered. Drive-thru access is also a big concern because cars cannot be stacked onto the road.

Regarding safety evaluation, Mr. Daley stated that safety and operational issues are discussed; people need to get around safely. Regarding sight lines, the DOT has a chart that defines the sight lines. Sight lines are defined as sitting in a car with a reaction time to hit the gas and enough time to come across the traffic and accelerate into the moving traffic. This is all about seconds; seconds equals distance.

Mr. Daley stated that driveway geometry is another safety consideration. This includes: internal impacts on public roads; radii centerline encroachment; and grades.

Regarding evaluating operations and determining traffic impacts, Mr. Thomas Harned stated that for background traffic, a comparison is needed. Previous studies will also be looked at. The next aspect of the evaluation is the trip generation, which is taken from the ITE Manual. They can then develop the combined traffic scenario, which is a future picture of what expected traffic will look like. To get the traffic impact, they need to compare the level of service at each of the study intersections. If there is a big change, they will do everything possible to mitigate that.

Regarding the level of service criteria, Mr. Harned stated that each intersection is evaluated with an A-F; this is typically like a report card. In most urban areas, a level of C or D is acceptable. The ranges for the levels of service are not the same for signalized and unsignalized intersections. The threshold is much higher for signalized intersections.

Chairman Barney questioned what the most important questions this Commission needs to ask any traffic engineer. Mr. Daley stated that they are: when the traffic counts occurred; how the sight lines were measured and what speeds were used; the process used in reviewing the applications and if modifications were made; if the most current version of software was used; and how traffic distribution was determined.

Mr. Delehanty made a motion to adjourn the Special Workshop at 7:45 p.m. Mr. Gallagher seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.