

**MINUTES**  
**ZONING COMMISSION – REGULAR MEETING**  
**MONDAY, December 18, 2023 at 7:00 P.M.**  
**Henry James Auditorium**  
**155 Firetown Road, Simsbury, CT 06070**

**I. CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Elliott called this meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Present:** Town Planner, George McGregor; Assistant Town Planner Brittany MacGilpin; Zoning Chairman, Bruce Elliott; Zoning Commissioners, Katherine Beal, Tony Braz, Shannon Leary, David Moore (Alternate), Diane Madigan, Joshua Michelson (Alternate), Tucker Salls

- Chairman Elliott introduced the Commissioners and provided an overview of the Commission. He noted that 3 of the Commissioners are licensed professionals - Ms. Beal is an architect Mr. Braz and Mr. Moore are attorneys.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- December 4, 2023 Regular meeting
- December 6, 2023 Special meeting
- Chairman Elliott tabled the approval of the minutes until the next regular meeting of the Zoning Commission on January 3, 2024.

**III. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND/OR ACTION ON APPLICATIONS**

- Chairman Elliott reviewed the general process to be followed for the public hearing to be held at this meeting.

**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.

**MOTION:** Ms. Madigan motioned that the Zoning Commission refer Application ZC #23-38 to the Planning Commission for their assessment. Ms. Leary seconded. The motion carried. (6-0-0)

- 41 • Mr. McGregor presented a summary of the application, noting that the proposal  
42 includes 488 multi-family units, 24 duplexes, and 68 single family units. The  
43 application is 100% residential.
- 44 • Mr. McGregor provided an overview of the HSFBC, noting that this was adopted  
45 by the Zoning Commission in 2014. The Silverman Group purchased the site in  
46 2015. Development on the north site began in 2019. The HSFBC is utilized only  
47 for this property. The Master Site Development process is a two-part process -  
48 The Master Plan Process and then, depending on the outcome of the Master Plan  
49 process, an applicant will follow up with a Site Plan. The Master Plan is intended  
50 to develop establish the types of development, the degree and scale of  
51 development, what kind of uses are intended on the site, building locations, etc.  
52 The Site Plan has more technical information associated with it including storm  
53 water details, etc. This is a Type 4 application, which triggers the public hearing.  
54 Under a Type 4 application, the applicant is permitted to ask for modifications to  
55 the standards that apply in the HSFBC. The applicant is asking to change the  
56 component elements to allow for 100% residential use.
- 57 • Mr. McGregor noted that letters and emails were received by Town Staff from the  
58 public and have been provided and made part of public record.
- 59 • Holden Sabato, Director at The Silverman Group, addressed the Commission and  
60 commented that The Silverman Group is a family-owned real estate developer  
61 based in New Jersey, specializing in residential and industrial projects. In 2015,  
62 The Silverman Group purchased this property from the Harford Insurance  
63 Company. The sale included the north and south site. The north site is a  
64 successful residential community known as The Ridge at Talcott Mountain and is  
65 100% occupied. The goal for the south site is to transform the vast piece of land  
66 that has been vacant.
- 67 • Paul Vitaliano, Director of Land Development from VHB, presented the aerial view  
68 of the building in 2015 and a more recent image from this year, noting the site has  
69 become over-grown and is deteriorating with the lack of use. He presented a  
70 drone flight video of the site.
- 71 • Mr. Vitaliano presented an overview of the Master Development Site Plan. The  
72 south site will be a pedestrian-friendly, walkable community with a variety of  
73 residential properties. It is designed with a central stacked flat quadrant block.  
74 There will be apartment buildings in the center of the complex. To the south,  
75 there are 12 duplexes with detached garages. Further south and to the east, are  
76 single family residential buildings. There is a clubhouse and pool area. There  
77 will be a multi-use path on the frontage of the property that will connect to the  
78 north property trail. The trail will be extended along the entire frontage of the  
79 south site property. There will be sidewalks that connect throughout the  
80 development. There are two existing access points to the site at the signalized

81 intersection and the secondary entrance to the north. This development will stay  
82 within the developed footprint and will reduce the impervious space by 7 acres.  
83 The town requirement is 2 parking spaces per unit. Under this plan, there are 1.99  
84 parking spots per unit.

- 85 • Mr. Vitaliano commented that from a traffic standpoint, as approved by the  
86 Department of Transportation, the infrastructure can handle the volume of traffic  
87 that existing when the Hartford Insurance Company was active, and this  
88 development will result less traffic than that. The Department of Transportation  
89 has approved the south site to be built out at a denser level and determined that  
90 Hopmeadow Street can handle the volume of traffic.
- 91 • Mr. Vitaliano explained that an economic impact report will be completed. A  
92 school impact report has been completed. The report indicates that the increase  
93 would be between 96-115 students to the school system. The project would have  
94 a net fiscal benefit to the school system of 1-1.5 million dollars. The projected  
95 increases in enrollment will not result in increases above the recommended class  
96 size.
- 97 • Rod Sawicki, Project Manager from VHB, presented the viewshed details.  
98 Heading northbound on Route 10, there are mature trees with berms. There is no  
99 view of tower or ridgeline. Heading southbound, there is a view of the ridge and  
100 tower. Mr. Sawicki presented simulated views of what is proposed as compared  
101 with current views from Hopmeadow Street.
- 102 • Laura Crosskey, President of Crosskey Architects, presented an aerial view of the  
103 Master Plan. There will be a clubhouse, which is a 1-story structure with a  
104 pergola that leads out to the pool area. The clubhouse includes a fitness room, pet  
105 washing station, gaming room, main hall with kitchenette, and a bar area that  
106 leads out to the pool area, as well as men's and women's locker rooms.
- 107 • Ms. Crosskey provided an overview of the 3 and 4-story apartment buildings,  
108 which will include a large lobby, package room, and rentable storage. There will  
109 be private garages assigned to each unit with tandem spaces behind those garage  
110 spots.
- 111 • Ms. Crosskey noted that there are two types of duplex buildings. The Tupelo is a  
112 2 bedroom that is ~2,900 sq. ft. The Magnolia is a corner building with a side  
113 entry that is also a 2-bedroom unit and provides ~1,450 sq. ft. All duplexes have  
114 a detached garage that is shared with one tandem space behind. The shared  
115 garage is separated by a divider to provide privacy.
- 116 • Ms. Crosskey also provided an overview of the single-family homes, noting there  
117 are variety of styles to avoid a cookie-cutter look.
- 118 • Mr. Salls inquired about which buildings are 3 vs. 4 story buildings on the image  
119 presented. Mr. Vitaliano pointed out that the 4-story buildings are the eight in the  
120 central quadrant and the other four buildings will be 3-story buildings.

- 121 • Mr. Elliott opened the hearing to the public.
- 122 • Joan Coe, resident of 26 Whitcomb Drive, requested the application be rejected as
- 123 The Silverman Group has not fulfilled its obligation to build a commercial
- 124 building as required in Phase 1 of the project. She expressed concern that the
- 125 town attorney was hired by The Silverman Group to present the development
- 126 before the East Granby Land-Use Commission. The town attorney was giving
- 127 advice to the Town of Simsbury on The Silverman Group development, while
- 128 working for The Silverman Group in East Granby. This now requires the town to
- 129 hire a private attorney. Her comments will be posted on Twitter and the Simsbury
- 130 Patch for review.
- 131 • Tom Turner, resident of 11 Barnard Drive, commented that Route 10 traffic is
- 132 congested all week long and that entering Route 10 without a traffic light is
- 133 unsafe. However, there are so many traffic lights that there is no longer smooth
- 134 traffic flow in Simsbury. He is concerned that taxes will increase because of the
- 135 impact this development will have on town services such as schools, police,
- 136 ambulatory services, etc.
- 137 • Tim Paine, resident of 35 Cooper Avenue at the Ridge at Talcott Mountain, has
- 138 lived in the north site for two years. He has concerns about the development,
- 139 noting a lack of quality in construction of the North site. He cited broken
- 140 windows that took months to repair and poor plumbing. He noted that the
- 141 building on the North site has not been completed and would like The Silverman
- 142 Group to follow-through on obligations associated with the north site before being
- 143 granted approval to begin construction on the south site. He expressed concern
- 144 that whatever decision is made will permanently impact the town and its ability to
- 145 manage school, police, fire, and other services. He encouraged the Commission
- 146 members to visit the north site when deciding on this application.
- 147 • Ellen Gilbert, resident of 126 Hopmeadow Street at Talcott Acres, commented
- 148 that she lives next to the proposed development. She has concerns about The
- 149 Silverman Group not fulfilling their obligations on the north site. She is
- 150 concerned over the impact this development will have on the schools and noted
- 151 that there is not sufficient space between the single-family homes and Talcott
- 152 Acres. She commented that the residents of Talcott Acres deserve to maintain
- 153 their existing privacy.
- 154 • Sharon Thomas, resident of 42 Brettonwood Drive, commended The Silverman
- 155 Group on the plan presented and is pleased that the development will not be all
- 156 apartments and includes duplexes and single-family residences. She inquired
- 157 about further detail of the community center. She agreed that The Silverman
- 158 Group should complete what was started in phase 1 before being granted approval
- 159 for the south site. She noted that she is a member of the Board of Education and
- 160 commented that no one associated with this application has spoken or presented to

the Board of Education. She is concerned with the data presented by The Silverman Group around the school numbers and believes this will have a significant impact on Tootin Hills and Latimer Lane schools. She requested more detail on the school analysis completed.

- Ray Lagan, resident of 27 Saddle Ridge Drive, addressed the Commission and is speaking as Executive Director for the Granby-Simsbury Chamber of Commerce. He noted that included in the Commission's report were questions on the commercial and retail development within the new development plan. He is curious if the new development plan has an approach to that.
- Pete Harrison, resident of North Site of the Ridge at Talcott Mountain, supports this project with certain caveats. He recommended that the Commission push for home-ownership options. He believes there is too much parking on-site. He is concerned with traffic on Route 10. He believes that school enrollment will decline because of broader demographic trends toward smaller families. He does not believe there is enough housing in Simsbury and believes that this development will be a net benefit for the finances in Simsbury, which will allow the town to address the climate crisis issues.
- Deborah Bishop, resident of 126 Hopmeadow Street at Talcott Acres, expressed concern about the high density of homes in the development and how it will impact Talcott Acres. She is concerned about the number of school aged children the development will bring into the community and the resulting impact on class sizes.
- Paul Ricciardelli, resident of 32 Northgate, spoke against this project as it will impact the character of Simsbury. Residents of the town live here because of the space and school systems. He has lived in other towns in the state, including Southington and New Britain, and experienced the negative impact that development had on those communities.
- Lori Bokyo, resident of 15 Oakhurst Road, commented that if just over 2 residents on average occupy the 580 properties, this will result in a 5% increase in town population, which is a large increase at once and the town has already experienced growth from other rental developments. She noted that the governing bodies represent the residents of the town and as such, the Commission should reject this application. She also encouraged the Zoning Commission to limit the number of stories on buildings for all future projects.
- Rob Serio, resident of 14 Rocklyn Drive, expressed concern about the development and inquired if there are plans for a visual buffer to block the view of the development from the street. He is concerned about the influx of people this will bring into town and the impact this will have on town resources, including schools, police, and fire. He inquired if there was a financial analysis

completed for this project to ensure taxes do not need to be raised to cover revenue shortfall.

- Charlie Goetz, resident of 72 East Weatogue Street, commented that the town has leverage if the commercial aspect of phase 1 is not complete. He commented that this application should not be approved until the first phase is complete. He questioned the school analysis provided and inquired if there has been a full fiscal analysis completed. He noted that the town budget last year was \$115 million dollars. There are 25,000 town residents, which equates to \$4,600 spent per person on a resident in Simsbury. There are 9,500 households in town, which equates to \$12,100 spent per household. This development proposes 580 residences which represents \$4 million in overall contribution. The development will result in a \$4 million shortfall in perpetuity. He urged the Commission to ensure a full fiscal review is completed prior to approving this project.
- Susan Salina, resident of 33 Alder Road, addressed the Commission and is the former chair of the Board of Education. She noted that similar developments have come in over the past few years, which have had negative impacts on the schools. Latimer Lane School was not able to handle the volume of students from the north site and the students needed to be re-districted to Central School. Neil Sullivan has shared numbers on the impacts these developments have on the school system, noting that the developer figures are often too conservative. She also noted the town has seen significant growth since the Hartford Insurance Company was active, which needs to be considered.
- Paul McKenna, resident of 16 Pine Glen Road, is concerned with the cost effectiveness of this project and believes that there is more information needed before the Commission can decide.
- Pat Weisbrich, resident of 3 Lenora Drive, expressed concern that this is another cookie cutter development that is all rental units. She expressed concern that this is being driven by the 8-30g regulation, while these rentals will not be affordable housing and will benefit the developer and not the Town of Simsbury. She noted that there are existing condominiums, PUDS and rentals in town that are not counted toward the 4.8% affordable housing that the State has calculated, as there is not a 40-year requirement in the deed.
- Steve Bovee, resident of 1 Simscroft Place, chose to live in Simsbury as it is a small neighborly town. Since he has moved here, there have been quite a few changes because of new buildings and residences. He noted that Hopmeadow Street is not safe with the current level of traffic. He is also concerned with the impact this development will have on crime. He inquired if the Commission could review if there is a correlation with an increase in police calls because of these developments. He is concerned that this will have a negative environmental impact as there are currently animals living in this site.

- Mary Turner, resident of 11 Barnard Drive, moved to town from Bristol because of the school systems. She is concerned that there has not been research completed on the revenue and costs associated with this development. This development will increase the costs required for town police, fire, schools, and social services. She noted that taxes have already significantly increased and will increase substantially more if this project is approved.
- Al Weisbrich, resident of 3 Lenora Drive, commented that Commissioners are in a position that is more difficult as there is no longer room for error. He is concerned that the numbers provided are intended to be in favor of the developer and requested a third-party analysis be completed.
- Joleen Benedict, resident of The Ridge at Talcott Mountain, moved to Simsbury as a child. When she moved back to Simsbury, there was nowhere to live in Simsbury, and she moved in with her parents to take care of them. When they passed away, she was grateful that there was a place like the Ridge at Talcott Mountain to live so that she did not have to make a permanent housing decision while she was grieving. She loves that it is a safe community with wonderful neighbors who are not transient.
- Diana Moody, resident of 7 Elcy Way, asked the Commissioners to think toward the future and the impact this development will have on the quality of life within the town.
- Jesse Schofield, resident of 9 Fairview Street, said that housing is economic development, but he does wish this was more mixed use. He noted that when he returned to Simsbury recently, it was difficult to find a house. He expressed that there are not many options for those within town to downsize, resulting in low housing inventory. As such, he supports this development as it provides an alternate housing option. He does not believe that these will be inexpensive rentals and thus will not result in an influx of people from outside the community. He believes that Simsbury can handle more students in school system. He expressed concerns about how The Silverman Group plans on constructing the single-family homes as there was a similar development in town that experienced issues.
- Gerard Toner, resident of 26 Ridge Road, commented that this development will negatively impact the quality of life within town and will impact the town's ability to manage town resources, including the school system, emergency services, and social services.
- Chairman Elliott recommended that the public hearing be continued until the next regular meeting of the Commission on January 3, 2023.
- Ms. Leary inquired about the costs of the rental units for each type of residence within the development. She also inquired whether there is affordable housing and housing that complies with ADA requirements other than the single-family

units. She also inquired if there is an opportunity for supportive living. She expressed concerns on the impact this development will have on the schools, traffic, fire, emergency, and social services in town.

- Holden Sabato, Director at The Silverman Group, responded that 90% of the residences will be market-based pricing. He provided the following rental prices:
  - 1-bedroom apartment - ~\$1,600/month
  - 2-bedroom apartment - ~\$2,100/month
  - Duplex residence - ~\$3,500/month
  - Single family residence will average ~\$5,000/month
- Mr. Donohue noted that the plan calls for 10% affordable housing.
- Ms. Crosskey responded that the apartments have elevators and 10% will be designated adapted units, so that those units can be adapted to support specific special needs of the residents. The remainder of the apartments also have a level of accessibility. The doorways are 36 inches wide throughout, which is the handicap code requirement.
- Mr. Donohue commented that he will prepare a response for supportive living that will be provided prior to the next meeting of the Commission.
- Mr. Braz inquired how the developer decided on 580 units as opposed to a small number. Mr. Sabato responded that the development is the same density of units per acre as the north site. Mr. Donohue noted that the site can support that number based on sewer capacity, traffic, and other analyses completed.
- Mr. Salls inquired about the nature of the clubhouse and whether a liquor permit will be required. Mr. Sabato responded that this is a private clubhouse with amenities for the residents and there will be no liquor permit required.
- Mr. Donohue noted that he will work to prepare responses to the comments and questions received at tonight's public hearing for the next meeting of the Commission on January 3, 2024.

**MOTION:** Mr. Madigan moved to continue the public hearing until the next regular meeting of the Zoning Commission on January 3, 2024 at the Simsbury Public Library. Ms. Leary seconded the motion. The motion carried. (6-0-0)

#### IV. ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION:** Without objection, Chairman Elliott moved to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

320	Cara Blackaby
321	Commission Clerk
322	