

**WETHERSFIELD PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
PUBLIC HEARING AND MEETING**

**December 15, 2015**

The Wethersfield Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing and meeting on Tuesday, December 15, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the Wethersfield Town Council Chambers located at Town Hall, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, Connecticut 06109.

**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Harley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**1.1 ROLL CALL & SEATING OF ALTERNATES (5 members required for a quorum):**

Clerk Roberts called the roll as follows:

Member Name	Present	Absent	Excused
Thomas Harley, Chairman	✓		
Antonio Margiotta, Vice Chairman	✓		
Richard Roberts, Clerk	✓		
James Hughes	✓		
George Oickle	✓		
Joseph Hammer			✓
Anthony Homicki	✓		
Thomas Dean	✓		
Ryan Allard	✓		
Leigh Standish (alternate)			✓
Yolanda Antoniak (alternate)	✓		

Also present were: Peter Gillespie, Town Planner/Economic Development Manager and Denise Bradley, Assistant Planner;

Members of the Public were present.

Chairman Harley noted at the time of roll call there were nine (9) members in attendance. Mr. Harley also explained how the meeting would be conducted.

**2. OLD BUSINESS:**

Commissioner Roberts made a motion to take Item 3.1 out of order to proceed first. Commissioner Homicki seconded the motion and the vote showed:

Aye: Harley, Margiotta, Roberts, Hughes, Oickle, Homicki, Dean, Allard and Antoniak.

Nay: None

Vote: 9-0.

The motion was approved by a vote of 9 to 0.

**3. NEW BUSINESS:**

**3.1 PUBLIC HEARING** APPLICATION NO. 1892-15-Z Michael Lindquist seeking a Special Permit in accordance with Sections 5.2 (Permitted Principal Uses) and 5.7 (Public Garages and Filling Stations) of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations for a Repairers License at 708 Silas Deane Highway. (Renewal)  
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Michael Lindquist, 4 Osborne Road Extension, Sandy Hook, CT was present representing his business at 708 Silas Deane Highway. The applicant noted that he is in the process of purchasing the business at 708 Silas Deane Highway (Cross Automotive). He noted that due to the transfer in ownership he is seeking a signoff from the Town of Wethersfield for his application to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to allow him to repair automobiles.

Chairman Harley noted that the request before the Planning and Zoning Commission was to renew the permit that is in place already with the current owner.

Mr. Lindquist noted that the permit through the DMV is not transferable between owners and a new application requires authorization from the Town.

Chairman Harley asked if the applicant proposed any changes to the approval already in place.

Mr. Lindquist responded that he was not requesting any changes.

Commissioner Oickle asked the applicant if he was considering any physical improvements to the property now or in the future.

Mr. Lindquist noted that the site is operational as it is and that he had no plans at this time to complete any improvements on the site aside from general maintenance and cleaning.

Commissioner Oickle noted that there were several conditions attached to the previous approval and he noted while on the site that the previous owner didn't seem to be meeting a couple of the conditions of approval. He noted for example the number of unregistered vehicles. He noted the condition that the number of motor vehicles on the premises not to exceed 8 and he noted about a dozen and a half.

Chairman Harley asked the applicant if he was familiar with the four original conditions.

The applicant responded that he was not familiar with them.

Chairman Harley noted the conditions of approval as follows:

1. Motor vehicles on the premises not to exceed eight.
2. No parking of unregistered motor vehicles.
3. No commercial parking.
4. No outside accumulation of unused tires.

Commissioner Oickle noted that the property only seemed to be meeting the condition regarding the accumulation of tires. He also asked about the existing condition of the pavement.

Chairman Harley asked if there were any other questions from the Commission.

Commissioner Roberts noted that if all the Planning and Zoning Commission is being asked is to approve the license and they have operational issues, the applicant can come back before the Commission to modify the conditions if necessary once he takes control of the property. Otherwise, until then it's an enforcement issue. He also noted that the Commission had recently seen another

application for redevelopment of the property and asked if that was off the table.

Denise Bradley noted that the Commission had seen a Pre Application Review for the property but a formal application was never filed.

Commissioner Hughes asked the applicant if he was applying to the DMV for a General Repairer's License, the same license the existing owner holds currently.

Mr. Lindquist noted that he was seeking the same permit with no changes.

Chairman Harley opened the hearing up to the public for comment.

There was no one from the public that wished to speak.

Chairman Harley then asked the Commission if there were any final comments or questions.

Commissioner Roberts made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Margiotta seconded the motion. The vote showed:

Aye: Harley, Margiotta, Roberts, Hughes, Oickle, Homicki, Dean, Allard and Antoniak.

Nay: None

Vote: 9-0.

The motion was approved by a vote of 9 to 0.

Chairman Harley asked if there was any final comments.

Commissioner Hughes noted that he agreed with Commissioner Roberts regarding how any existing issues should be handled, that he was comfortable with how the property currently operates and that he is in favor of the application.

Commissioner Hughes made a motion to approve APPLICATION NO. 1892-15-Z Michael Lindquist seeking a Special Permit in accordance with Sections 5.2 (Permitted Principal Uses) and 5.7 (Public Garages and Filling Stations) of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations for a Repairers License at 708 Silas Deane Highway. (Renewal), as submitted. Commissioner Margiotta seconded the motion. Chairman Harley asked if the motion included the four existing conditions. Commissioner Hughes responded that it did. The vote showed:

Aye: Harley, Margiotta, Roberts, Hughes, Oickle, Homicki, Dean, Allard and Antoniak.

Nay:

Vote: 9-0.

The motion was approved by a vote of 9 to 0.

**2.1 PUBLIC HEARING** APPLICATION NO.1889-15-Z Ridge Road Development Group LLC

seeking a resubdivision in accordance with subsection 143-20 of the Wethersfield Subdivision Regulations for the creation of one (1) new building lot at 295 Ridge Road.---CONTINUED FROM 12-1-15.

**2.2 PUBLIC HEARING** APPLICATION NO.1890-15-Z Ridge Road Development Group LLC seeking a Special Permit in accordance with Section 3.4 of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations to construct a 70 unit apartment building at 295 Ridge Road.---CONTINUED FROM 12-1-15.

Chairman Harley noted that the Commission would now go back to Items 2.1 and 2.2 which are continuation of public hearings for Application's 1889-15-Z and 1890-15-Z for the Ridge Road Development Group.

Chairman Harley asked if the applicant would have comments to offer the Commission.

Tom Arcari, principal with Quisenberry Arcari Architects 318 Main Street, Farmington, CT was present representing the applicant Ridge Road Development Group LLC. Pursuant to the presentation at the last meeting, they were presented with a number of specific issues to address as a result of public and Commission input. He noted that the applicant has since made a formal resubmission and intend to address more specifically some of the key issues in particular the property line and the site separation, the comparison of the project to the previous approval and how it relates architecturally in size and density, site line issues, and site analysis on a number of levels and addressing the issues of market study, number of school aged children the development will yield, comment on property values and rental rates.

Doug Ellis, Buck and Buck Engineers, Hartford, CT began the Powerpoint presentation for the Commission. He noted the existing duplex building which had been previously discussed would now be removed so the proposed property line has been adjusted. He noted that the proposal is less than the required two acre lot minimum but that there is a provision in the regulation that includes a provision that if an existing building is used for residential purposes, the two acre minimum does not apply. He noted that the original proposal was just about 1.5 acres and in the current configuration there is approximately 1.7 acres. He also discussed the reason for not including additional land area was to maintain the minimum required frontage for the parcel that is being created to the rear.

Commissioner Oickle asked Doug Ellis if he was asking the Commission to make a variance to the size of the condo site.

Mr. Ellis noted that this was done to provide for enough frontage for both lots and that there is a provision in the regulations that allows for the lot containing the existing building to be less than the two acres.

Commissioner Oickle asked why they were requesting a reduction in the lot size rather than a reduction in the frontage requirements.

Mr. Ellis responded that during the pre-application review meeting with the Commission informally a few months back and discussion with town staff more recently, that they felt this was the best proposal.

Commissioner Oickle inquired if the Condo Association was ok with the proposal.

Mr. Ellis noted that he did not know what the Condo Association's response was.

Tom Arcari, proceeded to discuss revisions to the landscape plans. He noted that the changes were small and included changes to the ground cover and that Ms. Barnes could answer any associated questions. He discussed the second issue they would address tonight which is comparison with the original assisted living project that was previously approved. He detailed the site plan showing an overlay of the existing plan and the previous plan. He noted that the original concept building was basically the same configuration, essentially the same size. He noted that the new proposal tucks the building in closer to the Ridge Road direction and oriented rectilinear to the property line.

Commissioner Margiotta asked if there was any concern regarding the left corner of the building and the

proximity of the brook.

Mr. Arcari noted that they have already gone before Wetlands, received approval and there is no impact. The new proposal is about 10' longer but it still has no impact on the adjacent wetlands areas.

Commissioner Margiotta asked if they were proposing a slab.

Mr. Arcari noted it would be slab on grade with a partial basement in the opposite leg of the building.

Mr. Arcari noted that the building that was previously approved was a three story assisted living building and showed the elevations. He noted there was very little breakup of the building. Generally, its two legged bar building with a very straight and tall façade. He then showed the Commission an overlay of the existing proposal. He noted that the proposed building is concealed almost entirely behind the approved condo building. The proposed roofline is lower but noted the two legs of the building are slightly longer. They have stepped the mass of the building down to address the comments from the neighbors. The original proposal had a very high, tall wall on that elevation. He described the height and scale of the other elevations. Mr. Arcari then showed the Commission a comparison of two similar views of the previously approved and existing application both demonstrating L shaped configuration and entry locations. The Commission was shown a 3 D rendering superimposed on the satellite image to show that the actual scale of the proposed building is in keeping with the directly adjacent housing complex. Both 3 story structure with porches and pitched roof. The proposed architecture is similar to adjacent architecture and they feel it is an improvement on the previously approved project and is more sensitive. Additionally, because it is architecturally more sensitive, they feel it will be a pleasant addition to the neighborhood and will have a positive effect on the community and property values.

Mr. Arcari addressed the issue of the property site lines and the preparation of site sections through numerous areas of the site. He demonstrated site sections taken in three different locations. He noted a great effort was made to orient the proposed building the same way the other building was in order to push as much of the building away from the neighborhood.

Commissioner Roberts asked if the respective locations of the house and the tree proportionate.

Mr. Arcari responded that they are noted that the data was taken off the survey and that he had additional photographs to show. He noted that care was taken to make sure that not only were the distances appropriate and that the gradients were appropriate. To give the Commission a sense of what the line of sight would look like from different angles they took photographs and superimposed the proposed building. He noted that visibly the impact is very low and he felt like this exercise was a good recommendation because from their perspective it clearly demonstrates architecturally not only is the building in keeping with the style and character of the residences and that the visual impact is relatively small and pleasant and complimentary.

Diane Barnes, discussed the species and height of buffer plantings along the property line and parking area. She noted that in addition to the evergreens, there will be a number of shade trees in the parking area that will add screening for the neighbors.

Donald Poland, of Goman York, East Hartford, CT discussed the testimony he made at the last meeting as it pertained to value and noted an MIT study was submitted to the Commission for review. He was also asked about the market analysis which was submitted for review and concerns related to the projection in the number of school aged children. He noted he testified in regard to the Village Apartments which neighbor this property with 294 units that generate 18 school aged kids. As a follow up they submitted a short document that went through a study done by Rutgers University and published in 2006 entitled *Residential Multipliers* which analyzed new housing construction from 1990-2000 and then the total number of persons, children and school aged children generated over those ten years. Mr. Poland noted that he used the demographic multipliers from Rutgers. The multipliers for Connecticut found that it is not until 5 bedrooms on a single family home that you see more than one child. It also finds that single family units tend to provide more persons and school aged children than multi family units. Generally, as the value of housing increases, owner occupied or rental, the number of persons per unit and number of school aged children tends to decrease. He also noted there is little difference

between public school aged children generated by 1 and 2 bedroom units. 3 bedroom units start generating significant numbers of school aged children. He discussed a table which demonstrated a breakdown in the Rutgers analysis.

Commissioner Margiotta asked Mr. Poland if he had conducted an analysis of Wethersfield itself.

Mr. Poland noted that he had by taking the total number of housing units, recognizing that 77.9% are single family, and took the total number of school children enrolled in the school system and divide them you get 0.32 across the total housing units meaning approximately 1/3 of the housing units are producing school aged children. He then applied the demographic multipliers to the proposed development using a rental range from \$850-\$1450 for a one bedroom and \$1300-\$1800 for a two bedroom. The 30, 1-bedroom units will generate a total of 1.86 students and the 40, 2-bedroom units will generate approximately 7.2 students.

Commissioner Roberts noted the current residential development in Rocky Hill and others in the area and asked Mr. Poland if he had any concern that the same overbuilding in the market that occurred with the age restricted and assisted living may now occur with apartments.

Mr. Poland responded that he is continually concerned with that. He said it is hard to see peaks and valleys and you don't always know when you are on the edge of a bust. He noted that if you compare the CT market, the Hartford market to other places, we overbuilt in the 80's and when the market went bust it hurt. Since then developers tend not to build on spec., they tend to not start construction until they have contracts and the total housing production is so low compared to the past. He concluded that he doesn't feel we are currently in a mode of overbuilding.

Tom Arcari described some of the interior finishes.

Commissioner Homicki asked if there would be second story porches.

Mr. Arcari responded that there would be approximately 6' X 12'.

Commissioner Homicki asked if there would be washer and dryer hookups.

Mr. Arcari responded that there would be.

Commissioner Homicki asked if he could respond to Town Engineer Mike Turner's comments regarding the pool and pool house location and whether a retaining wall or other site improvements may be required.

Peter Gillespie noted that Mike Turner had just issued this memo dated December 15, 2015 and there were seven issue he brought up that could be attached as conditions of approval.

Commissioner Dean indicated that he had familiarized himself with the record by observing the video of the December 1, 2015 meeting. He discussed the issue of declining property values which in his experience over 40 years of real estate development and advocacy has proven that facilities such as group homes and multi-family developments don't have any significant impact on adjoining property values. He hasn't seen any data in this hearing that would conflict with that assessment. Mr. Dean brought up issues of building sustainability, economic sustainability, and environmental sustainability. He discussed impervious materials related to the building and parking lot footprint. He asked if consideration was given to issues of using more pervious materials particularly on the parking lot.

Tom Arcari responded that certainly in the walks and in the entrance areas we talked about using pervious pavement but pervious pavement doesn't necessarily meet the requirements for the drainage so it would be complimentary and they would take it into account. Their approach is to collect and treat the water and it helps to ensure the issue of water runoff on adjacent properties. There is not enough area on the site to do a rain garden.

Doug Ellis discussed the existing drainage and the proposed design noting that there is no direct runoff other than what falls outside the curbs that would head towards the wetlands or towards the neighbors.

They are collecting existing drainage that sheets off towards the neighbors and collecting it in the catch basins directing it through a storm septor.

Commissioner Dean asked if this was based on calculations of ten year storms.

Doug Ellis responded that it was.

Commissioner Dean noted that was the standard but noted concern regarding what might be experienced over the next century climatically and he doesn't know what the useful life of the facility is but wondered if ten year storm calculations were enough with 20 and 30 year storms occurring more frequently. He asked if that was taken into consideration.

Doug Ellis responded that in general with storm water design it is easier to knock down the less frequent more intense storm. The overall design of the site and parking allows for any extra drainage to fall on the parking lot and be kept in the storm water collection system instead of being discharged directly towards the neighbors or the wetlands. He noted that there is extra capacity in the storm water storage system.

Commissioner Margiotta noted that he had looked at the drainage design and felt comfortable that it was adequate but asked about the brook that crossed through the parking lot that was closed off with a 42" pipe being able to convey a 100 year storm.

Doug Ellis noted that they are not proposing to do anything to that 42" pipe and that they are taking existing drainage that discharges to it now and sending it through their system. They are lessening the amount of drainage that gets to that pipe.

Commissioner Margiotta asked if there is an easement in place.

Doug Ellis responded that there is no existing easement.

Commissioner Dean asked about the level of insulation being proposed in the structure.

Tom Arcari noted the high performing envelope of the building exceeds the energy code requirement of 21 with the addition of continuous exterior insulation. He noted that the exact assembly of insulation hasn't been decided on. He detailed several potential assemblies to be used.

Commissioner Dean noted the amount of roofline exposure at the southern extension and asked if any thought was given to providing solar panels for that area.

Tom Arcari noted that it was not a part of their formal submission however they would take it into consideration.

Commissioner Dean noted that the proposed siding is a combination of stone and vinyl siding. He asked about the architectural rating of the siding and what its useful life is.

Tom Arcari responded that they propose the use of a Mastic product which is a thick cased wood. It is a high grade residential grade. He noted in this type of project it is a good product because it is easy to clean, maintain and it has a long life. He also noted it is detailed in a way that you can't tell it's a builders product. He then showed the Commission a sample of the product.

Commissioner Dean asked if that assembly is durable in hurricane type winds as opposed to other siding of façade treatment.

Tom Arcari responded no, that ultimately the protection and durability of the building is the sheathing behind but the benefit to the vinyl is it is easy to remove and repair.

Commissioner Dean asked about the function of the proposed office.

Tom Arcari responded that the office provides the opportunity to have a management person on site.

Chairman Harley noted that the Commission is in receipt of a letter from a lawyer representing the condo association concerning the property division. He asked if the applicant had seen the letter.

Tom Arcari responded that he was aware of the issue.

Chairman Harley asked him to speak to the issue and to help him understand what would happen in ten years if the market went soft. He asked about the applicant's ability to go for income assistance, whether it can ever get to income assistance and what safe guards we have that this stays a market rate apartment complex.

Tom Arcari noted that he would speak to the legal issue first. It is their attorney's perspective that it is clear that the language in the deed of the property allows them to remove land to provide this development. The attorney representing the condo association disagrees and feels that they need a vote of their members to allow that. The applicant emphasized that their position is that this is not the case but he can't talk about the particulars of the discussions going on between the parties in this matter.

Commissioner Oickle asked if this needed to be resolved before a decision could be made.

Commissioner Roberts responded that the issue didn't need to be resolved first and in fact isn't the Commission's problem. The Planning and Zoning Commission doesn't decide title and is not going to review condo documents and doesn't need to wait for the resolution of this civil matter.

Town Planner Peter Gillespie noted his question regarding the applicant's rights to apply for the land use approvals. The Town Attorney looked at the purchase agreement and felt the applicant had permissions to apply for the site improvements they have proposed. The issues between the condo association and the applicant will need to be worked out but should not prohibit the consideration of this application.

Tom Arcari noted that the target is a market rate facility that they believe they can meet. There is no subsidy contributing to the financing of the project. There is also no mandate to have any subsidized units at this site. Any potential renter will have to go through a screening to assure that they can meet the rent levels. Travelling vouchers like Section 8 etc. can look to take rent at any housing complex for rent in the entire community. He noted again that this is a market rate non-subsidized project.

Commissioner Oickle asked these rents would permit a Section 8 tenant.

Tom Arcari noted that he cannot describe the particulars or limitations of the voucher but noted that generally it picks up the balance of the rent that the tenant can't pay. The tenant is responsible for paying a third of their net income but he doesn't know other details. The goal of the facility is to be a market rate facility.

Donald Poland noted that he looked up the rental limits within the State of Connecticut. For a 1 bedroom the maximum for a voucher is just over \$1100 which is under their lowest end projection of \$1150 but the target is \$1300. The 2 bedroom maximum is \$1400 which is also below the lowest end estimate of \$1450. The project is above the limits of the State voucher program.

Tom Arcari noted that their presentation was complete.

Chairman Harley opened the meeting for public comment.

Gerhard Merkle 225 Ridge Road discussed his concern regarding impacts to the characteristics of the neighborhood. He noted his concern regarding impacts to surrounding property values.

Nancy Howie 15 Tollgate Road asked the Commission and the developer to consider their own response if faced with having the equivalent of a Residence Inn adjacent to their own home. She noted her concern regarding transit rental properties.

Benjamin Maynard 44 Tollgate Road discussed property values, traffic and sight line issues.

Lauren Deluca 269 Ridge Road discussed the need for revitalization in the neighborhood but not in the way the developer is proposing. She noted concern regarding long term maintenance of the development and neighboring property values.

Shaun Rugar 269 Ridge Road discussed concerns regarding traffic impact.

Cleese Sullivan 58 Oakdale Street discussed concern regarding traffic, noise issues and the scale of the development.

Mike Bellobunono 265 Ridge Road noted concern regarding the size and scope of the project related to the size of the property.

Diane Deluca 223 Ridge Road wanted the Commission to ask themselves if they would be okay if it was their house with the proposed increase in traffic passing every day. She noted concern with traffic, lights, number of potential residents, the lease terms and decrease in property values. She asked the Commission to think if this is something that they would want in their neighborhood.

Thomas Mazarella 600 Wolcott Hill Road noted he felt the project does not belong on Ridge Road. He noted concern with the scale, the potential number of children and parking.

Commissioner Margiotta asked about the applicability of Section 3.4 of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations and asked the applicant to speak to issues of common open space.

Doug Ellis gave the Commission an overview of the common open space and noted that they met the 50%.

Commission Margiotta asked the applicant to discuss the construction schedule.

Tom Arcari noted that work would generally take place 7:30 AM – 3:30 PM M-F with the potential for working Saturdays.

Commissioner Margiotta inquired about proposed site lighting and adherence to Dark Sky initiatives.

Tom Arcari noted that all light fixtures are Dark Skies compliant with LED focused streams. A photometric plan was submitted.

Commissioner Margiotta asked the applicant if any blasting was proposed.

Tom Arcari responded that it was not.

Commissioner Oickle asked if all staff issues had been addressed.

Peter Gillespie responded that they had not been. He noted several comments from the Planning Department, Engineering Department and Fire Marshal's Office needing to be addressed.

Commissioner Allard asked whether the dumpster proposed will be mechanical.

Tom Arcari responded that the pad would support a number of dumpster options but it will not necessarily be mechanical.

Commissioner Homicki asked where the mechanicals were located.

Tom Arcari noted that aside from the meters, the mechanicals would all be located inside the units.

Chairman Harley noted a few comments that he felt needed more information and he didn't come up with anything specific.

Commissioner Roberts noted that one of the components of this application is a subdivision application. The correspondence indicated that the surveyor discovered it was a free cut so the applicant doesn't need

subdivision approval. He asked the applicant if that was accurate.

Doug Ellis responded that was what the surveyor indicated. A brief discussion ensued regarding the need for subdivision approval.

Commissioner Roberts asked about the satisfaction of open space requirements.

Doug Ellis noted that 65% of the site is open space, far in excess of the 25% requirement.

A discussion ensued regarding the waiver for the landscape buffer requirement.

Commissioner Roberts discussed the issue of lot lines and the internal property lines vs. an actual perimeter property line.

Doug Ellis noted the internal property line and setbacks proposed.

Commissioner Roberts felt more comfortable with the treatment of an internal property line when that was Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the same projects.

Chairman Harley asked Peter Gillespie to speak to the establishment of an SRD and the need for approval of a new Master Plan.

Commissioner Roberts described the chronology of amendments the SRD regulations.

Peter Gillespie also discussed amendments made to the SRD Zone and how that impacts this proposal.

Chairman Harley called for last comments from the public.

Nancy Howie 15 Tollgate Road discussed the developers comparison of The Villages on the Berlin Turnpike and noise associated with trash removal at the Stop & Shop plaza.

Commissioner Hughes made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Oickle seconded the motion. The vote showed:

Aye: Harley, Margiotta, Roberts, Hughes, Oickle, Homicki, Dean, Allard and Antoniak.

Nay: None

Vote: 9-0.

The motion was approved by a vote of 9 to 0.

Chairman Harley asked if Commissioner Dean and Commissioner Homicki had familiarized themselves with the record and felt comfortable participating. Commissioner Dean and Commissioner Homicki both responded that they were.

Chairman Harley noted that he had heard from the applicant that they will withdraw APPLICATION NO.1889-15-Z Ridge Road Development Group LLC seeking a resubdivision in accordance with subsection 143-20 of the Wethersfield Subdivision Regulations for the creation of one (1) new building lot, because it is not required. Discussion regarding APPLICATION NO.1890-15-Z Ridge Road Development Group LLC seeking a Special Permit in accordance with Section 3.4 of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations to construct a 70 unit apartment building at 295 Ridge Road.

Commissioner Homicki mentioned the town planner having various outstanding issues on at least a dozen concerns and felt that the Commission wasn't ready to vote.

Peter Gillespie noted that he didn't feel like there were anything substantial with staff comments that

couldn't be addressed as conditions of approval. He added that a lot of them were technical and can be handled by staff and that it shouldn't prevent the Commission from voting.

Commissioner Oickle asked for clarification regarding the subdivision application.

Chairman Harley noted that the application was not really required because it is not a subdivision. The applicant will withdraw the application regardless of what goes on.

Chairman Harley noted that the Commission had approved the SRD and a Special Permit Master Plan previously. The building is similar in footprint, similar in size. He struggled with the use of the facility being similar and noted it was clearly a different use.

Commissioner Allard noted that his struggle with the development is not with the engineering. He felt the engineering and design seem sound. He mentioned trying to compare what would be put in to the surrounding area. He doesn't think traffic north of the development will be as much as south because he feels everybody is going to go down Nott Street and take 15 in one direction or another. He said he thinks the drainage seems fine and wouldn't contest it even though it's easy to. In terms of what's going in; is the Commission just trying to maximize the size of the building that's going in to this location. The original discussions of this area are seemingly smaller or at least different use development. He noted he was trying to get an idea about whether this is the right size for this area, for this neighborhood. He compared the proposal to a development in West Hartford.

Commissioner Margiotta noted that the property was designated a SRD Zonig district almost ten years ago and as such asked if the site was capable of accommodating an increased building. He felt it met the requirements of Section 3.4. He noted the previous residential approvals. He is in favor of the application.

Chairman Harley noted that the Commission prefers to act upon a motion that is positive and asked about things that have to be addressed. Peter Gillespie noted Mike Turner's December 15, 2015 memorandum which lists very specifically ten of the conditions. In addition to the ten, Mr. Gillespie suggested adding a note about the gap in the sidewalk plan to be addressed, a parking and driveway access agreement and easement for the condos to access their rear parking area and the landscape buffer waiver.

Commissioner Margiotta made a motion to approve APPLICATION NO.1890-15-Z Ridge Road Development Group LLC seeking a Special Permit in accordance with Section 3.4 of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations to construct a 70 unit apartment building at 295 Ridge Road with conditions as follows:

1. Confirm hydrant and Siamese connection locations with Fire Marshal
2. Confirm capacity of water and sanitary sewer by MDC
3. Fire marshal should confirm in existing onsite hydrant should be reconnected to new 8 inch water Service.
4. Extend a yard drain along south of building- can't expect a graded swale to carry surface water over 200 feet- This item was discussed with Doug Ellis and can be added if needed during construction.
5. Add precast concrete curb stops where conventional parking spaces abut sidewalk without a snow shelf
6. Provide details on pool construction, depth, utilities etc. Unsure how this can be constructed in such close proximity to wetlands without grading into the wetlands.
7. Specify ground cover plantings for proposed 2:1 slopes
8. Add details to provide ADA tactile plates; indicate same on site plan where required.
9. Add lighting plan including photometric- Provide details of proposed site lights (must be full cutoff)
10. Add TPZ Approval signature blocks
11. There shall be no gap in the sidewalk plan as discussed.
12. A parking and driveway access agreement and easement shall be submitted.
13. A landscape waiver in accordance with Section 7.4 of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations shall be granted.

Commissioner Homicki seconded the motion.

Commissioner Oickle noted that he would be voting against the application for many of the reasons that were expressed in the audience by people of that neighborhood. Although he purchased his home fifty years ago and as part of that made sure there weren't any properties around subject to subdivision and he stayed up on a hill to avoid floodable areas. He feels that the proposal is overwhelming for the neighborhood. He noted that a discussion about a reduction in the number of units did not take place. He thinks it may be a little too much in size and overwhelming for that neighborhood. He noted proximity to the cell phone tower, shopping center and homes in the neighborhood. Commissioner Oickle felt that when he voted for the SRD that it simply meant that the condos were there and also there'd be some kind of smaller, less intense development. He noted a comment made likening the development to a hotel and he agreed that it looks that way in many respects. He noted the aesthetics proposed were quite good. He also didn't like that the applicant was requesting the two waivers and that they could be accommodated.

Commissioner Roberts noted that he didn't read the regulations as allowing the Commission to approve the application with a lot that is going to be under two acres and cited from Section 3.4 of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations. There is no existing building that is going to be converted for housing. The only existing building to remain is already being used for housing. The site plan submitted doesn't meet the site plan requirements for the minimum front and rear yards because he feels that it wasn't the intent of the regulation that properties, while within the same zone, but under separate ownership under separate lots constitutes internal property lines. Commissioner Roberts noted single family residential is the dominant theme of that neighborhood. He noted the outstanding testimony and presentation of the applicant. He questioned when the Commission is looking at whether a particular proposed land use is consistent with the area or the neighborhood, how do we define what the area or the neighborhood is. There is the big old building in the front, the dilapidated buildings in the rear, The Village, AHEPA and Stop & Shop. He noted his concern with that level of what constitutes the neighborhood, what is compatible and so forth. Move to the other part of town, would you consider anything in Hartford Avenue to be compatible if it was consistent with the Shop Rite Plaza just because it was in the same general area these people can see it, it's a transition area. He asked if State Street and Upper Main Street is whatever happens to be compatible with DMV and the State surplus junkyard and is that how you define a neighborhood. Mr. Roberts questioned if the Town Garage was how Broad Street was defined. When looking at what is compatible with the neighborhood you have to look at the uses that are probably going to be most directly and intimately effected by a project. He noted that in this case, while the proposal is in the SRD, he felt the 70 unit apartment building is not compatible with the general tenor of the single family residential district. He noted the historical approvals on the property. He discussed the reason for his vote in support of the previous application for assisted living.

Commissioner Homicki noted that in his time on the Commission he felt this was one of the most difficult petitions since he's been on the board. He discussed the process of approving the Plan of Conservation and Development and conversations had during the hearings discussing parcels such as this. He noted looking at the credentials of the applicant's team. He stated that most of the housing projects in Connecticut are being subsidized and discussed the possibility of this property being the subject of such type of application. He noted the quality and integrity in the submission, his satisfaction with the applicant handling his questions and that he is in favor of the application.

Commissioner Dean stated that there are certainly aspects of what's been proposed that he would rather be seen done differently but that the Commission has created the situation where this developer has presented an application that seems to be within the scope of what this particular zone was created to do.

He respects the opinions in dissent of that position but he thinks he has to lean towards the way this has been interpreted by staff because they have to deal with this every day providing interpretations to other people and developers. When there is a legitimate question he would tend to come down in favor of how the staff are interpreting it absent of bias or complete wrongheadedness or absence of following the law which doesn't seem to be applicable here. He noted therefore absent of those kinds of things he would tend to think that they need to follow the application in view of how the staff has presented the issues. There are aspects he disagrees with. With this many units he would much rather see it performed with a building on a smaller footprint, possibly a large square instead of a long drawn out building. Nonetheless, this is what is before them and it seems to be a well thought out conception. The building structure is contemporary, standards from engineering and architecture and energy efficiency have been applied in its configuration. It does not appear to be a development which will automatically deteriorate over a few years' time. Absent any credible evidence to the contrary he feels like they need to take what the experts have presented, particularly Mr. Poland's testimony. He stated that overall it is a fairly sensitive and well thought out development for the setting.

Commissioner Allard stated that he agreed that home prices would not go down because there is enough evidence to suggest that. He also agreed that the design and character of the building is as top notch as they could hope for. He noted that the only thing is that the people who are there now may not want it so they move out and somebody else who doesn't mind this development moves in. So the price of the home doesn't go down but those homeowners might not want to stay there. He discussed taking a lot of engineering evidence into account and everything seems on the up and up according to what the regulations are stipulating but the one that kind of sticks with us throughout is whenever a proposal comes before the Commission the question is "Does this match the neighborhood, the intensity of use, scale and character?". He went on to note that the character is a match but the intensity of use and the scale of the building we are allowed to say that it doesn't match and that he would be voting against the proposal.

Commissioner Oickle discussed the town having very restrictive size sites. Those sites should go to more expensive condos or elderly housing or something along that line.

Commissioner Hughes noted his respect for his fellow Commissioners, the tremendous amount of information provided by the developer and respect for the citizens in town. He went on to discuss Mr. Poland's testimony being compelling. He discussed looking at many different uses for this property and noted that the economies of scale on this, assisted living etc., need to be a more sizable project to be profitable. He discussed the rental rates and viewing this application as an opportunity for Wethersfield. Bring the people here to live and enjoy our community and then they find out what Wethersfield is about and maybe they will stay for a long period of time or buy a house in the future. He noted that all the sites left in town are hard to build on and if this application is knocked down in size, the economies of scale go down and they quality of the product and price point go down. He noted that he is in favor of the application.

Chairman Harley acknowledged that this is about as high a quality a product that he has seen and that he appreciated the public's civility as they addressed this. He stated that he had been leaning in a positive direction and he heard more good information during the process but that he was so close to 50-50 that Commissioner Roberts' discussion and some of the public's testimony about whether he would want it in his backyard, that he would prefer it not be there if he was living there. He discussed defining the neighborhood not as being the Berlin Turnpike and Maple Avenue but Ridge Road and his finding that this is not comparable to the other properties on Ridge Road. He noted leaning against the application

for that one reason because he feels Wethersfield could use this. He questioned whether this development was right in this area, whether they wanted more congregate housing, multi-family housing in the Ridge Road area and noted that nothing else in the neighborhood, except for the condo building next to it, is multi-family.

Commissioner Antoniak discussed struggling with her position on the application but in listening to so many of the property owners and the presentation she felt that her gut tells her that she's opposed to the project. She is opposed because it would be a lot of density and uncertain impacts it will have on the neighborhood. In thinking about her backyard, she noted this would not be something that she would want because of the risk. She noted that she wasn't certain what would happen in 5 years, 10 years, 15 years but that some of the residents will be there. She questioned what would happen if they do subsidize, if there would be full use of the 77 units and noted her opposition to the application.

Commissioner Homicki noted living on Cumberland Avenue during the CREC school construction and what a success it has been for the neighborhood.

Chairman Harley noted there was a motion and second. The vote showed:

Aye: Margiotta, Hughes, Homicki and Dean.

Nay: Harley, Roberts, Oickle, Allard and Antoniak.

Vote: 4-5.

The motion was denied by a vote of 4 to 5.

#### **4. OTHER BUSINESS:**

There was no other business discussed that this meeting.

**5. MINUTES** – The minutes of the December 1, 2015 meeting were not available.

**6. STAFF REPORTS** – No staff reports were given.

#### **7. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON GENERAL MATTERS OF PLANNING AND ZONING:**

There were no public comments made at this meeting regarding general matters of planning and zoning.

#### **8. CORRESPONDENCE:**

There were no items of correspondence discussed at this meeting.

#### **9. PENDING APPLICATIONS TO BE HEARD AT FUTURE MEETINGS:**

**9.1 PUBLIC HEARING APPLICATION NO. 1884-15-Z CCC Construction c/o Frank DiBacco** seeking a subdivision in accordance with subsection 143 of the Wethersfield Subdivision Regulations for the creation of twenty two (22) building lots at the Terminus of Old Reservoir Road, easterly of Back Lane and northerly of Westmont Road (Parcels 043011 & 042016).

**9.2 PUBLIC HEARING APPLICATION NO. 1891-15-Z CCC Construction c/o Frank DiBacco** seeking a Special Permit in accordance with Section 3.3 of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations for the creation of twenty

two (22) building lots in the AAOS Zone on Back Lane at the Terminus of Old Reservoir Road, easterly of Back Lane and northerly of Westmont Road (Parcels 043011 & 042016).

**10. ADJOURNMENT:**

**Motion:** Commissioner motioned to adjourn the meeting at 11:10 pm.

**Second:** Commissioner seconded the motion.

The vote showed:

**Aye:** Harley, Margiotta, Roberts, Hughes, Oickle, Homicki, Dean, Allard and Antoniak.

**Nay:**

**Vote:** 9-0.

The motion was approved by a vote of 9 to 0.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Denise Bradley, Acting Recording Secretary