

**Approved
Minutes
Hartford Planning Commission
April 25, 2022**

**THIS MEETING WAS CONDUCTED IN COMPLIANCE WITH
THE VERMONT OPEN MEETING LAW
WITH ELECTRONIC PARTICIPATION**

Present: John Reid, Chair, Bruce Riddle, Vice Chair, Toby Dayman, Robin Adair Logan, Dillon Bianchi, John Heath, Colin Butler, Kim Souza, Selectboard Liaison, Lori Hirshfield, Planning and Development Director, and Jo-Ann Ells, Zoning Administrator

Absent: None

John Reid read the Remote Meeting Script and took a roll call.

Administrative Matters

1. Minutes

Bruce Riddle moved to approve the minutes of March 21, 2022, with several changes. Robin Adair Logan seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

2. Administrative Permits

John Reid noted that administrative permits had been issued for deck replacements and a new shed at Snow Village condominiums on Williams Lane in Quechee.

Jo-Ann Ells noted that an administrative permit had been issued to allow the former Greene's Propane building on Maple Street to be used as office/retail space.

3. Availability for the next Public Hearing (May 23, 2022)

With the exception of Toby Dayman who was uncertain, all Commissioners confirmed they were available for the hearing.

4. Public comment

None

Public Hearing

John Reid opened the Public Hearing, explained the hearing process, and administered the oath. He noted that he expected a lot of public comment and requested that comments be kept brief. He reminded people to mute their microphones when not speaking. He

noted that Interested parties would be given the opportunity to speak before the general public. Lori Hirshfield reviewed the definition of Interested party. John Reid reviewed the interested party rule, and asked that people state their name and address.

1. Application #22-10 by Gary Schall and Kimiko Kawakami Schall (owners/applicants) for approval of the subdivision of lot 13-0041-002 into two lots, 1660 Bliss Road, Hartford, in a FC zoning district, and Rural Lands and Wildlife Connector Overlay districts.

Gary Schall was present.

Jo-Ann Ells gave an overview of the application.

Gary Schall asked that Finding #8 be amended.

Toby Dayman asked about a woods road. Gary Schall explained that there are a number of woods roads on the property which has been used as a wood lot and hill farm for some time.

Noting come confusion, Jo-Ann Ells confirmed that the footnote in Finding #12 will be clarified.

John Reid asked about the applicants' request for a waiver for several narrative items as noted in the draft Findings of Fact. Gary Schall said that the narrative was related to the development of a house site and that a house was not intended at this time. He noted he would come back for a subdivision amendment in the future if plans changed and for now, he plans to do sustainable forestry and agriculture.

There was no public comment.

Bruce Riddle moved to close the Public Hearing. Dillon Bianchi seconded, and the Public Hearing was closed.

Bruce Riddle moved to approve the application with the noted changes to the Findings of Fact. Dillon Bianchi seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

2. Application #22-12 by St. Paul's Episcopal Church (owner) and Twin Pines Housing Trust (applicant) for Preliminary approval of a Planned Development under section 260-47 of the Hartford Zoning Regulations on proposed lot 43-0074-001, 747 Hartford Avenue, in a VR-C zoning district.

Andrew Winter and Nate Stearns were present.

John Reid noted that there was a lot of information submitted. He thanked the public for their letters and said that it was helpful to have them before the Hearing. He noted that

the application was for a Planned Development and reviewed the six criteria that must be met.

The applicant reviewed an 18-page Power Point (see exhibit in the Findings of Fact for narrative).

Andrew Winter reviewed the following slides:

- 1) Introduction and request to leave the Public Hearing open if there are questions
- 2) Information about Twin Pines
- 3) St. Paul's Place, WRJ project overview
- 4) Planned Development criteria
- 5) Planned Development criteria #3
- 6) Planned Development criteria #5
- 7) Previous building elevation (flat roof)
- 8) Streetscape
- 9) Current elevation (shed dormer)
- 10) Height of the building
- 11) Setback from Hartford Ave.
- 12) Color palette
- 13) Planned Development criteria #6
- 14) Parkhurst- Lebanon, NH
- 15) FAQs

Nate Stearns reviewed the following slides:

- 16) Parking
- 17) Open Space
- 18) Project Team

John Reid asked if the applicant wanted to review the proposed landscaping.

Paul Simon reviewed the applicant's response to staff questions outlined in a memo from Jo-Ann Ells regarding landscaping and lighting. He noted that a change to the proposed gate from a single swing to a double swing might be needed.

It was noted that the applicant should focus on the exhibits related to the Planned Development.

John Reid noted that for criteria #5 and #6 Andrew Winter referred to "environments." He asked if he was referring to the physical building. He added that the Planning Commission has received letters regarding the impact on the area which needs to be addressed. He asked how the project improves the neighborhood environment.

Andrew Winter responded that fewer people would be camping out, which happened at the Parkhurst project in Lebanon, NH.

Noting the comment that residents would pay a portion of their income as rent, John Reid asked if residents would be employed. Andrew Winter explained that some residents would be employed, and others would pay through other means. Some residents may be disabled or elderly. He added that residents will need to meet the definition of chronically homeless to meet eligibility requirements to live there.

Nate Stearns gave a brief overview of traffic and parking needs.

John Reid questioned if the applicant had considered making some of the residential parking spaces available if all tenants do not have cars. Nate Stearns noted that they can only request a 50% reduction in parking.

Nate Stearns noted that the 18 parking spaces would be designated for the 18 units.

It was also noted that as a result of the project, St Paul's Church loses 8 parking spaces and that a separate application for shared parking with the Haven is being proposed.

Jo-Ann Ells observed that for the Planned Development the number of parking spaces and layout is reviewed and that details such as a request for reduced parking and shared parking will be reviewed under separate applications.

Toby Dayman asked for clarification regarding the easement showed on the plans by the "Hixon House." Nate Stearns explained it was for a retaining wall and walkway.

Bruce Riddle noted that the success of the project will be the ability of the applicant to operate the project as proposed and questioned what will happen if the model failed.

Andrew Winter responded that they will go back to the State and request permission to run the project as a typical affordable housing project.

Robin Adair Logan complimented the applicant on the plans including the new building design. She suggested that when trees are cut, they are left on the property or reused elsewhere and not burned. She added that she does not agree with the applicant's architectural historian consultant Brian Knight's assessment of the rectory building.

Andrew Winter noted that he is looking into the possibility of relocating the rectory structure.

John Heath said he is still concerned with the size/mass and height of the proposed building. He asked why the project will not work with 14 units (which is possible without a Planned Development).

Andrew Winter reviewed the expenses associated with operating the building including an annual audit. He noted that the site is large, the project will improve the area, and that the project will pay approximately \$20,000 in local taxes.

John Heath stated that he disagreed that the lot is large, noting that a portion is unusable. He expressed concern with the proposed density and lack of recreational areas. He stated that he did not think there was enough room on site for residents and guests. He said that there is a lot going on in the area especially with activity related to the food shelf at the Haven and that he is concerned with parking. He added that he also is concerned that the Commission has not seen the pending application by the Haven for a new shelter, that the proposed parking feels piecemeal, and that overflow parking could spill into the neighborhood.

Nate Stearns acknowledged that there is a lot going on with multiple projects. He stated that an application for shared parking between the Haven and St. Paul's Church has been submitted which provides 70+/- parking spaces.

Andrew Winter noted that there are areas for gathering and socializing are proposed outdoors on the patio and smoking shelter and indoors in common areas.

John Heath stated that the removal of the parsonage is a concern.

Colin Butler stated that it is hard to comment on the application without seeing the pending application by the Haven. He acknowledged it may not be fair to the applicant to consider implications of a pending application. He noted that the applicant is trying to do too much on a small space, questioned including the slope as part of the open space requirements, and noted the project may feel very crowded if built.

John Reid asked for comments from Interested Parties.

Marie Alvin (Demers Avenue) stated that she wanted to know what the view would be for the houses on Demers Avenue and asked that the plans show that view. John Reid requested that this information be provided.

Marie Alvin stated that she was concerned with the height of the proposed building and noted that the eight houses on Demers Avenue need to be considered as well as the village in general. She added that the height of the proposed building is out of character. John Reid referenced planned development criteria #5 and #6. Marie stated she had concerns with both.

Marie Alvin pointed out that the neighborhood that the Parkhurst project in Lebanon NH is in is very different. She added that she is concerned with the lack of green space.

Scott Neal introduced himself as the Priest at St. Paul's Church and resident of Hartford Village. He explained that one of the reasons he came to St. Paul's was their involvement with housing issues. He added that he often hears concerns with the lack of housing options. He noted that he supports the project.

Jess Bowen (Devin Street) expressed frustration that the project seems like a “done deal.” She stated that the area currently seems unsafe, voiced frustration with the applicant’s lack of concern for the neighbors and expressed concern with the lack of open space. She stated that she understands that St. Paul’s Church needs to sell the property to make money. She questioned the applicant’s statement that the project will add “life and activity” to the area.

Michelle Boleski (Hanover Street) stated that she agreed with Jess Bowen’s and Marie Alvin’s comments. She said she is concerned that current safety concerns are not being addressed today. She indicated that the Haven had increased their programming without the required permits and expressed concern with the potential lack of oversight by the town for this project as well. She stated that separate applications by Twin Pines and the Haven make it difficult to see the scope of the project, and expressed concern with parking and traffic, and questioned the extent of the traffic/parking study. She added that she is concerned with the ability of residents to get to work on nights/weekends when public transit does not run, the proximity of the project to the schools, and is disappointed with the lack of respect from Twin Pines, St. Paul’s Church and the Haven for the people who live in the neighborhood. She asked for a copy of the traffic/parking report.

Michael Redmond (Haven, executive director) stated that the Haven’s project will be presented soon. He voiced support for the application and noted he previously submitted a document to the Planning Commission with information regarding the Parkhurst project.

Kerry Heavisides (Worcester Ave.) noted that she and her husband Doug had submitted letters. She stated that they have a 13-year-old daughter. She explained that she wished she could be excited about the project, they are lifelong residents of town, and they believe in the applicant’s goal, but they are concerned given experiences that they have had that have scared them. She noted that they have called the police twice in the past two weeks regarding a person who was headed to the Haven and that they do not see how the project will decrease problems. She asked where safety falls in the review process.

Chase Levesque stated that she is trying to determine the town’s roll in addressing comments regarding safety. She asked if the School Board should be involved in the review and expressed confusion that the applicant conducted their own traffic study and not the town.

John Reid explained that the governance of the town is split between entities such as the Selectboard, Town Manager, Planning Commission, and Zoning Board of Adjustment. He noted that the Planning Commission is reviewing an application for an 18 unit planned development which must meet specific criteria. Lori Hirshfield added that the Planning Commission/Zoning Board of Adjustment review applications for development and that the Selectboard does not have a role in the review of development per State statute.

Chase Levesque asked if testimony is taken into consideration. Lori Hirshfield stated that testimony is considered, and decisions are based on the review criteria.

Tim Fariel (Worcester Ave.) suggested that the Police Department and Fire Department be consulted. John Reid confirmed that they are. Tim suggested that the impact on municipal services be considered and for the applicant to consider providing housing for the proposed population in mixed housing projects. He questioned the assurance that supportive services can/will remain in place.

Andrew Winter stated that this type of project allows Twin Pines to serve homeless individuals, and has had a positive experience with a similar project. Tim suggested any permit address continued supportive services. Andrew noted that contingency planning for the long term is part of their planning.

Jessica Pecora (Hartford Avenue) stated that she lives across the street from the Haven and is an employee there. She expressed support for the project and noted that the Haven has been a respectful neighbor and the project is a good opportunity to make a dent in the need for housing.

Marcy Bartlett (Hartford Ave.) pointed out that prior speakers who live in the neighborhood have real concerns with the project and that the project is in their backyard. She requested a copy of the incidents report from the Police Department. She stated that 14 units seems like a better option, voiced concern with the lack of recreational space, noted that the people in the neighborhood are the experts, and noted that 71 people were currently attending the meeting.

John Reid pointed out that the hearing had been in process for three hours. The Commission agreed to continue public comment until 10:00 p.m.

Leslie Black (Wilder Street) stated that she is a resident of Wilder and a member of St. Paul's Church. She noted that St. Paul's Church members voted 70-3 to sell property to Twin Pines not just for financial reasons but also to support housing. She noted that there have been discussions about the formation of a neighborhood safety committee. She expressed excitement and support for the project.

Heidi Duto (Christian Street) suggested that it be clarified that the project is for individuals and not families. She suggested that the Planning Commission has denied applications based on parking and asked how the first floor of the building is being used.

Andrew Winter stated that the first floor will include office space for Twin Pines and the Haven to meet with residents. He estimated that generally up to three staff members may be using the office space to meet with residents.

Heidi Duto questioned where these people will park. John Reid noted that parking will be considered in future applications. Heidi questioned the inclusion of the wooded bank as open space.

Harry Kendrick (Passumpsic Ave.) noted that he lives in Wilder and is a member of St. Paul's Church. He stated that he feels the project will do a lot of good to help the homeless and asked the Commission to look at the success of the Parkhurst project.

Linda Miller (Miller Road) stated that she does not think there is enough room on the lot for the project, that the height of the building is not in harmony with the neighborhood, and suggested the applicant consider removing the offices and reducing the height. She added that she will support 14 units.

Kim Souza (Hartford Village) stated that she was speaking as a resident of Hartford and not as a member of the Selectboard. She noted that there is potential funding for a Community Safety Review which would increase unarmed first responders and would strengthen the town's ability to address current safety concerns.

Susan Mullens (Loral Lane) stated that she felt the applicant has listened to the concerns from the meeting in February about the architectural style of the building. She stated that she believes Twin Pines and the Haven bring knowledge and concern to the issue of housing.

David Allen (Lauren Lane) asked that the Planning Commission consider the implications of not approving the application as well as approving it. He voiced his support for the project.

Margo Howland-Mastro (Wilder Street) stated that she feels the project has improved since it was heard in February, but feels the project is still a little too big. She commented that the height of the proposed building is higher than adjacent buildings and thinks a 2 or 2 ½ story building should be considered and that this might be achieved by shifting services elsewhere. She added that it is hard to visualize the impact without seeing the proposed Haven building.

Nikki Grimes (Gillette St.) stated she is conflicted about the project after listening to the four-hour meeting. She noted that she'd like information from the Lebanon Police regarding calls about Parkhurst.

There were no additional comments.

Bruce Riddle moved to continue the Hearing to the Commission's next scheduled Hearing in May 2022. Robin Adair Logan seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Application #22-13 by St. Paul's Episcopal Church (owner) and Twin Pines Housing Trust (applicant) for Site Development Plan Approval under section 260-45 of the Hartford Zoning Regulations for a multi-unit dwelling on proposed lot 43-0074-001, 747 Hartford Avenue, Wilder, in a proposed Planned Development.

9. 04-25-22

Bruce Riddle moved to continue the Hearing to the Commission's next scheduled Hearing on May 23, 2022. Colin Butler seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

At 10:10 p.m., Colin Butler moved to adjourn. Bruce Riddle seconded, and the Hearing was adjourned.

Respectively Submitted,

Toby Dayman, Clerk