

MINUTES

WATERTOWN ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS PUBLIC HEARING

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2008 - 7:30 P.M.
WATERTOWN HIGH SCHOOL TECHNOLOGY CENTER

APPLICATION #877 – WATERTOWN BOARD OF EDUCATION POLK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PRESENT: Mr. Enrico Sarandrea, Chairman
Mr. John Griffith, Vice Chairman
Mr. Phil Roger
Mr. Roger Mitchell

ABSENT: Ms. JoAnna Abraham

ALTERNATES PRESENT: None

ALTERNATES ABSENT: Mr. Gary Swingle
Mr. Jason Aldridge
Mr. Jeff Franson

OTHERS PRESENT: Moosa Rafey, Assistant Zoning Enforcement Officer

1. Call Meeting to Order

Mr. Sarandrea, Chairman, Called the Public Hearing to Order at about 7:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Mr. Mitchell executed the Roll Call.

Mr. Sarandrea read the ground rules as follows:

“ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS GROUND RULES”

1. The applicant or his representative will make his formal presentation to the board stating his specific hardship and precisely why this merits a variance from the Zoning Regulations of the Town of Watertown.
2. All comments, discussions, and observations shall be made through the Chair after proper recognition by the Chairman. This is necessary to ensure that only one person at a time speaks on any issue, thus making it easier for everyone to understand, and for clearer legal transcription.

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3. All persons addressing the Commission shall begin by first clearly stating their name and address for the record. If necessary, the person may be asked to spell his or her name for the record.
4. Following the presentation of the application, the Zoning Board of Appeals will ask specific questions of the applicant.
5. After the Board has asked its questions of the applicant, I shall then allow members of the public who wishes to speak either in favor of this application or against it to address the Board.
6. I shall then allow the applicant to respond to the comments of the members of the general public.
7. I shall then allow any members of the general public who wish to present any additional information or clarifying discussion to do so.
8. I shall then provide an opportunity for the applicant to respond to these additional remarks is he or his representative so wishes.
9. The Zoning Board of Appeals has thirty-five (35) days from the date the Public Hearing commences to complete the Public Hearing. The Board may ask the applicant for a thirty-five (35) day extension of the Public Hearing period if the Commission requires any additional information or wishes to schedule a site walk to observe the situation for themselves.
10. The Zoning Board of Appeals has sixty-five (65) days from the date when the Public Hearing is closed to render its decision. The Board may or may not make its decision tonight at its Regular Meeting following the Public Hearing.
11. You may stay for the Regular Meeting if you wish or you may leave at the end of the Public Hearing and contact the Zoning Office the following morning to determine the status of your application.

3. Hearing of Cases

- A. Application #877 of the Town of Watertown Board of Education requesting for five variances of the Watertown Zoning Regulations concerning access driveway and parking to permit the construction of additions and renovations to Polk Elementary School located at 435 Buckingham Street, Oakville, CT.

Recess or adjourn the public hearing must be closed by March 29, 2008 unless applicant grants an extension of time.

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Mr. Mitchell read the Legal Notice as follows:

“Town of Watertown Legal Notice

The Zoning Board of Appeals of the Town of Watertown will hold a public hearing at 7:30PM on Wednesday, February 13, 2008 at the Watertown High School Technology Center 324 French Street, Watertown, CT to hear and act upon the following applications:

Application #877 of the Town of Watertown Board of Education request for the following 5 variances of the Watertown Zoning Regulations to permit the construction of additions and renovations to Polk Elementary School located at 435 Buckingham Street, Oakville, CT in an R-12.5 Residential Zoning District:

1. A variance of 78 feet to minimum distance required between two driveways serving the same lot to permit the construction of two driveways with 72 feet separation distance. Section 63.8.5.c of the Watertown Zoning Regulations requires 150 feet distance between two driveways on the same lot.
2. A variance of 16 feet to maximum width required for a two-way access driveway to permit the construction of a 60 feet wide access way. Section 63.8.5.f of the Watertown Zoning Regulations permits maximum 44 feet driveway width for non-residential uses.
3. A variance of Section 63.9.3 of the Watertown Zoning Regulations concerning minimum setback for parking to permit the construction of parking spaces within the required front yard.
4. A variance of 44 feet to required landscaped buffer zone to permit the construction of parking spaces to be located 6 feet from the property line. Section 70.4.1 of the Watertown Zoning Regulations requires a 50 foot landscaped buffer zone between non-residential uses and residences.
5. A variance of Section 70.4.3 of the Watertown Zoning Regulations concerning buffer zone to permit pavement within the 50 foot buffer zone.

At this hearing interested persons and written communications will be heard. A copy of the application is on file in the Planning and Zoning Office, 51 Depot Street, Suite 502, Watertown, CT.

Dated in Watertown, CT this 31st day of January 2008.

Dated in Watertown, CT this 7th day of February 2008

Bruno DiSisto, Secretary
Zoning Board of Appeals”

**WATERTOWN ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
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Todd Lofresse, Assistant Superintendent for the Watertown School System, submitted a letter from Fire Chief Larry Black. Joe DiCarlo from Kaestle Boos associates from New Britain, CT represented the applicant and presented the site plan. He stated that part of his hardship was they have some restricted sites and tight distances to work with. At the Polk School one of the first issues was that they were trying to alleviate some congestion where the present bus loop runs across the front of the school and by doing this alleviate some traffic problems that occur on French Street. They need two drives coming out reasonably close together as shown on the site plan. The next issue was the maximum width of the opening for the access drive. The problem was that the driveways are only 26 feet wide and the property line was where the width of the driveway was measured. School buses need a minimum 35 foot turn around and provisions will be needed to do this. This also includes garbage and fire trucks.

Mr. DiCarlo also explained the issue of parking on the front setback. There is existing parking non-conforming use now. Part of this project's attempt in a money saving effort was to recycle the pavement and leave the parking where it is. It exists now so they were looking for a variance to leave that non-conforming use in place and allow them to maintain it. The next issue was the 50 feet buffer required between a non-residential and residential use. The parking area at the south side falls into that buffer. Mr. DiCarlo read Mr. Lofresse letter for the record as follows:

**“To: Mr. Todd Lofresse, Assistant Superintendent
From: Larry Black, Chief and Fire Marshall for the Town of Watertown**

I recently have been made aware of some zoning concerns regarding the proposed width of the new driveway entrances at Polk Elementary School. As Fire Chief I am concerned that the driveways be wide enough to turn our fire apparatus into them without obstructing the exit land where vehicles may be attempting to exit the property. The turning radius of our largest truck is 47 feet 5 inches. Will you please make sure that the zoning officials are aware of our concerns. As chief of the department I strongly urge them make sure the turning radius both entering and exiting the driveway is sufficient for our trucks without obstructing the opposite lanes of traffic. I have attached a sketch of the turning radius of our largest truck which is Tower 1.”

Dr. Griffith questioned about parking behind the school if there was any way that the driveway coming in could be extended and go up to French Street. Mr. DiCarlo explained that that driveway was a hard scape play area and controlled by a gate. The only time they would be used as a parking lot would be in a special event at the school where they would need additional parking. They looked at it being the bus loop running behind the school and out to French Street. The problem is the change in grade and the elevation of French Street is almost even with the roof of the school.

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Motion was made by Dr. Griffith to close the public hearing and seconded by Mr. Mitchell.

Discussion: None Vote: 4 in favor Abstained: 0 Opposed: 0

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Attest:

Enrico Sarandrea, Chairman
Zoning Board of Appeals

Jennifer Guerrero, Minutes Secretary

MINUTES

WATERTOWN ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS PUBLIC HEARING

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2008 - 7:30 P.M.
WATERTOWN HIGH SCHOOL TECHNOLOGY CENTER

APPLICATION #878 – WATERTOWN BOARD OF EDUCATION JUDSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PRESENT: Mr. Enrico Sarandrea, Chairman
Mr. John Griffith, Vice Chairman
Mr. Phil Roger, Interim Secretary
Mr. Roger Mitchell

ABSENT: Ms. JoAnna Abraham

ALTERNATES PRESENT: None

ALTERNATES ABSENT: Mr. Gary Swingle
Mr. Jason Aldridge
Mr. Jeff Franson

OTHERS PRESENT: Moosa Rafey, Assistant Zoning Enforcement Officer

1. Call Meeting to Order

Mr. Sarandrea, Chairman, Called the Public Hearing to Order at about 7:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Mr. Mitchell executed the Roll Call.

Mr. Mitchell read the Legal Notice as follows:

“Town of Watertown Legal Notice

The Zoning Board of Appeals of the Town of Watertown will hold a public hearing at 7:30PM on Wednesday, February 13, 2008 at the Watertown High School Technology Center 324 French Street, Watertown, CT to hear and act upon the following applications:

Application #878 of the Town of Watertown Board of Education request for the following 7 variances of the Watertown Zoning Regulations to permit the construction of

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additions and renovations to Judson Elementary School located at 124 Hamilton Lane, Watertown, CT in an R-30 Residential Zoning District:

1. A variance of 6 feet to minimum distance required between two driveways serving the same lot to permit the construction of two driveways with 144 feet separation distance. Section 63.5.8.c of the Watertown Zoning Regulations requires 150 feet distance between two driveways on the same lot.
2. A variance of 60 feet to maximum width required for a two-way access driveway to permit the construction of a 104 feet wide access way.
3. A variance of 36 feet to maximum width required for a driveway to permit the construction of an 80 feet wide access way.
4. A variance of 65 feet to maximum width required for a driveway to permit the construction of a 109 feet side access way. Section 63.8.5.f of the Watertown Zoning Regulations permits maximum 44 feet driveway width for non-residential uses.
5. A variance of Section 63.9.3 of the Watertown Zoning Regulations concerning minimum setback for parking to permit the construction of parking spaces within the required front yard.
6. A variance of 28 feet to required landscaped buffer zone to permit the construction of parking spaces to be located 22 feet from the property line. Section 70.4.1 of the Watertown Zoning Regulations requires a 50 foot landscaped buffer zone between non-residential uses and residences.
7. A variance of Section 70.4.3 of the Watertown Zoning Regulations concerning buffer zone to permit pavement within the 50 foot buffer zone.

At this hearing interested persons and written communications will be heard. A copy of the application is on file in the Planning and Zoning Office, 51 Depot Street, Suite 502, Watertown, CT.

Dated in Watertown, CT this 31st day of January 2008.

Dated in Watertown, CT this 7th day of February 2008

Bruno DiSisto, Secretary
 Zoning Board of Appeals”

Todd Lofresse, Assistant Superintendent for the Watertown School System, submitted a letter from Fire Chief Larry Black. Mr. Lofresse read the letter for the record as follows:

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**“To: Mr. Todd Lofresse, Assistant Superintendent
From: Larry Black, Chief and Fire Marshall for the Town of Watertown**

Re: Driveway turning radius at Judson Elementary School

Todd,

I’ve been recently made aware of some zoning concerns regarding the proposed width of the new driveway entrances at Judson Elementary School. As fire chief I am concerned that the driveways be wide enough to turn our fire apparatus into them without obstructing the exit lane where vehicles may be attempting to exit the property. The turning radius of our largest truck is 47 feet 5 inches. Will please make sure that the zoning officials are aware of our concerns. As chief of the department I strongly urge them to make sure the turning radius both entering and exiting the driveways is sufficient for our trucks without obstructing the opposite lanes of traffic. I’ve attached the sketch of our turning radius for our largest truck Tower 1. Thank you.”

Joseph DiCarlo from Kaestle Boos Associates New Britain, CT explained the existing site setup. There is one looping drive that begins at the north end of the site, loops across the front of the school and exits approximately the same location. Both parents and school buses use the same drive. They would like to alleviate the congestion by separating the bus loop and drop off from the parent drop off being an open area passable by at least two cars side by side.

The next issue was inadequate parking at the school. They increased the parking to at least double of what is there. They will again grind up the pavement, recycle it, overlay it and improve on it by putting curbs and directing some of the storm water away from the wetland that exists just above it on the site. Two more parking lots will be added. The problem with the driveway is that the measurement of the width is at the property line and the property line is right out on the street. Anything we do to create a turning radius for vehicles would violate the regulations.

Mr. Mitchell questioned if there was time to do a site walk. Mr. Rafey explained the time restriction with the state and that local approval is needed as soon as possible. Mr. Lofresse explained that the referendum for this project passed on June 6, 2007. Approvals needed to be in place before going to the state department. Mr. Roger expressed that the board feels as though they are being forced to make a decision tonight because of the schools deadline and they should have approached the board sooner.

Mr. Sarandrea asked about making Hamilton Lane one way. Mr. Lofresse explained that the Planning and Zoning Commission asked the board of education to take a look at what

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could be done in regards to the residents on Hamilton Lane expressing concern of traffic issues due to the school.

Teresa Mikowski, a resident of 65 Hamilton Lane, stated that she was in the process of pleading with the town to have some trees removed at the end because it does cause a bottle neck situation on her street. The traffic completely backs up and people are stranded in their driveway. There are problems with parents pulling into the driveways and doing u-turns and coming back out. She questioned whether the huge driveways are needed. She has almost been hit numerous times by parents speeding and dropping their kids off while walking her own daughter to school.

Howard Roshan, a resident of 69 Hamilton Lane, stated that his home will be directly across from the proposed new driveway. He questioned how many feet this driveway will be. Mr. DiCarlo responded that the driveway at the north end of the site will be 108 feet as measured at the property line. Mr. Roshan is concerned about people coming in and doing u-turns. He submitted pictures of how close his house is to that driveway which is only 30 feet away from the new proposed driveway.

Michael Meyers, a resident of 82 Hamilton Lane, stated that his property was adjacent to the north of the property line. He had concerns about the buffer between the proposed parking lot and his property.

Nora Meyers, a resident of 82 Hamilton Lane, questioned the lighting affecting the residents due to the parking lot being so close to the property line.

Robert Gignac, a resident of 287 Hamilton Avenue, commented that the Board of Education had enough time to review these plans. He stated back in April at the budget meeting he was told that the buffer zones were in place. He spoke about it being dangerous and two cars on each side won't fit on the road.

Mr. Roger brought up the option of bring the lower driveway along the ball field all the way to Hamilton Avenue if that would alleviate some of the problems with the width of Hamilton Lane being so small. Mr. DiCarlo responded by explaining he is not a traffic engineer and traffic engineers have reviewed the plans. He stated from a practical perspective running another lane of traffic down along the ball fields parallel to Hamilton Lane it would make the intersection of the two Hamilton's even more dangerous. As far as the lighting issue, the regulations have changed and the lights will not shine anymore into the neighbor's property. There will also be hedges put in.

Mr. Roger questioned the parking separate for the athletic field. Mr. DiCarlo said parking was looked at but he did not want to encourage parking in and among those trees because once paving and cutting into the roots has begun, the trees will start to die. Also Mr.

Cavanaugh requested that a sidewalk be run down there so people can walk away from the road down to Hamilton Avenue.

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Mr. Rafey questioned the possibility of Hamilton Lane being one way to prevent u-turns. Mr. DiCarlo commented that the traffic engineer is doing a study on that in conjunction with the police commission but it's not finalized. It will be brought before the Planning and Zoning Commission. Mr. DiCarlo also stated that Larry Black, fire chief, said that if the road was one way it would extend the response time of the vehicles.

Mr. Sarandrea questioned the parking lot area on top if people can turn around and come back out. Mr. DiCarlo agreed and said it was known as a "hammerhead". Mr. Mitchell still wanted site walk.

Michael Meyers from 82 Hamilton Lane asked about the variance for the parking lot and extra room for the snow plowing. Mr. Sarandrea stated most likely back into the hammerhead. Mr. DiCarlo did a small sketch of how the street is measured and the problem they face is that the street line is right out at the edge of the pavement. He was showing that a normal travel lane is 12 feet wide to access a car. If there is a two way road it will be 24 feet wide. In order to get a car to turn they need approximately a 15 foot turning radius. He explained that you can see that the in road on the sketch ends up being longer than the 24 foot width if the property line is approximately 10 feet back from the edge of the road. If it's increased to a 35 foot radius which is a bus turning radius you can see measured again at this 10 foot back from the edge of the pavement now makes the pavement 45.3 feet wide. If he goes to a 47 foot radius it will get even wider and the problem they have there is that the measurement is actually taken out at the street. This gives them an enormous width in theory because they are measuring the tips of the curbs and that is the hardship they have run into.

Mr. Rafey explained that the Planning and Zoning Commission could not make a decision without the approvals of the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Inland/Wetland Commission.

Mr. Sarandrea explained he still felt having a smaller driveway would be better than a bigger one with an island. Mr. DiCarlo explained his hardship again as to why they need their variances.

Mr. Mitchell not being familiar with what exactly was being discussed did not feel comfortable making a decision without doing a site walk. Mr. Rafey also explained in defense of the applicant they could have come two months ago to the Zoning Board of Appeals if they knew that they needed variances. Those questions were raised at the last pre-application meeting when they met with the staff they found they needed variances. Their wetland process got lengthy because they did not think that there were wetland activities. They got a permit for Judson school and later on the public works department wanted them to include the existing drainage problem that they had and then go back to the commission.

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Motion was made by Mr. Roger to close the public hearing and seconded by Dr. Griffith.

**Discussion: Yes Vote: 3 in favor (Mr. Sarandrea, Mr. Roger, Dr. Griffith)
Abstained: 0 Opposed: 1 (Mr. Mitchell)**

MOTION DID NOT PASS TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Rafey explained that before you vote to close the public hearing this is the time to discuss all the issues. If they board wanted to have a site walk they should determine it now and tell Mr. Rafey which date they would like to go so that he could create an agenda. Mr. Roger felt whoever was comfortable with the plan should not have to go on a site walk. Mr. Mitchell asked if the following night was ok to have a meeting but Mr. Rafey explained that the office needs 48 hours before having another meeting.

Mr. Lofresse spoke letting the commission know that he or consultants would be available any evening as chosen.

Teresa Mikowski of 65 Hamilton Lane stated that she was now aware as concerns were raised many times that they could be possibly jeopardizing a project. She appreciated the option of a site walk but what is proposed is safer than what the residents are living with now.

Mr. Rafey explained that was his point. This is better than what they have now. It will not be perfect but this plan will improve the traffic situation and other situations. Mr. Roger explained that he did not feel that if Mr. Mitchell did go on a site walk it was not going to change the outcome. He felt Mr. Mitchell having the site walk will hold up the project and possibly jeopardize it. Mr. Mitchell questioned to the public if any of the people in the neighborhood had any problems with this project. He wants to be sure that they are satisfied with what they have heard during the public hearing.

Brent Fremantle of 52 Pleasantview Avenue questioned Mr. DiCarlo about his presentation. He wanted to see the project in power point so everyone would see it better.

Michael Bouffard of 70 Tower Road Oakville CT stated that he would hate to see rubber stamping of everything and understands Mr. Mitchell's concerns of wanting to walk the site and wanting to get it right is his charge. He urged the board not to make hasty decisions.

Alan Pizaloruso of 19 Gilbert Lane stated everyone knows things will be better by getting this project done.

Rich Mazzamero of 1055 Guernseytown Road is the Vice Chairman of the Board of Education and Chairman of the Facilities sub-committee. He explained that there is no part of this project that is being rushed.

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June Bouffard of 70 Tower Road agreed that the schools needed upgrades but was not aware as to what would happen to the perimeters.

Mr. Mitchell that if the board and the neighbors had no more problem with it then he does not need a site walk.

Motion was made by Mr. Roger to close the public hearing and seconded by Dr. Griffith.

Discussion: None Vote: 4 in favor Abstained: 0 Opposed: 0

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Attest:

Enrico Sarandrea, Chairman
Zoning Board of Appeals

Jennifer Guerrero, Minutes Secretary

MINUTES

WATERTOWN ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS PUBLIC HEARING

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2008 - 7:30 P.M.
WATERTOWN HIGH SCHOOL TECHNOLOGY CENTER

APPLICATION #879 – WATERTOWN BOARD OF EDUCATION WATERTOWN HIGH SCHOOL

- PRESENT:** Mr. Enrico Sarandrea, Chairman
Mr. John Griffith, Vice Chairman
Mr. Phil Roger
Mr. Roger Mitchell, Interim Secretary
- ABSENT:** Ms. JoAnna Abraham
- ALTERNATES PRESENT:** None
- ALTERNATES ABSENT:** Mr. Gary Swingle
Mr. Jason Aldridge
Mr. Jeff Franson
- OTHERS PRESENT:** Moosa Rafey, Assistant Zoning Enforcement Officer

1. Call Meeting to Order

Mr. Sarandrea, Chairman, Called the Public Hearing to Order at about 7:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Mr. Mitchell executed the Roll Call.

Mr. Mitchell read the Legal Notice as follows:

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Application #879 of the Town of Watertown Board of Education request for the following 6 variances of the Watertown Zoning Regulations to permit the construction of

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additions and renovations to Watertown High School located at 324 French Street, Watertown, CT in an R-G General Residential Zoning District and Watertown Fire District:

1. A variance of 18 feet to maximum width required for a driveway to permit the construction of a 62 feet wide access way. Section 63.8.5.f of the Watertown Zoning Regulations permits maximum 44 feet driveway width for non-residential uses.
2. A variance of 5 feet to required landscaped buffer zone to permit the construction of parking spaces to be located 45 feet from the property line.
3. A variance of 16 feet to required landscaped buffer zone to permit the construction of parking spaces to be located 34 feet from the property line.
- 4 & 5. Two variances of 40 feet and 20 feet to required landscaped buffer zone to permit the renovation of the existing southeasterly non-conforming parking area to be located 10 and 30 feet from adjoining property lines. Section 70.4.1 of the Watertown Zoning Regulations requires a 50 foot landscaped buffer zone between non-residential uses and residences.
6. A variance of Section 70.4.3 of the Watertown Zoning Regulations concerning buffer zone to permit pavement within the 50 foot buffer zone.

At this hearing interested persons and written communications will be heard. A copy of the applications is on file in the Planning and Zoning Office, 51 Depot Street, Suite 502, Watertown, CT.

Dated in Watertown, CT this 31st day of January 2008

Bruno DiSisto, Secretary
 Zoning Board of Appeals”

Todd Lofresse, Assistant Superintendent for the Watertown School System, submitted a letter from Fire Chief Larry Black. Mr. Lofresse read the letter for the record as follows:

**WATERTOWN ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
PUBLIC HEARING
APPLICATION #879 – WATERTOWN BOARD OF EDUCATION
WATERTOWN HIGH SCHOOL
FEBRUARY 13, 2008**

**“To: Mr. Todd Lofresse, Assistant Superintendent
From: Larry Black, Chief and Fire Marshall for the Town of Watertown**

Re: Watertown High School

Todd,

I’ve recently been aware of some zoning concerns regarding the proposed width of the new driveway entrances at Watertown high School. As fire chief I am concerned that the driveways be wide enough to turn our fire apparatus into them without obstructing the exit lane where vehicles may be attempting to exit the property. The turning radius of our largest truck is 47 feet 5 inches. Will you please make sure that the zoning officials are aware of our concerns. As chief of the department I strongly urge them to make sure the turning radius both entering and exiting the driveways is sufficient for our trucks without obstructing the opposite lanes of traffic. I’ve attached a sketch of our turning radius for our largest truck, Tower 1. Thank You.”

Mr. Lofresse: Mr. Joe DiCarlo from Kastle Boos is going to take you through the site plan. I think one bit of information that is important for the board to hear at this time is that through the Public Works Department and Planning and Zoning Department the requested that the Watertown Board of Education hire a traffic engineer to examine the possible need for a traffic light at the end of the driveway. Those results have been obtained by the traffic engineer and have determined that it does meet the warrants for traffic light to actually apply for one to the state traffic commission. The decision whether the traffic light is needed at the end of the driveway as far as I understand it rests with the police commission as well as the state traffic commission. The Board of Education understands that we might need traffic lights and stop controls. They may recommend no controls at all; all thought I don’t believe that is the case. I believe they are going to recommend some kind of control at the top of French Street at our driveway due to site line issues. Thank you.

Mr. DiCarlo: Joe DiCarlo with Kastle Boos Associates. What we have on the board here is the High School. It’s on a rather small scale to fit the whole thing on. Our issue once again becomes because of the proximity of the property line where the access drive comes out onto French Street it makes the measurement of the width of the driveway wider than what’s allowed by the regulations. The actual driveway is 39 feet wide but because of the flares on the end and it’s rather tight and constricting with adjoining properties it comes out at wider than that. We actually end up with a driveway that’s about 61.5 feet wide if

you measure it at the flares. The present driveway is almost 42 feet wide without a raised island which already is a non-conforming use and doesn't meet the regulation. The

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second issue is the 50 foot buffer and again the intent was for the rear parking areas to pulverize and re-use the existing pavement, to recycle it, and pave over them in place in the exact location that they are now. They are within that 50 foot buffer from adjoining residential properties. It's simply a maintenance issue to re-pave the cracked and worn pavement in place so we are looking for a variance saying we are simply maintaining a non-conforming use. To the extent possible we have planted evergreen screen plantings in those areas between residential properties. Along Tower Street there is a natural vegetative cover now and the intent is to maintain that. In the other areas we are inducing some evergreens screen plantings. We have existing parking in the buffer zone and a very small number of cars as part of the design. They arched into the buffer zone by some few feet. We'd like to be able to maintain those again trying to get as many cars as we possibly can onto the site to relieve any type of traffic congestion or parking problems. So those are the 3 issue. They are the width of the driveway, the parking in the buffer zone and pavement in the buffer zone.

Mr. Mitchell: You were saying evergreens but in the other plan we looked at it was all Oak and Maple Trees in the Judson one.

Mr. DiCarlo: The darker circles you see here represent Dark American Arborvitae's at 6 to 7 foot height and that's the screen plantings. In the plans you have they were probably submitted weeks ago and we've already upgraded them since then. That's that continuous process that I have been talking about. There is definitely going to be a mix of plantings. There will be shade trees and flowering trees intermixed.

Mr. Sarandrea: Anyone from the public wish to speak for or against this application?

Michael Bouffard, 70 Tower Road Oakville, CT

Mr. Bouffard: If I may I will speak on behalf of my neighbor and mother-in-law Mrs. Eleanor Durwin who resides at 78 Tower Road. Her property runs parallel to the east area here that they are requesting at least one variance for additional parking. The school is asking for two variances to there east towards Mrs. Durwin's property for expanded parking. The hill from the present parking area down towards Mrs. Durwin's property is already very steep. I will hand the board some pictures. Moving the parking area into the buffer zone and closer to the property line will only exacerbate that grade. Presently I have counted 22 mature trees that run parallel to the boundary line. Those trees are at the top of the embankment against the present parking area. Of the 22 trees, 20 of them are evergreens and 30 foot tall or greater. They provide a year-round natural buffer for noise, exhaustion from the cars, dust and alike. Mrs. Durwin's well is also located about 10 feet from the property line directly below the existing parking area. During the original

construction of the school that hill did give way at one point and mudslide into the house and yard. A truck had also gone over that embankment and if not for a mature tree location in that buffer area the truck would have ended up in the house. I look at the

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demolition plans at the zoning office on Monday afternoon. The demolition plans call for clear cutting that embankment so the mature trees would be gone and the natural buffer would be gone. There were no plans there for landscaping or erosion control beyond the construction phase. Thirty and forty year old plantings will be gone with no replacement as far as we can see. Mrs. Durwin's privacy and the integrity of the embankment and the buffer zone will be gone as well. This is unacceptable to us and I think it's a slap in the face to the zoning regulations. No where have I seen a regulation ordinance or specification mandating a required number or parking spaces. It's my understanding a variance is granted based on a proven hardship. It appears to me the hardship is self created by the architects and the school in trying to garner a few more parking spaces. We object to this and if it should go through I think that their perceived hardship will be transferred to Mrs. Durwin and she will have no recourse. Will the school and architects guarantee her well? Will they guarantee the clear cutting the hill and moving it closer to the property line and increasing the grade will not cause another mud slide? Will this block her sunlight? Will it alter wind currents off the hill and cause problems such as down drafts in the chimney? I've actually seen this twice in my line of work. Also what about her property value? The proposed parking arrangements would also cause problems for snow removal. Presently there is a grassy area below the practice field where when they plow the existing parking area it can push the snow there. Obviously there is no where to put the snow which means they will pile it up, get a pay loader and dump it on the embankment. That can cause additional problems. If you also notice the proposed parking arrangement will easily dump the traffic onto Tower Road. They are already using it for a 15 to 20 minute time period each day for dismissal. It seems obvious now that it would become an easy exit during any event. I noticed that the school and the architects have had several concerns with the fire department in terms of safety. I would urge you to visit the top of Tower Road during a dismissal time and see the congestion there. If safety is a true concern how are we going to get fire trucks or ambulances up that road during these events. In the 40 plus years of the schools existence, maintenance of the border fence along Mrs. Durwin's property line and the catch basins that go with it have been non-existent. Not once had they made any repairs in fact I have made repairs on the fence. With the additional square footage of the building and the construction of the new playing fields there is no reason to believe that the school will have neither the time nor the main power to maintain the new ravaged buffer zone. I submitted a letter to the zoning board at their last meeting and it detailed the trespassing, littering, smoking, drinking, and drug use that some students engage in on our properties because the fence has been undermined due to deterioration and lack of maintenance. To conclude I'd ask that the zoning board in High School respect and protecting the integrity of Mrs. Durwin's property and that of the entire neighborhood that we'd love to see the High School thrive but to do so within the foot print of the boundaries. These proposed plans don't accomplish that for at least the request for those two variances so we respectfully urge you to reject the variances. Obviously I have learned here tonight that if it should go

through we would definitely have some requests and would take them up with other boards. I do have a letter here from Mrs. Durwin if I am allowed to read it into the record and then I will give you gentleman the pictures and you can see for yourself the grade of

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this hill. This is in response to application #879 of the Town of Watertown Board of Education for 6 variances relating to Watertown High School:

“I object to the granting of the requested variances. The request especially for numbers 4 and 5 involve a significant departure from the 50 foot landscape buffer zone requirement. The allowance of the variances would make a mockery of the town’s overall Planning and Zoning. Moreover the topography and general configuration of the subject area is not conducive to any expansion in the area. I am also concerned that the plan if implemented after the granting of the variances makes no provision for plantings to make the zone attractive and meaningful. Indeed a 10 foot buffer zone is in this case meaningless in my opinion. The severe slope from the school to my boundary line has for years been a source of mud which ends up in my yard and the high bank of the school yard blocks sunlight to my house. I do not want either of these conditions exasperated because the buffer zone has been eliminated or seriously compromised. I urge the board of appeals of the town of Watertown to deny the request for the variances in application #879 especially numbers 4 and 5.

**Very Truly Yours,
Eleanor Durwin”**

Mr. Sarandrea: Does anyone else have anything that they would like to say? Please state your name and address for the record.

Russell Erickson, 39 Pleasantview Avenue

Mr. Erickson: My property borders the high school and here are some photos that I have of the high school. This is the vegetation he is talking about coming up our road the he is talking about and this is the parking area up in here and if you notice it is loaded with garbage. These are the photos of what we are seeing here everyday because of the high school and the back gate.

Mr. Roger: So what you’re saying is that these plans that are presented before us to make improvements to the school are going to make what you see there worse?

Mr. Erickson: If they add more parking, sure. It will make that worse. This is what borders the homes also and this is the one I have a problem with. They are going to add parking over here. The parking is right up against their houses. When there are sporting events over there the trash is thrown over their fences and the cars speed in and out of the parking lot. The fence there now is in the same condition as the one on the other side of

the high school. I've been after the board of education to fix this fence for years. They still won't fix it. This has become an area where people hang out, smoke and throw their trash. They are spending 58 million dollars to fix the parking lot and one of the

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commission members at the zoning meeting asked the traffic engineer if it was going to cure the problem and eliminate the need to open the back gate and he didn't give him an answer. It starts in the morning and you take your life in your hands when you talk a walk down there and going to work. You can see coming out of that parking lot and nobody obeys the speed limit. We have been after them to fence it off for years and they won't do it.

Mr. Roger: Where you there when the gate was open all the time? How long have you lived there for?

Mr. Erickson: Yes, for about 15 years. It was a disaster. We begged them to close it and they finally did. Then the president of the student council got together with some students and made a presentation to the board of education to open the gate. After much resistance from us in the neighborhood, they decided to open it anyway. I went to all those meetings and I didn't hear one tax paying citizen in favor of it. There is a big hole in the fence that I have observed. The kids that walk down that street in the afternoon have no sidewalks to walk on. If two cars are coming up that street one of those kids has a chance of getting hit so the only think they can do is walk on property owners lawns. We are property owners, we have rights. The variance will increase the problem. This field is going to make it worse. They're going to park on Pleasantview Avenue. During graduation time, people park on both sides of the street. If a fire truck had to get up it there would be no way. Someone could lose their life because of it. If that's not public safety then I don't know what is. Tower Road there is the same problem. You need to make them fence this off. You can't grant this variance. Thank You.

Mr. Sarandrea: Anyone else from the public?

June Bouffard, 70 Tower Road Oakville, CT

Mrs. Bouffard: I don't know if this will be any importance to you but I have pictures here from when the high school was built from my mother. I can't put it into public minutes but it's just for you to look at if I could have them back just to see what she endured. I grew up there. I liked the neighborhood so much that I can back and built a house there. Our three children did benefit form the high school so we're no against it. But what Mr. Erickson said is true. Next to my mother's house is basically a 7-11 in the afternoon. There are kids that go down there. They smoke; they have their coffee, whatever. Last summer there were benches on my mother's property and all drug paraphernalia. We had it cleaned up. It's because of the fence they come under the fence. They're no on school property so they think they can do drugs. My sister lives next to me too. We also live in the neighborhood. She had a club house in her back yard that these

kids came and did drugs in the club house, ransacked it, and ruined it. She can't be here tonight because she has the flu. We are just saying what we have residents have endured.

Some people think that if you don't like it then move. I was here before the high school

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and I am still there. I feel I have the right to complain because I have been there. It's the people driving down the hill to pick up the kids that are more problematic. The gate is only open for 20 minutes but it's the traffic of coming and going in the morning and night.

Mr. Sarandrea: Anyone else form the public?

Alan Pizaloruso, 19 Gilbert Lane

Mr. Pizaloruso: I sympathize with these people here. It's not a good situation where the kids infringe on their property. I do believe that's a separate issue though. My property is right at the end of French Street so I know what they're talking about when kids are parking there especially during games and other events. When they have games they come right in front of the house and park. Can I charge them anything for that or is that against P and Z? There is nothing else we can really do but put pressure on the police department and enforce what they are supposed to do. I can't understand why you haven't been more emphatic to them about doing that. There has to be a solution to that problem but I don't think it's here tonight. I want to see the expansion of the high school I think it's a good thing. I don't think this women's property should be infringed upon to the point where it's unsafe. You know yourself Mr. DiCarlo that you can design something to take care of the problem with the hill. The bottom line is that we need to actually promote the expansion to the school and we need to do things that are going to make it safe. We can't go back to the 60's, we just have to deal with what we have here and we have to improve it. Tonight's the night that gives these gentlemen the opportunity to do that. I don't like the idea of having the traffic light but that's not something they decide here. So I'll go to the next level and give them my input.

Mr. Sarandrea: I just want to answer your question for you. Every variance has a different flavor. This one variance if we did grant it means that they are going to take trees down hat are 40 years old, dig up the ground, take the fence down and he will answer those questions tonight. We may or may not grant that variance. We may grant that variance with conditions on it. Every variance is different. Don't take it lightly that we are just here for the variance. If we are going to grant this variance it has to be granted right.

Mr. Lofresse: I have some information for the board and the public. Regarding the rear of the high school that I believe will offer some relief. Will it solve the issue entirely? I don't know I would guess not to everyone's complete satisfaction. We are making improvements to the front exit and entrance which we believe will enhance the ability of the high school to exit traffic. We hope that in turn create a situation where parents are

more willing to come into the high school parking lot instead of battling the buses and the cars that are double parked, triple parked, and parked on islands. In regards of loitering off of school grounds, this instruction project includes perimeter security cameras around

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the entire building focusing on parking lots, and entrances to school, property. So the Tower Road area will be monitored by security camera which will be recorded continuously on a digital video recorder. These are some of the enhancements that we believe will help. Will they solve everything? Probably not but we do believe improvement is on the way.

Mr. Sarandrea: Each variance is either denied or approved on its own merits.

Mr. DiCarlo: The embankment is part of a some what complex project. The drainage from this area now runs into pipes and runs down Tower Road to a brook several blocks down without any impediment whatsoever. The new regulations require that there be no increase in storm water run-off. In order to do that we have to detain water on site so it trickles slowly into the pipe system that's in the street otherwise the city would end up ripping up all the pipes and all the streets to replace them. Therefore the open area necessary to get the drainage based on topography in the slope of the ground is in that embankment. There will be buried underground retention chambers. I was somewhat sorry to hear that people have been looking at drawings and I'm not sure what they are looking at that said there was no sediment and erosion control. There is a civil engineering firm that issued part of the project set which was a set of sediment and erosion control or a state mandate so that it would have to comply with state requirements and DEP requirements. They are part of this project. Yes, we will have to remove some of the trees on the slope in order to re-establish it later on. There are landscaping plans as part of this set. No, there are no trees proposed for that slope at this time. That doesn't mean it could not change. At this time it is proposed that the slope be stabilized with a stabilization fabric and be planted with wild flowers. That could change. I could use a clarification of Mrs. Durwin's property. There is no request for a setback variance in that area. The new pavement is about 80 feet from that property line. So there is no request for a variance along that property. In anticipation there will be activity in that slope. There is going to be a need to establish the underground storm water detention system and a restoration of the slope in accordance with the state requirements from the DEP. We actually pulled the pavement back in that area for that very reason that we didn't want to destabilize the slope. We are also not clearing any trees within 10 to 15 feet of the property line. We are leaving the vegetation there however part of the project is going to call for the replacement of any damaged perimeter fences as a part of this project. Unfortunately for equipment to get in and repair fences trees have to be removed to get anything in to fix it. Part of this project will be to repair perimeter fencing. The existing parking along the back of the school, you are correct that at this time we were simply repairing the parking lot that was there and trying to do as little as possible there so there were no proposed plantings between that existing parking lot which there are not any now and on the property line. I was out there and there was over hanging branches and

vegetation on the neighbor's property. I felt trying to put more plants in there they would be crowded out by the plants that are there. However, that's not something that we can't change. If this board says no we want to see screen plantings along there, it's a very

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narrow strip but we can put plants in there if that would help. I thought the existing vegetation was acting as a screen although that is not on school property it's on the abutter's property.

Mr. Sarandrea: Where you are putting this filtration system you can not plants trees.

Mr. DiCarlo: You are correct they are underground chambers, large plastic chambers that retain water and introduce them into the groundwater.

Mr. Sarandrea: Where are those chambers going?

Mr. DiCarlo: Here.

Mr. Mitchell: Where is that in relation to her property?

Mr. DiCarlo: It's next door to her property. It's on the slope abutting her property. The question came up about cutting trees down on that slope and yes in order to get this storm water detention system in the trees will be removed on the slope. The slope will be re-established.

Mr. Sarandrea: This is all just to gain more parking?

Mr. DiCarlo: No in fact the parking was there and we pulled it.

Mr. Sarandrea: Why are you working in this area again just to refresh my memory?

Mr. DiCarlo: I should say the parking is being increased because the size of the school is being increased. It's anticipated that the population of the school will increase. We have added about 80 cars to the parking system that is here now. We have separated once again the bus drop off from the parent drop off.

Mr. Sarandrea: Why are you working back there?

Mr. DiCarlo: This is all new parking. Part of this was to get parking convenient to the front door and to athletic activities at the stadium. So this is proposed to be the parking area and that's what started the activity in this area and then as you collect the storm water here it has to go somewhere and downhill is that way and we didn't want to flood the system out so we are putting a detention system here before it goes into that system. The drainage from here is going into a detention system that will be over here. Similarly drainage from here will go into a detention system in an embankment over here.

Mr. Sarandrea: There is no parking back there at all?

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Mr. DiCarlo: Well, there is no parking in this area for about 80 feet back from the property line. Initially we had parking up to here and realized it would not work with the slopes and the topography so the parking was revised and pulled back. The request for variances as far as the buffer goes is here which is an existing parking lot that's being repaved and maintained. There are a small number of spaces over here that encroach 3 to 5 feet into the buffer zone.

Ms. Bouffard: If we go back to the last P & Z meeting I remember them asking you about that parking lot and you said there is a deep embankment and now we are calling it a slope there. So are you pushing that hill back towards the property line?

Mr. DiCarlo: No, the embankment will be restored to its present contours. It will be disturbed while these underground drainage systems are put in and then it will be restored to the contours that are there now. One gentleman asked about the gates and he sees nothing about the gates. From day one it has been said that the two gates out to Pleasant View and Tower Road will be replaced with new vehicle gates. He's more interested in the control and the opening and closing which is again not a design issue but an administrative issue.

Betty Barnes, 95 Tower Road Oakville, CT

Ms. Barnes: Will both gates be open for cars? Will the Pleasant View one be opened? It is not open anymore.

Mr. Roger: Whatever they are presently doing they will probably continue it when the renovations are done. The Pleasant View gate will remain the way it is. Only the Tower Road on will be used the same way it is now.

Mr. DiCarlo: If there some confusion to what is there now it is essentially a cable across the road. We will be putting a pipe rail gate. The operation of it will remain the same it's just a newer better gate in the area. It will have the capability of being pad locked.

Mr. Mitchell: It's going to be how high of a fence or gate?

Mr. DiCarlo: I'll say about 3 ½ feet. It'll be a typical vehicle gate.

Mr. Mitchell: That will keep the people from driving through it but not jumping over it. Can you make it a six foot gate?

Mr. DiCarlo: It could be a 6 foot chain link gate fence if that's what they wanted.

Mr. Mitchell: That would eliminate a lot of people running into her yard. Repairing the fence in the back will also keep everyone out of her yard and people yard.

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Mr. DiCarlo: You can make that as part of your condition of approval.

Mr. Mitchell: It may eliminate parking on the street.

Mr. Bouffard: Where is the location of the detention tank on the east side that abuts Mrs. Durwin's property? Is it under the existing parking lot?

Mr. Roger: It's in the existing slope.

Mr. Bouffard: This adds to the possibility of when the tanks fail or should they fail. The demolition plans that I saw in the planning and zoning office Monday afternoon said to clear cut that hill.

Mr. Roger: Trees can't be planted above that detention system.

Mr. Bouffard: Right so wild flowers are going to hold back this steep embankment? I don't think so. If this were a whole new construction project today that embankment would never be allowed to be built that way. It would need to be terraced.

Mr. Roger: The variances that are before us have nothing to do with that embankment.

Mr. Rafey: Chuck Berger, the town engineer, is reviewing all these proposed slopes for the Planning and Zoning Commission to make sure they meet the subdivision regulations and also the zoning regulations. The town engineer will review all of these slopes for the planning and zoning commission to make sure they can stabilize these.

Mr. Sarandrea: That's why I asked him that. If it was that we were granting a variance on that slope then we could deal with the planning and zoning so your best thing would be to go to planning and zoning that night and state your concerns.

Mr. Erickson: I would request they construct a wooden fence to shield neighbors because as you drive out here tonight you can see their houses. I think a nice wooden fence on top of the hill instead of that chain link fence that is all broken would be nice for these people. These homes are right here and this spot right here where there is a gate here has been broken for years. I feel with a six foot high fence it would not become a hang out. They put a small gate over here a few years back and the kids tore it down. They ran into it with their cars. Now we have a chain link.

Mr. Roger: With security cameras and maybe someone might enforce some for the rules and they will have it on camera. But that's beyond us. We grant variances and whatever

problems arise from us granting variances. I agree with a taller and wooden solid fence at this point.

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Mr. Sarandrea: Anyone else?

Brent Freemantle, 52 Pleasant View Avenue

Mr. Freemantle: On this back parking lot can something be put up during construction. There is garbage being thrown into my property all the time and I had to put up a picket fence myself.

Ms. Bouffard: You talked about the wild flowers on the bank. There is a known fact that my mother has a herd of deer in her back yard almost every evening. They are going to have a feast on those wild flowers. Just take that into consideration when you do make plans that whatever you put out please make it deer resistant.

Mr. Sarandrea: Anyone else wish to speak for or against this application? Do I have a motion?

Motion was made by Mr. Roger to close the public hearing and seconded by Mr. Mitchell.

Discussion: None Vote: 4 in favor Abstained: 0 Opposed: 0

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Attest:

Enrico Sarandrea, Chairman
Zoning Board of Appeals

Jennifer Guerrero, Minutes Secretary