

**WATERTOWN PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
CONTINUATION OF
Public Hearing**

**FEBRUARY 6, 2008
Watertown High School Technology Center
324 French Street, Watertown, CT 06795
7:00 P.M.**

A public hearing was held by the Watertown Planning and Zoning Commission on Wednesday, February 6, 2008 in the Watertown High School Auditorium, 324 French Street, Watertown, CT at 7:00 P.M.

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chairman David E. Minnich called the public hearing to order at 7:50 P.M.

2. ROLL CALL

Mr. Minnich asks Mrs. Allen to read the roll

Present: D. Minnich, M. Masayda, C. Mancini,
D. George, G. Martin, K. Demirs, R. Rondeau

Absent: J. Blaise, G. Dupliese, R. Russ

Ray sits in for Mike and Ken sits in for Ron

Others Present: Ms. Ruth Mulcahy, Administrator of Land Use
And Mr. Charles Berger, Town Engineer.

3. HEARING OF APPLICATIONS

- a. Continuation of public hearing Special Permit #233 Watertown High School, Watertown, CT Site Plan Modifications for an educational use with additions and renovations located at the Watertown High School, 324 French Street, Watertown, CT**

G. Martin returned to the meeting

R. Rondeau was no longer seated for G. Martin

Joseph DiCarlo, Kaestle Boos Associates

Mr. DiCarlo tells the board that coincidental with this meeting is a Police Commission at the same time where the member of the board of education and the

traffic engineers are in attendance and he is here to update the members on what is going on.

The first issue is a revised planting plan because they had failed to install evergreen screening between residences and parking spaces at the various projects. He has a revised plan to submit.

The second issue is that they have applied to the Zoning Board of Appeals for certain variances at the various schools for issues they felt they could not comply with based on certain site restraints and design requirements and in that regard, a hearing is scheduled for February 13, 2008 to address certain issues for all three (3) schools.

Wetlands issues have arisen due to design changes so they have applied to the Conservation Commission on all three (3) schools because some work will be occurring in resource areas of all schools and an amendment to their permit for Judson School was granted at the last meeting, but the High School and Polk School need to be discussed with them. Also, parking has been studied at the high school and there was some concern about a looping drive and what it would look like with parallel parking along that street at the southern end. You lose approximately 22 parking spaces but parking can be made if it was an issue and if it was felt that it was a safety issue that would want to be incorporated. There is a sketch but it really doesn't show much but the parallel parking. Mr. Minnich requests that Mr. DiCarlo submit it to Mr. Berger.

At Judson, there was a discussion of possibly making Hamilton Lane a one way street and the Board of Education has had their traffic consultant looking into it and it is being discussed at this time.

What is needed at this time is for the public hearing to be extended this evening to allow the Board of Education members to return later in the agenda and/or continued to another date until they hear from the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Mancini asks why the entrance, bus turn and car parking areas are so wide. Mr. DiCarlo replies that he would like to show him. He continues that the regulations say that the width of the driveway has a certain dimension which is not to exceed 30 feet on a non-residential driveway; unless they have a raised island in that case it can be 44 feet wide. The problem is that where the measurement is taken is at the property line and on Judson the street line is right up against the road pavement and in some cases, the road crosses onto school property. In order for there to be adequate turning radius', we had a 26' drive and in order to get a trash truck in and an emergency vehicle in, we had to put 35' radius' on the end and the property line is right on the road and as soon as they get two 35 foot radius', there is 70 feet plus the 26' of the driveway, and it is all wider than what is allowed by the regulation and it occurs at all the schools.

It is asked what the theory is of making Hamilton Lane a one-way. Mr. DiCarlo states residents have raised the issues and he has been there and he feels that there is a lot of chaos in front of Judson School and now there is only one (1) drive that enter, goes across the front of the school and exits and busses and parents are supposed to use the same thing for dropping and picking up students. The idea in the design is to separate that and some of the residents felt that some of the residents would not obey that anyway. It is a narrow road on which there are people making U-Turns, getting stuck behind the busses, etc. and states that some of the residents proposed that if the road was one way, they would keep moving along and there would be no U-turns. This is a decision that the Police Commission has to ma

Mr. DiCarlo states that he has seen the plans from the traffic engineer and whether it be north or south is not yet decided.

Further, he states that if the school's entrance is made one way in, Mr. Cavanaugh recommends that he would suggest against it and with regards to the out side, the Board of Education prefer it to be two way traffic it wouldn't get much narrower. The issue is that you measure the width of the road at the property line and in order to get emergency vehicles that Chief Black asked to be put on there, the road starts getting very wide at the property line. If it was a one way line, the width wouldn't change and the regulations in town for drives in parking areas are 25 feet wide.

Mr. Masayda suggests that bringing cars in both ways on student drop off is a mistake because children will be crossing incoming traffic if they are going out the entrance. He asks why Mr. Cavanaugh recommends against making the entrance a one way and Mr. DiCarlo responded that if they are coming in and stop as they are pulling in, all the traffic will back up onto Buckingham Street.

Mr. Minnich asks if any commission member has any questions.

Mr. Kevin Kileen states that he was at the Police Commission meeting and at this time the board did not have a position on the one way or two way concerning the Judson site, but in discussions with the architect, indicate that one of the issues was parent drop off and what they did for the drawings was they separated the parent drop off from the bus drop off in such a way that it would expedite parent drop off to keep it moving in better patterns. Having said that, he adds that at the Police Commission meeting, they did not take a vote at the time he was there, the fire chiefs sentiment was shared in a letter which stated that if a one way was made, that would add two minutes of response time for the apparatus to contend with if they weren't going down the one way the wrong way in an emergency situation which was not an option for them. He states that the Assistant Superintendent and the Director of Operations are still in attendance at that meeting.

Mr. Minnich gives his thinking on this project and states that there is another party to this project which are those that surround and adjoin those properties that are nearby. He appreciates the work done about the screening and adds that a concern of his is that in the plan of development that non-residential traffic generated from a non-residential entity should not be going through a residential street that is Tower and Pleasant view in this case. The practical reasons why this has come about is because the students and busses cannot get out quick enough onto French Street. He adds that they have done a fine job of addressing the issue by having two (2) lanes come out onto French Street. He asks if they still need to keep Tower Road as an access, but the Commission has the authority to say that you may not use that egress for any traffic other than emergency traffic and that is not an issue that the board of education can decide.

He doesn't think the presentation has gone far enough in terms of getting traffic onto French Street. The road is widened; two exits were made so people can get out. Now there are two ways of getting out. Someone in the left hand lane turning left onto French Street and someone queued going right and there are no stop signs on French Street and people are going to go. The person on the left are now blocked by the right hand side and every vehicle that stops at that entrance has to stop and it does not get them out as quickly as possible. He thinks he would like to get some thoughts and thinks that a traffic light is an option to take a look at there. Properly delayed, the students will get out, there will be a red light for those on French Street and the busses will get out and there will be no need to use Tower Avenue. The objection he has heard is one he has a hard time with which is that it costs money. A traffic light is no where near the price of an artificial turf field and he looks at the trade off for a 3rd artificial turf field, the second one at the high school versus a traffic light as the rational reason in terms of costs and in his mind it doesn't equate and he wants them to think through the egress. He asks to bring it to the board and it ought to be considered again.

Lastly, he thinks that he wants to be convinced by the Department of Public Works that the artificial turf that is proposed as well as the one that is an alternate meets all of the specifications that are acceptable to the Director of Public Works. There has been a long series of discussions about Swift School and he wants to make sure. Part of the issue was that the manufacturer of the turf product wanted to be convinced of how the drainage was going to be because they weren't going to guarantee the project and did so in writing.

Mr. Minnich reiterates that a good job was done but he still thinks a traffic signal would be the best and Mr. DiCarlo replies that this is not his expertise and that the traffic consultant works directly for the Department of Education and he thinks that this is one of the issues being discussed.

Mr. Martin asks about the high school student drop off being a one way coming in front of the building and Mr. DiCarlo states it is a one way loop dedicated for

parent drop off and pick up and the lower one is for the busses. The pull up for parent drop off holds 12 cars.

**Todd LoFrese, Assistant Superintendent
Watertown Board of Education**

Mr. LoFrese states that he, Dr. Pelosi and their traffic engineer has just left the police commission meeting for a special meeting to discuss Judson and Hamilton Lane as a one way street.

He states that he has received written correspondence from Mr. Roy Cavanaugh in regards to the recommendation to look at a traffic light at the end of the driveway at Watertown High School. They then consulted with the traffic engineer to begin an investigation process. If a traffic light is required, it is something we would look at doing.

Henry Ditman, Traffic Engineer

Mr. Ditman reports that a study for the need for a traffic light at the driveway has been started. The process is dictated by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices referred as the MUTCD. In that manual, there are warrants that are set aside that must be adhered to for the consideration of installation of traffic lights. There are eight (8) warrants which involve traffic volume, pedestrian volume, and traffic accidents. Not all need to be satisfied. Only one needs to be satisfied to have consideration for a traffic light. The proposal must go before the board of Police Commission; they must approve it and in turn must apply to the state traffic commission and ask for "permission" approval to install a traffic light at the school driveway in this case. Two bodies need to approve, one is the Police Commission and the state traffic authority.

He states a case can be made based on the traffic volumes and a traffic light would be warranted at the driveway. It meets two of the warrants. At the next regular Board of Police Commission meeting, the findings will be presented and would be able to come back to this commission and tell what the decision is and assuming it is approved, application can be made to the state traffic commission.

Mr. Masayda asks about the sight line on Tower Road and Riverside. Mr. Ditman responds that he didn't go that way. It states the issue would be different because on French Street traffic speed is over 40 mph, poor visibility because the intersection is on the crest of a road and that is why they are looking to provide good, safe access onto French Street from the school driveway. Mr. Masayda tells him that the Tower and Riverside is another potential school access. Mr. Ditman replies that would put the traffic through residential streets.

Mr. Mancini answers the question about sight line from Tower Road onto Riverside Street. He was up there two days checking out the traffic on Tower,

Pleasantview and coming out of the high school. After the traffic was out of Tower Road, he went to Riverside Street where a car went flying by at 60 mph blowing the horn at him. He further adds that they are trying to eliminate traffic on Tower Road. He asks if the traffic light is installed on French Street, would an exit be necessary at Tower Road. The gate was not open today or yesterday. There were 15 cars parked on Tower Road and Pleasantview. He only counted 18 cars going out of the school onto Tower Road. Mr. Ditman states that the traffic light would help to eliminate the Tower Road exit.

Mr. LoFrese adds that it is important for the Commission to understand that some of the traffic on Tower Road is parents picking up students as they exit and as far as the design at the front and eliminating Tower Road, except for emergency access, you still have the ability of students to continue to be able to exit the school and walk down Tower Road and continue on their walking route home. It is a walker access area and he believes the Board of Education would want that to continue.

Mr. Minnich is convinced that the new scenario for egressing both busses and students, it is going to be far more efficient so that the need for parents to park on Tower Road won't be the same because the only reason they park there is because it gets them out quicker and if the appropriate means is taken care of by letting them egress first, and then the busses, it will eliminate the need to be on the neighborhood property. He doesn't share the opinion that using Tower Avenue is the way to go. It is a residential area and it is the job of the Zoning Board to protect adjacent properties from activities that are non-residential and this is one of them and Mr. Lofrese agrees.

Mr. Martin asks if this light would be continuously operational. Mr. Ditman responds that it would be operating continuously and that lights are designed to be efficient and be able to be traffic responsive. The light will be green on French Street except when a vehicle comes out of the school using vehicle detection which reads when a car goes into the detection area. It would tell the computer that a car is waiting and the light would switch over to the driveway and when it leaves, it switches back.

A police officer can control the amount of green time on the light for the school lot to empty out. Most schools operate this way.

Mr. Rondeau states he feels that the light should intermittently be turning red to slow traffic on French Street. He states that he was going to mention a 3 way stop and Mr. Ditman replies that it was an option in his draft letter that instead of a stop light, a 3 way stop sign would be appropriate at that intersection. It would also serve as a traffic calming measure and could be designed inexpensively.

Mr. Mancini questions Mr. LoFrese about the Police Commission meeting and if anything about Tower Road was mentioned. Mr. LoFrese replied that it was a

special meeting limited to Hamilton Lane one way. They will be discussion it on the 13th.

Mr. Masayda adds that whatever design is used, it should maximize parking to the maximum amount that you can get.

Russ Erickson, 39 Pleasantview

Mr. Ericson addresses the sightline and that you cannot see the cars coming out until they are almost on the street from the school.

He questions the shrubbery being planted.

Mr. DeCarlo states they are in compliance with the regulations that say a buffer between residences and non-residential use and it will be only 6-8 feet wide and there are presently shrubs on the landowner's property and the gate will be replaced with another vehicle gate. There is no plan to replace the fence. It is an evergreen screen of arborvitaes.

Mr. Ericson asks what will be on Tower Road. Mr. DeCarlo states that behind the maintenance building, an evergreen hedge, then the vehicle gate, then whatever is presently growing there now will be left.

Mr. Ericson believes that it won't matter because when people come from Oakville, they will not take the extra time to go around the front of the high school. The parents will come up the hill and drop the kids off. This area is a nuisance area. They kids hang out there and walk up and down the street making noise and thinks it won't stop unless it is fenced off. He states he submitted a petition to the Board of Education years ago signed by every resident on the streets and asked them to fence it off and stop the nuisance during events and they have not acted on it. He informs them that he only sees 2-3 kids walking up in the morning and the majority is parents dropping the kids off and they do not obey the speed limit. There are 11 no parking signs and they still park there. He asks the board before any final decision is made, to take a site walk to see what goes on and ask them if they would want that in their neighborhood. He feels entitled to a peaceful neighborhood.

Allen Pizzalarusso, 19 Gilbert Lane

He states that he owns the parcel across from the high school entrance as well as the next one on the corner. He gets a good look at what goes on and isn't sure about how he feels about a traffic light. He states now the traffic is stopped there anyway and he thinks a police officer might do a much better job because the kids are cognizant of the fact that he is standing there and pay attention.

He watches the teenagers come down Gilbert and there is no way to cross to get to the other side. He thinks a traffic light should be studied more. The engineer states that 5000 cars come onto French Street every day and whatever can be done to divert it makes sense. A concerted effort needs to be made to do something constructive.

Kevin Kileen, 430 Northfield Road

He states he has heard the neighbors talk about the Tower Road issue and he is opposed to its use because he had taken the opportunity to go there during dismissal to watch what takes place. He continues that cars are parked on both sides of the road without regard to traffic that may be blocked going up or down. They do not move safely through the area and we do have walkers whose safety he is concerned about. It is a narrow road and no sidewalks. He would like to see the debates of the uses of the roads kept separate. One making French Street usage safe by whatever means determinable and two, move the discussion away from Tower Road. It was used minimally. It is the board's prerogative that it be used only during the hours of dismissal to expedite the traffic. It is a problem of parents doing pick up and drop off. They do exactly as the neighbors indicate, park up and down each side making it nearly impassible.

Tom Lambert, 28 Cottage Place

Mr. Lambert feels that this is a Police Department problem. Once they leave the high school, they are on private property and the parents that park there are a hazard and a nuisance. We can put a sidewalk on Tower Road to get the students off the road.

There is no reason why the Police Department can't have somebody back there to control the situation and/or in front of the High School. He does not understand why the Police Department doesn't handle this problem.

Mr. Rondeau asks if the reason why the Police aren't there now is because of shift change and the answer is yes. It is roll call.

Mr. Martin asks if the police were asked to come.

Mr. Minnich adds that he is convinced that the way the school and the architects proposal for new bussing and parking and parents, there will be less reason to go to Tower Avenue and their incentive to be there will not be the same.

Mr. Rondeau adds that if enough traffic tickets are written to pay for the overtime, people might have a second thought about parking there. Mr. Minnich replies that there is a distinction between parking and standing and there are laws for each. Mr. Mancini agrees that it is a police matter. He added that he had gotten in touch

with John Gavallos who told him it was an overtime issue but it was being addressed and he has spoke with two (2) officers that would stay an extra hour to address the issue. When the police are up there for 3-4 days in a row, the problem dissipates until they see the police aren't there anymore.

Donna Masi, 33 Pleasantview Street

Ms. Masi asks what the sight line is for coming out of the driveway onto French Street. Mr. Minnich states that he does not know and Mr. Berger reads a memo from the Public Works Director stating the existing sight line to the left is 255 feet and to the right is 215 feet. She asks if it goes along with the thoroughfare regulations and Mr. Berger replies that it is not in compliance with the sight line standards of the subdivision regulations which don't apply to this application.

She asks if he stated that it doesn't matter. Mr. Berger states that the letter from Mr. Cavanaugh reads that the 85th percentile speeds that determine sight line in the State Highway design Manual are 42 and 43 miles per hour which put you in the range of over 445 of sightline required and Mr. Cavanaugh recommends that the traffic engineer evaluate the existing conditions, and potential for revising this intersection including but not limited to a traffic light.

Motion: To Continue public hearing
Motion made by: C. Mancini
Seconded by: R. Russ

Motion passes unanimously.

Michael Masayda, Secretary
Planning and Zoning Commission