



**TOWN OF WATERTOWN
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, August 5, 2026, 6:30 pm
Watertown Town Hall, Town Council Chambers
61 Echo Lake Road**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ray Antonacci called the meeting to order at 6:30PM and took attendance.

Members Present: R. Antonacci, D. DiVito, L. Cavallo, R. Antonetti (Z), J. Masi, J. Desmarais

Members Absent: J. Duva, J. McHugh, J. Nygren

Also Present: S. Musselman, C. Natusch, P. Bunevich, C. Allen

Appointment of Alternates: J. Desmaris was seated for J. Nygren

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- Jefferey Ingerman, 68 J Ryan Way – Has concerns with the completion of the Ashford Woods development and the fact that the development was never issued a permit from the DEEP for the detention basin / dam. He believes the removal of the condition that the detention basin have a perimeter fence creates a safety issue.
- Darcy Cobbs Lomax, 60 J Ryan Way – Moved into the development 5 years ago and the development remains incomplete with the road surface incomplete and sewer drains still raised. Her greatest concern is the detention basin and objects to how the decision to remove the fencing was handled and believes it should be reversed requiring the developer to install the fencing. Lastly, she is asking that the Commission request a timeline from the developer to understand when the subdivision improvements will be completed.
- Ray Lomax Sr, 60 J Ryan Way – Shared many of the same concerns as Darcy. He believes the Town has a responsibility to see that the development is completed according to the approval.
- Katherine Camara, 31 Cottage Place – Letter from K. Camara, read by Frankie Papolowski who later submitted her own letter. Her main concern is that the DEEP dam permits were not obtained prior to the start of the project. She is also concerned with the fence condition being removed and the project's bond.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Regular Meeting – April 1, 2026
- b. Special Meeting June 17, 2026

D. Divito moved to approve the April 1, 2026, and June 17, 2026, minutes. L. Cavallo seconded and the motion to- approve carried unanimously except J. Desmaris and J. Masi who abstained from the vote.

6. STAFF REPORT

S. Musselman reported that he and C. Natusch have been inspecting erosion controls at all open projects throughout town after each storm. Also, he stated that he will give a further report on the planning considerations under agenda items #10c & 10d. S. Musselman put together the PA 25-1 amendments over the month of July and will give a presentation to the Commission.

7. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

R. Antonacci moved to limit speaking to five minutes per commission member and three minutes per member of the public. L. Cavallo seconded the motion carried with all in favor except J. Desmaris who voted to deny.

8. OLD BUSINESS

- a. **790 Echo Lake Road – Atlantis Service Center** – Site plan modification for the location and installation of a freestanding sign. MBL# 103-096-00C

Danny Porco was present for the application and explained that the original sign dimensions were reduced according to the Commission's comments at the last meeting and that updated plans were submitted. Two 5' x 10' monument signs are now proposed, one on the corner of Rt. 262 and another on the corner of Echo Lake Road and Buckingham Street. Commissioners had concerns with having both signs and agreed that the Rt. 262 location was preferable and didn't like the Echo Lake Road location. D. DiVito was happy to see the size reduced but wanted to see the sign incorporate a stone masonry base. J. Masi requested that the sign includes the street number directly on or attached to the sign.

R. Antonacci moved to approve the site plan modification for one (1) 5' x 10' sign located by Rte. 262 with the condition that the address of the property is displayed on the sign. J. Masi seconded the motion to approve as conditioned carried unanimously.

9. PUBLIC HEARING(S)

Before opening the hearings R. Antonacci read the public hearing rules into the record. C. Allen read the legal notices for the public hearings that were published in the Republican-American on 7/23 & 7/30/26.

- a. **178-184 Commercial Street – Bela Sztanko** – Zone change request from IR-80 → B-SC to allow for car sales and repairs. MBL# 159-045-122. *Application received 5/6/26.*

Bela Sztanko of European Performance Specialists was present for the application and gave an overview of his request to change the zone from IR-80 → to B-SC to allow for car sales and repairs at his new shop at 184 Commercial Street. His business has expanded beyond what his old shop in Oakville could handle and is looking to continue operating in Watertown at a bigger facility that works better for his business' needs. The adjacent properties are car dealerships and B. Sztanko stated that he has made significant improvements to the formerly vacant property.

J. Masi asked why the applicant is requesting changing the zone from IR-80 → B-SC when IG-80 would've also been appropriate for the use he is looking to establish on the property. S. Musselman stated that there are no IG-80 parcels near this property and that the adjacent property is B-SC so this would not be considered spot zoning.

With no one in the public with comment D. Divito moved to close the public hearing. J. Masi seconded the motion to close passed unanimously

After discussion concluded, D. Divito moved to approve the zone change. L. Cavallo seconded and the motion to approve carried unanimously.

- b. **3 Harvard Street-Napoli Associates, LLC.** – 3-part application to establish “Oakville Village Residential Planned Development District” (OVRPDD). MBL# 133-213-004. *Application received 6/3/26.*
- i. OVRPDD Master Plan Application in accordance with Section 4.6.D.1.a of the Watertown Zoning Regulations.
 - ii. Text Amendment to establish OVRPDD in accordance with Section 4.6.D.1.b of the Watertown Zoning Regulations.
 - iii. Zone Change Application to establish the OVRPDD at 3 Harvard Street on the Official Watertown Zoning Map in accordance with Section 4.6.D.1.c of the Watertown Zoning Regulations.

Attorney Franklin Pilicy was present on behalf of the applicant along with David Hughes, P.E., R.L.S. F. Pilicy gave an overview of the site and proposal to redevelop the former Connecticut Hardware building utilizing a Planned Development District (PDD)

into a 12-unit apartment building. The PDD application contains three component parts: 1) Master Plan, 2) Text Amendment to establish the new PDD overlay regulations, & 3) Zone Change application to establish the zone at 3 Harvard Street.

F. Pilicy stated that the 12-units are relatively modest in size and are targeted towards empty-nesters and anyone who is looking to downsize. He also added that the development is in keeping with the State's mission to increase the number of housing units and diversify each community's housing stock.

D. Hughes gave the Commission an overview of the existing conditions of the 0.49-acre parcel that is currently zoned B-C. The existing building footprint is 6,800 ft² and there is a parking lot in the front and back of the former store. The site is largely flat, and the existing open space of the parcel is 8.8% of the total site. To address the comments of the Commission and Staff from the last meeting the Master Plan was updated. The only proposed additions for the building are for exterior stairs, otherwise the existing footprint will remain as is. The aisle width of the parking lot was increased to 25' to meet the regulations as per comments from the last meeting. In addition, the curb cut was adjusted for safer ingress/egress to and from the site. 25 parking spaces are proposed along with a dumpster enclosure. A rain garden is planned along with a landscape area for stormwater management of all the roof leaders. An asphalt sidewalk on the front parking lot is proposed to be removed to reduce the amount of impervious coverage on site; arborvitaes will be planted in this area instead. A new stockade fence is proposed for the eastern and northern property lines. Light poles are proposed to remain; however, the fixtures will be replaced with full cut-off lighting. Additionally, a cluster mailbox was added to the plans for the tenants. The Commission's concerns with lack of green space for the tenants, raised at the last meeting, was addressed and is now shown to be 16.6% proposed while the existing site had 8.8%.

Gary Nurnberger, R.A, was also present for the application and gave a presentation on the changes to the building to accommodate the apartment buildout and shared building elevations and floor plans with the Commission. The existing building is a 1.5 story concrete block structure. The roof is proposed to be raised with a gable pitch to accommodate 2 full residential floors. Siding will be replaced with vinyl yellow clapboards while the gable ends will have light green vertical vinyl siding. 3 exterior wooden stairways are proposed for the apartments and will have metal roof coverings to protect from ice and snow. G. Nurnberger stated that all the apartments are about 1000 ft² with 2-bedrooms, a full bath, and in-unit laundry.

J. Masi and J. Desmarais shared their concerns with the number of parking spaces provided as it leaves few spaces available for visitor parking. D. Hughes responded that the parking calculations require 2 spaces per dwelling unit. R. Antonacci then stated that there is a new statute that is in effect that wouldn't allow the Commission to require a minimum number of parking spaces for this application. S. Musselman

then added that PA 25-1 states that for residential developments of 16 units and under that no minimum off-street parking can be required. The site plans show that there is a parking minimum required so he asked that the applicant remove that from the site plan. S. Musselman also requested that the proposed PDD's dimensional standards be added to the site plan and application documents.

D. DiVito asked what materials would be used for the stairs. G. Nurnberger responded that they will be constructed of pressure treated wood and composite decking. Commissioners also raised concerns with where plow trucks could pile snow on the site. D. Hughes responded that snow could be piled along the northern property boundary and that an asphalt sidewalk in this area will be removed and this area can be used as well.

With no further commissioner questions R. Antonacci opened the hearing to the public for comment.

- John Deary, 53 Yale Street – Asked why the underlying B-C zoning requirements don't have to be met. Concerned with the amount of parking on the site and increased traffic. He believes that 12 apartments are too many for the site but is in favor of its redevelopment with a more appropriate number of units.

With no further public comment F. Pilicy stated that the application to re-develop the site, which has been vacant for a decade, fits within PA 25-1. He believes it's a unique opportunity to revitalize a property in Oakville. S. Musselman stated that the application doesn't fall within the 2-9 units required for a summary review under PA 25-1 but reminded the Commission that since the application is for 12-units that it falls under the 16-unit threshold and as such no minimum parking space requirement can be applied. Since the parking table still shows a minimum parking requirement and that the application documents don't specify dimensional requirements for the PDD S. Musselman recommended the Commission continue the hearing. D. Hughes stated that the dimensional requirements are shown on the site plan. D. DiVito stated that it's important that it be added to the text amendment itself before the Commission could consider acting on the application.

With no further public comment D. DiVito moved to continue public hearings i, ii, & iii. Joe Masi moved to second the motion with all in favor.

The Commission recessed at 7:40PM and returned at 7:48PM

- c. **Commission Petitioned Zone Change application** to rezone parcels from IR-80 to IG-80 on the southern side of Echo Lake Road from Park Road (15 Mountainview Drive) to 1460 Echo Lake Road.

The Commission discussed that a text amendment was considered to the allowable uses in the IR-80 zone which would affect all IR-80 parcels throughout town. Instead, the Commission decided to propose a change to just the parcels currently zoned IR-80 → IG-80 on the south side of Echo Lake Road from Park Road (15 Mountainview Drive) to 1460 Echo Lake Road. J. Masi shared his concerns with the proposal as it may allow car dealerships in this area and proposed a new zone that would be like IG-80 but would preclude car dealerships. Commissioners discussed the idea and ultimately concluded that this area is not likely to see the same development pressures that areas like Straits Turnpike experience. S. Musselman stated that if an applicant were to propose a car dealership here they would have to go through a special permit process which is reviewed on a parcel-to-parcel basis and would require a public hearing.

With no one in the public with comment D. DiVito moved to close the public hearing. L. Cavallo seconded the motion to close passed unanimously.

D. Divito moved to approve the zone change to go into effect by August 25, 2026. R. Antonetti seconded the motion to approve with all in favor except J. Masi who voted to deny.

10. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **465 Straits Turnpike – DG&P Realty, LLC** – Site plan application for a 5,600 ft² addition to an existing building in the RT Overlay District. MBL# 153-098-003.

Attorney Thomas Pettinichi was present for the application and gave an overview of the application to build an addition to the existing Law Office at 465 Straits Turnpike. T. Pettinichi noted that the agenda incorrectly states that the addition will be 5,600 ft²; the actual size of the proposed addition is 900 ft² and the building will be approximately 5,600 ft² after completion of the addition. The 21' x 22' addition will be 2 floors and will be built at the back of the existing building to allow for additional office space for the firm.

D. DiVito stated that he liked how the addition was designed to fit in with the existing structure's design and wouldn't be visible from the street. L. Cavallo concurred and had no objections to the plan as presented. J. Masi asked for more information on the detention basin shown on the plans. T. Pettinichi responded that the detention basin already exists on site from when the office was built originally in 1999.

With no further discussion D. DiVito moved to approve the site plan. J. Masi seconded the motion to approve carried unanimously.

- b. Echo Lake Road – Echo Lake Property, LLC – Site plan application for the construction of a contractor facility with office, garage, and employee parking. MBL# 104-090-02E.**

David Hughes, P.E., R.L.S., was present for the application along with applicants Flori and Kade Senkolli of C&S Paving. The 5.88-acre parcel is currently vacant land situated just to the east of Anco Tool and Manufacturing and is Lot #6 in the Park Road Industrial Park Subdivision. The property has no wetlands and consists of moderate steep slopes, and no work is proposed within an upland review area. Proposed is a 10,080 ft² 5-bay contractor facility, of which 2,100 ft² will be office space; one of the bays will be utilized as a vehicle wash area. 28 parking spaces are shown for employees and visitors. 2-1,000 gallon above ground fuel storage tanks are also proposed for on and off-road diesel.

Stormwater is to be managed through a subsurface collection, treatment, and detention system. The plan also shows an enclosed refuse area, proposed utilities, service laterals, and a 1,000-gallon oil and grit chamber for the vehicle wash bay. D. Hughes has met with Public Works to review the plans for sewer connections, and the plan will be submitted to the Water and Sewer Commission at their next meeting. A detailed erosion control plan, construction sequence, lighting, and landscaping plan. All proposed site lighting will be full cutoff dark sky compliant.

R. Antonacci asked if the applicant had building elevations. D. Hughes responded that they did not but noted that the applicants are looking to build a metal building with 4-5' tall masonry knee wall around the building. The siding and roofing will be metal. S. Musselman requested that D. Hughes explain how water from the vehicle wash bay will be treated. D. Hughes stated that it is important to the applicants that they keep their vehicles clean weekly. A floor drain will capture all of the sediment and water that comes off the vehicles and will flow by gravity into the grit chamber to separate the oils, greases, and sediment before the remaining water will flow to the pump chamber and be sent to up to the force main into the sewer system.

J. Masi asked why they are proposing pumping the influent up to the existing sewer main in Echo Lake Road when they could use gravity to connect through the property to the trunk line in Turkey Brook, as the property does have an easement for this purpose. D. Hughes stated this would require crossing Turkey Brook and would require an application to the CCIWA. Between the proposed project area and the trunk line there are many large boulders and ledge that would have to be navigated. The Echo Lake Road connection would cost less and be more environmentally sound. J. Masi then asked if there was a plan to maintain the subsurface detention system. D. Hughes responded that there are access manholes so that it can be desilted and that a maintenance schedule is provided on the plans. The system was designed to reduce stormwater discharge by 50% during a 25-year storm. R. Antonetti asked what the Town Engineer's view was on the impact of the stormwater on Turkey Brook. P. Bunevich responded that D. Hughes has designed the system in accordance with 2024 DEEP water quality standards and that he has reviewed

the discharge reduction and water quality infiltration calculations and finds no issue with it. He also agrees that it was good choice to not connect the sewer to the trunk line in Turkey Brook and that the subsurface infiltration system will not have an impact on the brook. R. Antonetti asked what kind of vehicles will be washed on the property. F. Senkolli stated that it is for their tri-axle dump trucks, trailers, and equipment which they wash weekly.

J. Masi asked the applicants to consider a masonry building like others structures in the surrounding area. K. Senkolli stated that they were amenable to that but believed that the combination of masonry and metal would be a more aesthetic structure. L. Cavallo then asked about why the diesel storage tanks were so large and if they were considering changing their use in the future. K. Senkolli responded that they currently use about 500 gallons of off-road and 700 gallons of on-road diesel per week for their machines and trucks. Having extra fuel capacity on site will allow them to grow their business. D. DiVito asked about the construction of the fuel tanks. D. Hughes stated they will be double walled and that a detail is included on sheet #C9 of the site plan.

J. Masi moved to table the site plan application to allow time for the applicant to submit building elevations. J. Desmaris seconded the motion to table. The motion was denied with R. Antonacci, D. DiVito, L. Cavallo, and R. Antonetti voting in the negative.

D. DiVito moved to approve the site plan application. R. Antonetti seconded and the motion to approve carried unanimously with the exception of J. Masi who voted against.

- c. **Driveway Separation, R-70 & R-90 Zoning Districts** – Staff presentation and discussion regarding a proposed amendment to Section 6.9.E.5.c of the Watertown Zoning Regulations; possible action to initiate a Commission petitioned text amendment and schedule a public hearing.

S. Musselman gave a presentation on the amendment package. The office has received several inquiries regarding second driveways so that property owners can gain better access to an accessory structure like a barn, workshop, or ADU. Currently the regulations for driveway separation in the R-70 and R-90 zones require a greater separation between driveways than the required minimum frontage for the respective zones at 125' and 150'. By reducing the minimum required separation to 50' it will still allow for meaningful separation and curb cuts on Town Roads will still need approval from the Highway Department and DOT for State Roads. For more intensive uses such as places of worship, non-profit institutions, etc., the Commission retains oversight of site development, including driveways, through a special permit process.

Commissioners briefly discussed the proposed amendment and then J. Desmaris moved to schedule a public hearing for 9/2/2026. D. Divito seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

- d. **Public Act 25-1 Zoning Compliance** – Staff presentation and Commission discussion regarding potential amendments to the Watertown Zoning Regulations to bring them into conformity with PA 25-1; possible action to initiate a Commission petitioned text amendment and schedule a public hearing for 9/2/26.

S. Musselman gave a presentation on the amendment package to bring the zoning regulations into compliance with PA 25-1. A phased approach was discussed and agreed to be the best path and Phase 1 will close the compliance gap as soon as possible while Phases 2 and 3 will require more substantive planning discussions that should be considered during the 2027 POCD process. The following are the major changes proposed to establish compliance with PA 25-1:

1) *Allowing Middle Housing and Mixed-Use by Summary Review*

- a. *Transit community middle housing (2–9 units) and qualifying mixed-use developments are now permitted on commercially or mixed-use zoned lots, subject only to administrative (summary) review by staff—no public hearing required.*
- b. *This applies across all eight business districts.*

2) *New Objective Design and Use Standards (Section 5.28)*

- a. *Introduces clear, measurable standards for building design, site layout, parking, landscaping, and public health/safety for these developments.*
- b. *Ensures the Zoning Enforcement Officer can only approve or deny based on objective criteria, not subjective judgment.*

3) *Residential Parking Requirement Reforms*

- a. *Eliminates minimum off-street parking requirements for residential developments with 16 or fewer units.*
- b. *For 17+ units, caps parking at 1 space per studio/1-bedroom and 2 spaces per larger unit, with flexibility for further reduction via a parking needs assessment.*

4) *Manufactured Housing Parity*

- a. *Manufactured homes built to federal standards must be treated the same as other dwellings—no additional restrictions allowed.*

5) *No Cap on Number of Units*

- a. Prohibits any fixed numerical or percentage cap on the total number of multifamily, middle-housing, or mixed-use units permitted town-wide. Density and lot-area standards remain as lot-specific controls only.*

6) Character-Based Criteria Reform

- a. Removes the ability to deny applications based on subjective neighborhood character unless such character is defined by explicit, physical standards in the regulations.*

7) Nonconforming Uses Clarification

- a. Demolishing a nonconforming structure is not, by itself, evidence of intent to abandon the use.*

8) Protest Petition Procedure Update

- a. Lowers the threshold for protest petitions to 50% and allows zone/text changes by a simple majority vote of the Commission.*

9) Minimum Unit Size

- a. Removes the 650 sq. ft. minimum unit size in the RT Overlay; now only the building code minimum applies.*

10) Conversion of Vacant Nursing Homes

- a. Permits conversion of vacant nursing homes to multifamily housing by summary review, provided certain conditions are met (e.g., no major footprint changes, 90 days vacancy).*

11) New and Updated Definition

- a. Adds and updates definitions for terms such as cottage cluster, middle housing, mixed-use development, perfect six, summary review, and more, aligning with state law.*

12) Phased Implementation

- a. The amendments are to be implemented in phases, with immediate compliance measures and future work on detailed design standards and housing growth planning.*

Commissioners discussed the proposed amendments and L. Cavallo moved to schedule a public hearing for 9/2/2026. D. DiVito seconded and the motion carried unanimously. S. Musselman will notify the NVCOG, as required, of both amendment hearings.

11. COMMUNICATIONS AND BILLS

- a. CT Federation of Planning and Zoning Agencies Quarterly Newsletter Summer, 2026

12. ADJOURNMENT

D. DiVito moved to adjourn at 8:57 PM. L Cavallo seconded the motion to adjourn carried unanimously.

- ***Next Meeting Date: 9/2/2026***

Respectfully submitted,

Spencer Musselman, CZEO
Land Use Administrator
Town of Watertown, CT