



**TOWN OF WATERTOWN
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, June 17, 2026, 6:30 p.m.
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. Antonaci, D. DiVito, K. Demirs, L. Cavallo, J. McHugh, J. Nygren, J. Masi
(Present at 8 :35PM)

Members Absent: J. Duva, R. Antonetti

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

Appointment of Alternates: Jack McHugh was seated for R. Antonetti

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Regular Meeting – April 1, 2026

R. Antonacci moved to table the approval of the April 1, 2026, minutes. D. DiVito seconded and the motion to approve carried unanimously.

6. OLD BUSINESS

- a. 28 Riverside Street – Solli Engineering on behalf of Palm Coast Capital, LLC (Tractor Supply) – Site plan modification to approved site plan #2025-05 to increase driveway grade, elevation of proposed development, and replace stormwater detention basin with an underground detention system. *Application received 4/1/26.***

Casey Birch, of Soli Engineering was present on behalf of the applicant Palm Coast Capital, LLC. Also present was Matt Darling of Palm Coast Capital.

Since the last meeting they have received approval from the CCIWA on 4/9. A site walk was scheduled for the PZC earlier in the spring; however, no Commissioners were able to attend so staff were given a walk through of the site with Soli Engineering. Both S. Musselman and C. Natusch were present. R. Antonacci asked if staff had any further comments on the applicant. P. Bunevich stated that the Engineering Department had no further comments or questions.

J. McHugh moved to approve the site plan modification. K. Demirs seconded and the motion to approve carried unanimously.

b. 110 Woodbury Road – Stephanie Cummings, Esq. (Carmody) on behalf of the Taft School – Petition for waiver of fees pursuant to Ordinance 36-4 Taft School, 110 Woodbury Road, Watertown, CT. (*Petition received 3/4/26*).

Attorney Stephanie Cummings was present on behalf of the applicant, Taft School, and gave an overview of her applicants request to waive a portion of the fees associated with the site plan / special permit application.

R. Antonacci responded that the Commissions only authority to reduce the application fee is under Section 3.2 of the fee ordinance. A waiver can be permitted for 1 of 3 scenarios, A) the re-filing of an application within 1-year of an application withdrawal, B) a substantial public benefit or, C) a Commission error in applying the fee. Since Taft's request meets neither A or C, and a specific finding of a public benefit under B is absent there is no basis for the Commission to waive the fee. This is consistent with the Commission's treatment of comparable projects. In 2024, Forum Plastics, the last large-scale application before this Commission, paid the full \$30,600 site plan fee for the \$14,500,000 project under the same fee formula established in the ordinance. Waiving Taft's fee where a comparable applicant paid in full, and no justification under Section 3.2 has been shown, would be arbitrary.

D. DiVito agreed with R. Antonacci's reasoning and shared that he understands Taft's position, however, he felt that Taft didn't consider everything that is involved in monitoring a project of this magnitude until completion. He added that the fee is a set calculation that all applicants are subject to and Taft isn't being treated differently. J. Nygren also agreed that the fee was fair considering the scope of the project.

S. Cummings responded that she believes the fee ordinance does permit the fee to be reduced when it is clearly excessive in relation to the cost for the town to review the application. She further stated that the statute supports this as well and that the fee needs to be proportionate to the cost of review of the application.

K. Demirs added that he feels that approximately \$140,000 fee is too much, however, the Taft proposed \$35,000 wasn't enough. So, if the Commission and Taft cannot figure out how to arrive at a number between there he stated that he couldn't support the waiver. S. Cummings responded that they were willing to engage in additional conversation regarding the fee but that she hadn't seen anything to support denying the waiver.

R. Antonacci stated that the Town appreciates Taft as an important part of the community and would like that to continue, however, he cannot support the waiver for the reasons explained in accordance with Section 3.2 of the ordinance.

D. DiVito moved to deny the waiver of fees pursuant to Ordinance 36-4. J. Nygren seconded and the motion to deny carried unanimously.

As a result of the decision to deny the fee waiver request, S. Cummings stated that Taft is prepared to tender full payment of the site plan / special permit fee. The fee was then submitted to Town Staff before item# 7a proceeded.

7. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

- a. 110 Woodbury Road – Stephanie Cummings, Esq. (Carmody) on behalf of the Taft School – Site Plan / Special Permit for the construction of two new 45,000 ft² dormitories with associated site improvements to include landscaping, walkways, and stormwater management. (Application received March 4, 2026, Public Hearing April 1, 2026).**

R. Antonacci read the public hearing rules into the record before discussion began. Attorney Stephanie Cummings was again present for the applicant, Taft School, and explained that a full presentation was prepared for the application and asked the project engineer to highlight the changes made to the stormwater management plan.

Rodney Morrison, P.E., principal for the LRC Group, was present and explained the differences between the new current plan and the stormwater plan that was previously presented to the Commission in April. Additional bio-swales were added to incorporate the additional stormwater flow that was omitted from the plan's original calculations. The up-gradient area to North Street was missed in the original calculations. R. Morrison stated they now feel comfortable that the plan accommodates all the necessary stormwater retention on site. S. Cummings added that the additional stormwater infrastructure doesn't encroach within any wetlands or upland review area and as such doesn't require additional review by CCIWA. Staff have met with S. Cummings and the LRC group to go over the changes made since the last meeting.

D. DiVito asked what the bio-swales look like. R. Morrison responded that it's a shallow vegetated swale that takes stormwater runoff and lets it filter through the vegetation and infiltrate back into the soil. The remaining water, that isn't infiltrated, is then transferred into the rest of the stormwater system. P. Bunevich stated that he reviewed the revisions and that they comply with town regulations as well as the DEEP Stormwater Quality Manual guidelines.

J. McHugh asked if the two dormitories would increase enrollment to Taft. CFO of the Taft School, Jake Odden, responded that they will not and explained that it will allow the school to house more students on campus, however, the overall school size will not change.

Currently the student cohort averages between 590-600 students, and the new dormitories will allow them to de-densify the existing dorms that have become overcrowded. The dorms are designed for the younger cohort of 9th graders as well as providing space for faculty within each floor of the dorms. There is 5 staff units and capacity for 68 students in each dorm. J. McHugh stated his concern that if the student population grows, so will the need for more faculty and teachers and that they would need housing somewhere. J. Odden responded that this would be true if it occurred, however, Taft is firmly committed to maintaining the existing size of the school both with students and faculty and that they are positioned competitively with other private schools in the region. J. McHugh added that he isn't against growth, he is just concerned with more housing being taken off the grand list. J. Odden appreciated the concern and stated that the added staff units (10-total between the new dorms) would help alleviate this pressure. It was also added that Taft keeps the PILOT payment in line with the tax liability that is taken off the grand list and that if further units were taken off the tax rolls that the PILOT payment would be adjusted accordingly to be a good neighbor and member of the community.

D. DiVito shared that appreciates the level of presentation that Taft has provided throughout the process and their ability to address all the questions and concerns of the Commission. His concerns are related to the process of construction and how that will be managed by the school. D. DiVito asked what the hours of construction would be to address the concerns of the neighbors. J. Odden stated he was unsure of the exact hours of construction but would ensure that the construction managers, O&G, will adhere to the ordinances. He also acknowledged the issues that had occurred during the construction of the Turf Fields and steps the school took to address those concerns at the time. S. Cummings added that measures have been taken to be good neighbors throughout the project including tracking pads, spraying down vehicles to minimize dust, off site staging etc. D. DiVito added that another concern of his is the pressure added to an already strained police force and volunteer fire service. S. Cummings reminded the Commission that the new buildings will not increase the student cohort and that the increased oversight of staff in these buildings will help mitigate potential incidents. J. Odden stated the school remains committed to educating the students on best practices to minimize non-emergency calls. Dan Sacconne, representative of the Taft School, added that the new buildings will allow for the very best emergency systems to be used that will also help minimize nuisance calls. The systems will also be updated throughout the campus to work with the new emergency systems being installed in the new dorms.

K. Demirs asked what the expected construction period would be for the project. D. Saccone responded that it will be an 18-month process beginning to end. Groundbreaking is expected for March 2027 and will be completed for the fall 2028 semester.

With no further comments or questions from the Commission R. Antonacci opened the hearing to the public for comment.

- *Heather Allen, 101 Walnut Street – Was present at the 1st hearing and is still concerned with the size of the project and the height of the buildings. She questioned how they received approval for the height of the buildings. Is concerned with lighting and adverse*

impact to the neighborhood and effects to her home. Felt that lighting was never adequately addressed. North Street is a busy street and is concerned with the mess and noise from construction she experienced during the turf field project. Additionally concerned with landscaping for screening.

- *Diane Chere, 87 North Street – Has many concerns with the dorms including the proximity of the new dorms to her property. Noise, lighting, and site management were also cited as concerns. She experienced bad dust and road conditions from the last project. Is concerned with the landscape screening and how they will be able to adequately screen given the tight space between her home and the project site.*

With no further public comment R. Antonacci asked if the applicant would like an opportunity to add any additional information.

S. Cummings came forward and offered further details and explanation on any aspect of the project should the Commission have any questions. She spoke specifically to the height concerns raised by the public, noting that the height will be consistent with the overall campus and that no variance is required to comply with the zoning regulations. All lighting will be dark sky compliant and robust landscaping plans have been developed. The landscape architect designed the plans to be both aesthetic and provide screening for light, noise, and act as a natural physical buffer. She referred to her earlier comments on site management considerations that have been built out and noted that doing both dorms as once will mitigate the impact to the neighborhood by not having two separate construction periods.

D. DiVito asked for clarification on Ms. Chere's concern with the proximity of the buildings to her home. S. Cummings responded that actual project area is hundreds of feet from her property and that her property borders the access road area. Extra landscape screening was intentionally added to this area to address Ms. Chere's concerns. S. Musselman asked for clarification on exactly how far her house was from the project area and what specially was being proposed for landscaping in this area. Robert Douglass of Voith and Mactavish Architects, LLP, was present as the project's architect and noted that the closest point of Ms. Chere's property to the dorms was actually 60'. This point is a faculty residence and was designed this way intentionally to reduce noise impacts to the neighborhood. The closest dorm to Ms. Chere's property is more than 125'. D. DiVito then followed up by asking what kind of landscape screening was in this area. Project Manager D. Saccone stated that there will be a large number of trees being planted in the area. The landscape plan was designed with retaining walls in this area so the mature trees along the property boundary could be preserved. Nearly a \$1,000,000 in plantings is proposed for the project and plantings will be large 4-6" caliper inch trees.

S. Musselman then noted, for the record, that a 6/9/26 letter had been received from the applicant granting an extension for the deadline to close the public hearing to 6/17/26. D. DiVito moved to close the public hearing. J. Nygren seconded and the motion to close carried unanimously.

J. McHugh moved to approve the special permit and site plan. K. Demirs seconded and the motion to approve carried unanimously.

8. NEW BUSINESS

- a. 758 Litchfield Road – Elvis Methoxha** – 8-24 review for the sale of a town-owned parcel (MBL# 053-33A-009) for the construction of a new driveway with improved sightlines.

Elvis Methoxha, property owner of 758 Litchfield Road, was present and explained the reasoning for the 8-24 review. The property has sightline issues at the existing driveway and acquiring the vacant adjacent town-owned parcel (MBL# 053-33A-009 Litchfield Road) would allow him to construct a driveway with improved sightlines that would benefit public safety. In addition to the sightline concerns the existing driveway is very steep and the new driveway could be built with a more favorable grade if he is able to acquire the vacant town-owned parcel. K. Demirs asked if there was a map of the town parcel. E. Methoxha stated that it was in the Commission packet and that the sight-line analysis was also included. K. Demirs stated that the Town Council is looking into other vacant town-owned properties at this time as well.

R. Antonacci moved to issue a favorable 8-24 review recommendation to the Town Council. D. DiVito seconded and the motion to issue a favorable recommendation carried unanimously.

- b. 470 Straits Turnpike – Carmine Castiglione** – Permit extension request for a site plan / special permit approval for an age-restricted housing development to expire on 12/1/26. MBL# 152-256-003.

R. Antonacci asked what the date of expiration for the permit would be if granted. C. Natusch stated that it would be for 5 years. S. Musselman stated that it would expire on 12/1/31.

R. Antonacci moved to grant the site plan / special permit extension request. D. DiVito seconded and the motion carried unanimously. Approval is now valid to 12/1/31.

- c. 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.

Bela Sztanko was present for the application to request a zone change at 178-184 Commercial Street from IR-80 → B-SC to allow for car sales and repairs. B. Sztanko stated that he is a long time Watertown resident and he owns a Porche repair shop on Falls Avenue. He employs several Watertown residents and they have outgrown their current space and are looking to re-locate to Commercial Street. The current zoning is IR-80 and doesn't allow for car repair or sales by changing it to B-SC it will allow his decade old business to continue to grow in town. S. Musselman noted that this application is just the request for a zone change and that if approved the applicant will have to come back before

the Commission for approval to locate the business at this location. B. Sztanko noted that the neighbors of 178-184 Commercial Street are car dealerships like Crabtree Toyota and Valenti Volkswagen. J. McHugh asked if there needs to be two different zones in this area. R. Antonacci stated that this property directly abuts a parcel zoned B-SC so it wouldn't be considered spot zoning.

D. DiVito asked that since there are two buildings, what his plans were for both. B. Sztanko stated that the rear building is currently leased and is well established. His business will occupy the front building which has been vacant for some time. They are currently doing repairs to bring it up to a nice condition. The business is a small family-owned shop with a total of 5-6 employees. The business is multi-faceted with restoration of classic vehicles and custom race car builds meant for off street use only. Sales are also being considered as a future facet and as such is looking for approval for that as well. B. Sztanko explained to the Commission that his old building is already sold and having to wait many months to occupy the new space will put a significant strain on his business. R. Antonacci said that the soonest they could hold the hearing is for 8/5/26.

J. McHugh moved to schedule a public hearing for 8/5/26. D. DiVito seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

d. 394 Sand Bank Road -Michael Jedd- Farm stand with accessory parking and grading. MBL# 162-021-010.

Michael Jedd, owner of Kalenauskas Farm, was present for the application. The application is for the relocation of an existing 12' x 20' farm store that was inadvertently placed halfway over the neighboring property line, so this would address the non-conformity issue. He is also looking to excavate an area along the road just to the west of the current location to place the farm store. A state grant was received to purchase a 10' x 12' walk-in freezer, so he is proposing to attach that to the rear of the store. Also proposed is a small parking area for the farm store, which is why the application had to come before the Commission and wasn't an administrative approval.

To bring the site grade down to road level there will be a significant amount of excavation involved. D. DiVito asked if there is any work within a wetland or upland review area associated with the project. M. Jedd responded that there is not. J. McHugh asked if there were any retaining walls proposed. M. Jedd stated no and that the grade will be sloped to a 3:1 and won't require a retaining wall.

J. McHugh moved to approve the site plan application. D. DiVito seconded and the motion to approve carried unanimously.

e. 3 Harvard Street-Napoli Associates, LLC Application to establish Planned Development District (PDD). MBL# 133-213-004.

- (a) Zone Change Application in accordance with Section 4.6.1 C and Section 8.6
- (b) Application for Planned Development in accordance with Zoning Regulations Section 4.6.1(a) (Master Plan)
- (c) Regulation Amendment Application in accordance with Regulations Section 4.6.D1.b and Section 8.5.1

Attorney Franklin Pilicy was present for the application along with the applicant Napoli Associates, LLC. They were before the Commission approximately a year prior for the pre-app discussion and are now ready to formally apply. F. Pilicy requested the Commission to schedule a public hearing for the 8/5/26 meeting. David Hughes, P.E., was present as well and gave an overview of the documents submitted. Plans include and existing conditions map and a master site plan. D. Hughes and F. Pilicy had met previously with staff before applying and incorporated their comments into the plan. Most of the changes are to the interior and exterior of the building, however, some site improvements are also proposed which include the replacing of an existing fence, an enclosed dumpster and utility area, and arborvitae landscaping. 24 parking spaces are required and 26 spaces are provided. Other improvements include stormwater management and a rain garden. The light fixtures will be updated with new full cut-off lighting.

R. Antonacci raised concerns over the amount of impervious area and the lack of green space for the residents of the building. D. Hughes stated that it was an existing commercial development that is being converted to residential. R. Antonacci responded that it doesn't mean that it has to stay that way. The applicants reduced the impervious area by 5% with this plan. The Commission asked if any affordable housing was being proposed as part of the project. F. Pilicy stated that there was not. Also raised was the fact that the access aisle doesn't meet the standards of Section 6.2.E.3 and needs to be made wider and asked the applicant to check this. S. Musselman stated that the requirement is 25' and what is shown is 22.5'.

D. DiVito asked what kind of amenities the units will have. Applicant M. Cipriano responded that there will be custom cabinetry, stainless appliances, and granite counters. They are trying to keep the rents in affordable range of \$2,000 a month. R. Antonacci again brought up the lack of green space. M. Cipriano stated that yes the area is limited, however, there is a park located within walking distance. The Commission asked for clarification on how to set the hearing given the 3-part application. S. Musselman stated that all 3 parts will need to go to a hearing and, if approved, a site plan application will be required before they can begin construction. F. Pilicy pushed back on why a subsequent site plan application was necessary. S. Musselman responded that this is a

PDD and requires a special procedure spelled out in the regulations that must be followed. As presented, in the current zone, the use wouldn't be permissible and as such a PDD is required.

D. DiVito moved to set a public hearing for the 3 Harvard Street PDD application for 8/5/26. J. McHugh seconded and the motion to set a hearing carried unanimously.

- f. 401 Park Road – Datto**– Site Plan modification for the installation of a new fuel tank on an existing concrete pad. MBL# 082-089-04B.

D. DiVito moved to approve the site plan modification. K. Demirs seconded and the motion to approve carried unanimously.

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

J. Nygren moved to continue the site plan modification application to the 8/5/26 meeting. D. DiVito seconded and the motion to continue carried unanimously.

9. PLANNING

- a.** Discussion of potential text amendment to allow bulk material storage in the IR-80 zoning district or the rezoning of parcels along Echo Lake Road from the IR-80 → IG-80 zoning district between Park Road and Rte. 8.

J. McHugh moved to schedule a public hearing for 8/5/26, for a zone change amendment to allow bulk material storage in the IR-80 zoning district for the rezoning of parcels along Echo Lake Road from the IR-80 → IG-80 zoning district between Park Road and Rte. 8. D. DiVito seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

10. COMMUNICATIONS AND BILLS

- a.** UCONN Extension Expanding Connecticut Agriculture through vacant lot activation and peri-urban Farmland Access linking.
- b.** City of Waterbury Zoning Commission Notice of Proposed Zoning Amendment, Public Hearing June 24, 2026, for the purpose of permitting Religious Institutions by Special Permit in the Park Industrial District.
- c.** Town of Woodbury Zoning Regulations text amendment Short-Term Rental - Public Hearing June 9, 2026.
- d.** City of Waterbury Zoning Commission Notice of Zoning Regulation Amendment Section 5.04.15 (RM District Maximum Residential Units per Building and Section 10.02.04 (Standards for Intensified two, three and multifamily Development) Public Hearing July 22, 2026.

- e. Town of Woodbury – Zoning regulations text amendments to site plan, mixed-use, and off-street parking standards – Public Hearing June 10, 2026.

The Commission accepted Communications and Bills

11. ADJOURNMENT

D. DiVito moved to adjourn at 8:28PM. K. Demirs seconded and the motion to adjourn carried unanimously.

- *Next Meeting Date: August 5, 2026*

Respectfully submitted,

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