

**SUFFIELD PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION**  
**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**  
**February 27, 2023**

**Present:** Mark Winne, Chairman  
Erin Golembiewski, Vice Chairman  
Ginny Bromage, Secretary  
Tracy Hespelt  
Leon Litvak  
Christine Sinopoli  
Jacob Byrnes, Alternate  
Jeff Girard, Alternate

**Absent:** Ross Wilcox, Alternate

**Also Present:** Bill Hawkins, AICP, Director of Planning & Development  
Karen Isherwood, P.E., Town Engineer  
Ellie Binns, Administrative Assistant  
Carl Landolina, Commission Counsel

*The proceedings of this meeting were recorded and are available on the Town website, along with all of the application materials.*

**I. ROLL CALL**

Chairman Winne called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM as a hybrid meeting with seven member's in-person and one member participating remotely on the video/teleconference call.

**II. PUBLIC COMMENT – None**

**III. PRE-APPLICATION CONFERENCE**

Request from Briarwood Homes, Inc. for a pre-application conference to discuss a proposed flexible residential development (FRD) subdivision for a property located on the westerly side of Remington Street with the nearest intersection being Poole Road, Map 29, Block 26, Lot 9-3.  
Applicant: Briarwood Homes, Inc.

Attorney Joseph Flynn of Alfano & Flynn, LLC presented the preliminary design for a 24-lot Flexible Residential Development (FRD) subdivision on Remington Street on behalf of Briarwood Homes, Inc. The engineer for the project, Robert Hiltbrand of RR Hiltbrand Engineering & Surveying LLC was also in attendance to answer questions. Attorney Flynn described the location of the property and noted that the front of the property is zoned R-25 and the rear of the property is zoned R-45. It was noted that the subdivision has received a capacity letter from the WPCA for use of the sewer. The proposed lots varied in size, ranging from 0.6 to 3.5 acres. There have been discussions about donating the proposed open space to the Suffield Land Conservancy (SLC). The proposed subdivision is adjacent to the property already owned by the SLC. The proposed road for the subdivision connects to Remington Street in two locations with sidewalks shown along the Remington Street frontage. Commission members indicated that they would like to see sidewalks on Remington Street and at least one side of the proposed road

within the subdivision. Members also noted that they would like to see a mixture of housing types in the plan.

#### **IV. PUBLIC HEARING - None**

#### **V. OLD BUSINESS**

**File #2022-11-** Request for a special permit/site plan approval as amended to convert the building located at 140 South Main Street (St. Joseph's Church) into residential apartments per Section V.U. Adaptive Reuse Zoning Regulations. Map 44H, Block 47, Lot 217. Applicant: James McMahan.

The public hearing on this application was closed on January 23<sup>rd</sup> and the Commission began deliberations on the information presented over the course of the two public hearings. The Commission's Attorney Carl Landolina was present to answer any questions with regard to procedure. Mr. Winne pointed out that this is an adaptive reuse permit as well as a special permit and that the Commission members should discuss if the criteria in the Adaptive Reuse Regulations (V.U.) had been met. They would also need to consider if the Special Permit Approval criteria in Section XIV.B.1.b. had been met. Commissioners reviewed the lack of a substantial benefit to the town and raised concerns about the adequacy of the parking, the change from proposing affordable units as part of the development, and the density of the development compared to the surrounding properties. They also felt that the applicant had not shown that there was a substantial inability to develop the property in conformance with its' current zoning. Mr. Winne also mentioned the plan would call for a number of substantial trees to be removed from the property.

Ms. Golembiewski moved to approve File#2022-11 for 140 South Main Street with the application having met the criteria for adaptive reuse as listed in Section V.U. and having met the criteria for the special permit approval as listed in Section XIV.B.1.b. with the following conditions:

- The plans are revised to indicate "Type C" screening on the northern and eastern sides of the parking lot.
- The plans are revised to indicate a screening fence around the trash bin area.
- A drainage easement is shown on the plans for the grading and drainage basin shown on the adjacent property. Final easement language to be approved by the Commission's counsel.
- A letter from CT Water indicating they can provide adequate supply to the building is submitted for the file prior to building permit approval.
- Submission of a revised Storm Water Management Plan that meets Town Engineer approval, amended to document the water quality volume required and provided, and to model post-development peak runoff from the water quality area.
- Final plans shall specify the basin outlet (location and material) to agree with the approved storm water management plan, and include necessary measures to ensure stable overland discharge for all storm events.

The motion was seconded by Ms. Hespelt and defeated with a unanimous vote of 0-6-0.

Mr. Winne stated that the Commission should provide a collective statement of reasons for not approving the application.

Ms. Golembiewski moved to enter into the record a collective statement of reasons for denial of the application as set forth in the memo from Director of Planning and Development, Bill Hawkins dated February 27, 2023 starting on the bottom of Page 2 with “the applicant failed to show that” and continuing through the end of Page 3, with the additional statement that the plan requires the removal of too many trees of 12” caliper and greater as follows:

The applicant failed to show that:

- There is a substantial benefit to the Town.
- The conversion of the church building into apartments is compatible with the surrounding area.
- There is a substantial inability to develop the property in conformance with its’ current zoning based upon the information submitted with the application.

Other reasons the Commission did not approve the application included,

- The proposed density of 13 units/acre is not appropriate for the general vicinity of the project and a higher density than any other permissible density in the zoning regulations for a residential zone including the Planned Development Apartment zone which permits 5 units/acre or 7 units/acre if age restricted.
- Section XIV.B.1.b(1) - The location and size of the proposed use; nature and intensity of the operation associated with the proposed use; the size, shape, and character of the site in relation to the proposed use; and the relationship of the proposed use and site to adjacent land uses, sites, and streets giving access to it are not appropriate for the orderly development of the district in which 140 South Main Street is located.
- Section XIV.B.1.b(4) – The parking and loading facilities are inadequate and improperly located for the proposed use as the design does not show an area for snow removal and while the number of spaces meets the minimum requirement there has been no provision for guest parking shown on the plans.
- Conversion of the structure to multi-family residential is not an appropriate use of the adaptive reuse regulation and inconsistent with the 2022 Plan of Conservation & Development as follows:
  - This application does not guide residential growth in ways that will provide compatible uses of land. (Strategy A.1., Page 18).
  - Approval of this application does not retain the overall character of Suffield (Strategy B, Page 19)
  - The applicant removed the proposed affordable units from the project as part of reducing the number of apartments and therefore does not provide housing that is affordable.
- The plan requires the removal of too many trees of 12” caliper and greater (Section VIII.C.7).

The motion was seconded by Ms. Hespelt and approved with a unanimous vote of 6-0-0.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS - None**

**VII. REPORTS**

Chairman – None

Director of Planning & Development - Mr. Hawkins reviewed the State Statute pertaining to required parking spaces and noted that the Commission can still opt out of these requirements. He added that if the Commission does opt out they may want to revise the current regulations with respect to parking requirements. Mr. Hawkins also noted that he had a request for additional signage at 11 High Street and explained that the property is unique as it has frontage on both High Street and Mountain Road but is not a corner lot. Tenants in the building would like better signage on the Mountain Road side of the property. He will investigate possible solutions to recommend. It was noted that this might be best resolved by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

**VIII. MINUTES**

Ms. Bromage moved to approve the minutes of the January 23, 2023 regular meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Golembiewski and approved unanimously 6-0-0.

**IX. CORRESPONDENCE** – Mr. Winne shared the invitation to the upcoming Connecticut Federation of Planning & Zoning Agencies annual conference on March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Members can contact staff if they would like to register for the program.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

With nothing further to come before the commission, Ms. Bromage made a motion to adjourn at 8:58 PM. The motion was seconded by Ms. Golembiewski and approved unanimously 6-0-0.

Submitted,

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Ginny Bromage, Secretary

cc: Assessor, Building Official, Conservation Commission, Selectmen, Town Clerk, Town Engineer, Zoning Enforcement Officer, Commission Counsel