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## **PLANNING AND ZONING - LAND USE DEPARTMENT**

### **VIA INTEROFFICE AND ELECTRONIC MAIL**

June 25, 2024

Mr. Tony Turner  
Central Middle School Building Committee  
290 Greenwich Avenue  
Greenwich, CT 06830  
Tony.Turner@greenwichct.org

**RE:** The application of the Central Middle School Building Committee, authorized agent, for the Town of Greenwich, record owner, for a Final Site Plan and Special Permit application PLPZ 2024 00021, to replace the Central Middle School building with related site improvement including, new grass athletic fields, vehicular access, and parking areas, the results of which would exceed 150,000 cubic feet in Building Volume, pursuant to Sec. 6-13 through 5-15, 6-17, 6-93, 6-94, 6-101(a), Division 14, 15, 17, and 18, and Sec. 6-205 of the Town of Greenwich Building Zone Regulations, on a 21.72-acre property located at 9 Indian Rock Lane in the R-12 Zone as shown on a site plan prepared by SLAM last revised 5/16/24, architectural Plans prepared by SLAM last revised 4/3/24 and landscaping plans prepared by SLAM, last revised 5/16/24.

Dear Mr. Turner:

At a regular meeting held on June 11, 2024, the Planning and Zoning Commission considered the above referenced application and took the following action:

Upon a motion to approve a final site plan and special permit with modifications made by Ms. Alban and seconded by Mr. Macri, the following resolution was adopted 4-1 (Voting in favor of this item: Alban, Macri, Jones (for Lowe), and Welles (for Yeskey). (Voting against: Levy); and

WHEREAS the Commission held public hearings on April 30, May 29, and June 11, 2024 and took all testimony as required by law; and

WHEREAS the applicant received Municipal Improvement (application PLPZ 2023 00389) approval in compliance with Sections 99 and 100 of the Town's Charter and preliminary site plan, (application PLPZ 2023 00388) was moved to final in Compliance with Sec. 6-13(a)(8) of the Town's Building Zone regulations on October 17, 2023; and

WHEREAS the subject action would replace the existing 111,417 sq. ft. Central Middle School building with a new, 129,034 sq. Ft. Central Middle School building with related site improvement including, new grass athletic fields, play areas, vehicular access, and parking areas, the results of which would exceed 150,000 cubic feet in Building Volume, on a 21.72-acre property located at 9 Indian Rock Lane in the R-12 Zone; and

WHEREAS the subject action requires a special permit as the proposed building would exceeds 150,000 cubic feet in building volume in a residential zone; and

WHEREAS the subject action proposes removal of the current 111,417 sq. ft. Central Middle School building in the southern part of the site and construct a new 125,407 sq. ft. educational building would be constructed to the north of the property where currently ball fields and wooded slopes, exist; and

WHEREAS a new, extended driveway to the building, a separate bus loop, and new parking areas are proposed. The main entry drive would increase onsite queuing space (1,250 linear feet or approximately 50 vehicles) for drop off and pickup activities. And the new separate bus loop off of Orchard St. would create a segregated traffic flow (bus vs. personal vehicle); and

WHEREAS the existing school would be abated and demolished, and then replaced by athletic fields in the space to be vacated by the existing building; and

WHEREAS proposed structure would continue to house grades 6-8; and

WHEREAS the size of the facility has been approved by the Board of Education to meet the State required educational specifications and continue to accommodate the current and expected student head count for those districted to attend the Central Middle School; and

WHEREAS the current maximum occupancy of the existing school is noted to be 734 students; and

WHEREAS latest enrollment numbers for this middle school was noted to be 511 students; and

WHEREAS the occupancy of the proposed replacement building would accommodate up to 660 students; and

WHEREAS the subject action appears to meet the required setbacks of the underlying R-12 zone; and

WHEREAS the proposed height, from grade plane, appears to be 28 ft. which is less than the 35ft maximum height permitted in the R-12 Zone; and

WHEREAS the proposed gross floor area of 129,034 sq. ft. would appear to be below the 297,992 sq. ft maximum allowable for the site per the floor-to-area ratio of the R-12 Zone; and

WHEREAS onsite vehicle parking would be increased from 98 to 122 parking spaces; and

WHEREAS space of onsite queuing for student drop-off/pick-up by personal vehicles would be increased in the proposed design; and

WHEREAS overflow parking for special events would be accommodated in the proposed bus loop outside of school hours; and

WHEREAS the applicant has advised the Commission that it will continue to coordinate parking needs with Greenwich High School and that the Public Schools also has an agreement with the Greenwich Baptist Church to use its parking when needed; and

WHEREAS the Commission finds the proposed parking to satisfactorily meet the demands for the typical activities expected for this middle school and meets the intents and purposes of Sec. 6-158 of the Town's Building Zone Regulations; and

WHEREAS emergency access to the north side of the proposed building would be provided via a dedicated service path. This access around the building was accepted by the Fire Marshal who has also endorsed the proposed plan; and

WHEREAS the provided traffic study prepared for this project found current and future Levels of Service to be an "F" or lower for the affected intersections during the AM and PM peaks; and

WHEREAS the subject action does not appear to decrease the LOS based on the provided analyses and as reviewed by the Commission's Traffic consultant, and the Town's DPW; and

WHEREAS the traffic impact study also found a large percentage of students walk or are driven to school; and

WHEREAS the proposed site plan seeks to address the resultant safety and circulation issues by altering points of ingress and egress to the site by separating personal vehicle from bus traffic; and

WHEREAS the proposed bus loop will be gate controlled during school hours to ensure the separation; and

WHEREAS the driveway on Indian Rock Lane will preserve existing utility poles and the entrance widened to allow WB-50 turning movements entering the site from the east and west; and

WHEREAS the clear travel width on Indian Rock Lane is to be 11 feet wide at the curb extensions for each direction of travel as measured from the double yellow center line to the curb lines. The westbound direction includes a painted one-foot hatched shoulder, resulting in an effective 10-foot-wide travel lane to match the existing cross-section in order to accommodate on-street parking in an eight-foot lane; and

WHEREAS in traffic comments dated 5/31/24, the DPW agreed to waive its requirement for a sidewalk extension from Indian Rock, north to the Bus Driveway Exit only. DPW indicated support for three options. The Commission and the applicant have agreed to Option C which is a 5-foot-wide ADA-accessible sidewalk from the existing sidewalk on Indian Rock Lane toward the parking lot, then along the east side of the parking lot to the Bus Drop-off Sidewalk.; and

WHEREAS DPW traffic further advised that the proposed median pavement imprint at the Orchard Street Bus Driveway Exit is acceptable in concept, subject to certain conditions. DPW also noted the RRFBs, additional pedestrian signage, and pavement markings proposed at the Bus Driveway Exit are acceptable but that a sight line profile sheet must be provided for the proposed crosswalk at the Bus Driveway Exit.; and

WHEREAS the Commission finds the Building Committee has been diligent in its effort to enhance traffic and pedestrian safety in this application; and

WHEREAS the Engineering Division signed off on the proposed drainage plan last revised 4/24/24. In so doing, they have required the Board of Education hire an engineering firm to handle the entire site construction

inspection to meet the requirements of the Town of Greenwich Drainage Manual February 2014. They are also requiring a licensed Land Surveyor be hired to develop the requisite Improvement Location Survey which is necessary for the Certificate of Occupancy to be issued; and

WHEREAS the applicant has agreed to these and the remaining DPW Engineering conditions; and

WHEREAS the project will require a relocation of the sewer main along Indian Rock Lane. The Sewer division commented on 10/11/23, 1/30/24 and 4/24/24. In its most recent report, Sewer Division noted the applicant has been working cooperatively with it and has developed a potentially approvable sewer relocation plan; and

WHEREAS the applicant has provided written acknowledgement of Sewer comments; and

WHEREAS the Conservation Department commented on 1/24/24. They noted that the proposed structure will involve substantial cut and fill as it is being placed in an area which is currently wooded, has steep slopes and a high-water table; and

WHEREAS while the Commission agrees the placement of the building is environmentally sub-optimal although it recognizes this location is intrinsically mandated by the Board of Education Specifications and is necessary to keep the existing school in operation while the replacement is completed; and

WHEREAS Conservation further lamented the extensive tree loss while acknowledging the strength of the proposed landscaping plan with some concern regarding planting viability over possible ledge; and

WHEREAS Conservation agreed with the inclusion of bicycle racks and asked for more efforts to promote bicycle lanes; and

WHEREAS the IWWA Staff issued a green sheet on 10/13/23 indicating no permit was required for the subject action; and

WHEREAS on 5/20/24, the Town Tree Warden approved, with conditions, the proposed removal of 188 trees to accommodate this project. The applicant is aware of and has agreed to these conditions; and

WHEREAS the proposal seeks to remove the rock ledge that exists at the entrance of the current school building; and

WHEREAS on 4/25/24, the Chief of Police wrote in support of the proposal to completely remove the rock outcropping which faces the main entrance of the existing school building; and

WHEREAS the applicant has indicated the choice of a diesel generator addresses building code requirements for an 'on site fuel supply' for generators powering life safety systems. It was the building committee's opinion that natural gas does not meet that requirement. However, the applicant has agreed to pursue a natural gas generator subject to that fuel supply being compliant with the building codes; and

WHEREAS the proposed structure will also be solar panel ready and is designed with enough points to be LEED gold certified. The project also includes EV chargers in the parking areas.

WHEREAS Soil sampling was performed on two (2) occasions, the first, on July 15, 2019 by Milone & MacBroome who reported " the soil at the Central Middle School playing field does not contain contaminants and would be considered "clean fill" if excavated and removed from the site." The second soil sample was performed by Langan

on 10/17/23 to confirm the removal of a 7,200-gallon underground storage tank and that no historical release from the tank had occurred. Concentrations were reported below CTDEEP RSR criteria, and no further investigation or remediation was deemed warranted; and

WHEREAS the ARC reviewed this proposal at three (3) meetings, most recently, on 5/15/24, and found two (2) main areas to consider further improvement in the design: the entry canopy; and the brown parapet panels; and

WHEREAS the ARC noted 'the canopy needs to be better integrated with the front of the building' and 'the brown parapet panels appear to feature two different tones of materials which needs to be corrected'; and

WHEREAS in previous meetings ARC expressed reservations about courtyards / light wells as the 'light wells will be in shadow for 75% of the year and also had concerns about the vastness of the roof-scape; and

WHEREAS the Commission noted that they and the ARC were disappointed that the Building Committee appeared before ARC late in their design process and was not able to be more receptive to design input; and

WHEREAS the Connecticut Office of State Archaeology issued a report on 3/30/24 noting that the majority of the site has been used over the past 60 plus years as a school, it is already disturbed. Further, the approximate 1.9 acres of new disturbance appears to be generally unattractive for past human settlement and recommends against need for archaeological work being required for the project area; and

WHEREAS the existing school would remain open and functioning until the replacement school is completed and ready for occupancy; and

WHEREAS a construction phasing plan has been provided for the project and the Commission notes staff comments of 6/7/24, requesting a contingency plan also be in place to maintain existing parking capacity on site at all times during construction; and

WHEREAS although this application was submitted prior to the most recent amendments to the Town's the lighting regulations, the Commission wishes for the site to comply with the dark sky objectives these regulations contain, subject to safety considerations; and

WHEREAS the Commission find that the final site plan and special permit application substantially complies with Sections 6-13 through 6-15, 6-17, 6-93, 6-94, 6-101(a), Division 15, 6-151, 6-153, Division 17 – Screening and Planting, Division 18 – Site Plans, and 6-205 of the Town's Building Zone Regulations; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the application of the Central Middle School Building Committee, authorized agent, for the Town of Greenwich, record owner, for a Final Site Plan and Special Permit application PLPZ 2024 00021, to replace the Central Middle School building with related site improvement including, new grass athletic fields, vehicular access, and parking areas, the results of which would exceed 150,000 cubic feet in Building Volume, pursuant to Sec. 6-13 through 5-15, 6-17, 6-93, 6-94, 6-101(a), Division 14, 15, 17, and 18, and Sec. 6-205 of the Town of Greenwich Building Zone Regulations, on a 21.72-acre property located at 9 Indian Rock Lane in the R-12 Zone as shown on a site plan prepared by SLAM last revised 5/16/24, architectural Plans prepared by SLAM last revised 4/3/24 and landscaping plans prepared by SLAM, last revised 5/16/24 is hereby approved with modifications.

The Applicant shall address the following, make an appointment with staff, and submit the one (1) digital copy of any documents or plans; two (2) physical sets of any documents, and three (3) physical sets of any plans, to staff for review prior to issuance of a Zoning Permit:

1. Soil and Erosion Controls and tree protections shall be installed, per the accepted plans, and prior to the start of construction, to protect adjacent properties and the Town's Right-of-way, and be maintained for the full duration of the project.
2. Applicant shall meet with ARC prior to 50% Construction Documents to address its outstanding concerns regarding the front entry canopy and the "brown" colored parapet panels to break up the massing of the building.
3. Per the Commission, the lighting plan should attempt to address the dark sky initiatives in the amended lighting regulations. It is noted that the preliminary site plan application was filed prior to the effective date of this proposal.
4. The CMS design shall be designed to be solar panel ready.
5. The Applicant shall address the Sewer Division Comments related to the sewer main relocation. Sewer permits will be required prior to issuance of any building permit for the new CMS school.
6. Any work in the Town's Right-of-Way, will need approval(s) for DPW. DPW is amenable to one of three paths for the required sidewalk along the west side of Orchard St. The proposed median pavement imprint at the Orchard Street Bus Driveway Exit is acceptable in concept, subject to details being provided to DPW under a Highway permit. Sight line profiles are needed to verify that sight lines to/from the proposed curb ramps are adequate based on the measured 85th-percentile speeds. The Commission encourages the applicant to continue its efforts to enhance the traffic and pedestrian safety measures contained in this proposal with DPW.
7. The applicant shall address comments from the Engineering Division dated 4/24/24 prior to issuance of any zoning permit.
8. All tree removals and tree plantings shall be in accordance with the decision of the Town's Tree Warden.
9. The applicant's construction phasing plan shall maintain current parking levels onsite and any reduction of the existing available parking, even for short periods of time, shall have a contingency plan in place. This needs to be discussed with staff prior to zoning permit.

In accordance with Section 6-14.1 (e) of the Building Zone Regulations of the Town of Greenwich and Sections 8-3 (i) and 8-3(m) of the Connecticut General Statutes, construction in connection with this site plan must start within three years, and all work must be completed with five years from the date of this approval: June 11, 2024.

The contents of this letter have been reviewed by members of the Commission and reflect the action of the Commission made at its meeting on June 11, 2024.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact this office.

Sincerely,



Patrick LaRow, AICP  
Director / Zoning Enforcement Coordinator / Town Planner