Design Review Advisory Committee
Town of West Hartford – Department of Community Development
50 South Main Street, Room 214, West Hartford, CT 06107
P: (860) 561-7555 www.westhartfordct.gov

Issued April 19, 2025

DESIGN REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE
*****SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES*****
THURSDAY, APRIL 24, 2025
ROOM 400, TOWN HALL, WEST HARTFORD, CT

Call to Order/Roll Call: 4:30 P.M.

DRAC ATTENDANCE: Chair, Ray Giolitto; Committee Members; Angela Cahill, Brian Flemming, Jenna McClure and Liz Pang. Alternates: Rick Conary and Jim Lawler
ABSENT: David Hines

Staff: Brian Pudlik, Senior Planner; Robert Gosselin, Associate Planner

FORMAL REFERRAL FROM THE TOWN PLAN & ZONING COMMISSION:

1. **137 North Main Street** – Application (SUP #1448) of The American School for the Deaf, requesting approval of a Special Use Permit to construct a lighted multi-sport court, a multi-use track and synthetic turf infield area, together with associated site grading and drainage.

2. **137 North Main Street** – Application (SUP #1429-R1-25) of The American School for the Deaf, requesting approval of a Special Use Permit to construct a new +/-2,442 square foot maintenance garage in lieu of the previously approved, but never built garage in the adjacent parking lot to the east.

B. Pudlik – Senior Planner – Introduced both projects at the same time, as both are located on the same property, and suggested the team present both and that the Committee provide feedback on both before voting to recommend or not recommend approval to the TPZ on each project individually.

J. Bravin – ASD Director – Stated that the school is always looking for opportunities to improve its facilities and that these projects represent substantial investment to both improve the student experience and to better manage property maintenance needs. Mr. Bravin noted that the proposed sport court and track are located within an existing soccer field and that a future project will include a new, more formalized soccer field at the northeast corner of the campus adjacent to North Main Street.

R. Deane – Project Engineer – Provided a more detailed introduction of both projects by discussing locations of work within the campus and the specific components of the proposed sport court and track. Mr. Deane noted that new walkways would be installed to get students to the track and those walkways would be integrated into the existing campus sidewalk network. He further noted that landscaping would be added at the southeast corner to screen the field from Hilltop Drive. Regarding lighting, noted that it would be Dark Sky friendly and would be used to primarily light the sport courts. Some lighting would extend onto the track area, but would not be designed to fully light the track.

J. Lawler – DRAC member – Stated that the field is well-sited to minimize impacts to adjacent residential properties.

R. Conary – DRAC member – Stated that the location is appropriate for the courts. Mr. Conary asked whether any storage devices would be needed and whether bollard lighting would be required for paths. Mr. Deane, Project Engineer, responded that no storage devices are planned at this time. Regarding bollard lighting, noted that they might be necessary and they would review it.

E. Pang – DRAC member – Stated that the design is well done and echoed the comments of other Committee members regarding the placement of the field.

A. Cahill – DRAC member – Stated that the lights appear to be well situated to minimize impact on adjacent residential properties, but asked whether existing ASD buildings on the north side of the campus would further screen the residential properties. Mr. Deane stated that they would, in addition to the mature trees along that property line.

J. McClure – DRAC member – Echoed comments of other Committee members regarding the position of the field and lighting. Asked whether any additional paths were necessary to connect older dorm buildings. Mr. Bravin stated they would not because students are all living in the new dorms at this time. Ms. McClure also asked whether an additional gate was necessary to exit the track area. Mr. Deane indicated that they would considering additional gate locations.

M. Fraser – Project Engineer – Regarding the proposed garage building, stated that they drew inspiration from the other buildings on campus and are proposing cementitious siding with a faux brick pattern. She stated that existing landscaping on the north side of the site will screen the building and maintenance activities from adjacent residential properties. Regarding any possible conflicts with the existing parking lot that this project is being connected to, stated that the additional pavement being added will provide adequate space for maintenance activities to take place safely while others are utilizing the parking lot. Regarding stormwater, stated that a small detention area is proposed just to the west of the garage where the site grades naturally. Regarding exterior lighting, stated that wall-pack downlights would be used and that they will be Dark Sky friendly. Regarding building layout, stated that the garage will have three bays, some ancillary storage space, a bathroom and an office.

J. McClure – DRAC member – Asked whether any lights are proposed on the north side of the building. Ms. Fraser stated that two would be located on the north side of the building to light the path.

A. Cahill – DRAC member – Asked whether the renderings provided are accurate with respect to color. Ms. Fraser stated that they are. Ms. Cahill also asked whether other components of the building will be shop-coated or painted on-site. Ms. Fraser stated they would be shop-coated.

J. Lawler – DRAC member – Asked whether the proposed cementitious panel would match the brick pattern and color of existing brick on campus. Ms. Fraser stated that it would.

On item #1: Motion to Recommend Approval to the TPZ made by J. McClure; second by A. Cahill: Vote – 6-0

On item #2: Motion to Recommend Approval to the TPZ made by L. Pang; second by A. Cahill: Vote – 6-0

REFERRAL FROM THE TOWN PLANNER:

3. **100 Mayflower Street & 847 South Quaker Lane:** Study session preparatory to the submission of potential Special Development District application for the construction of a new Elmwood Community Center.

B. Pudlik – Senior Planner – Introduced the item

K. Scurlock – Project Architect – Introduced the project by discussing the history of the site, the Town's goals for the project and initial project timeline. Regarding the site conditions that influenced their design concept such as topography, wetlands, floodplain, locations of mature specimen trees and that the building is proposed to span two properties.

B. Flemming – DRAC member – Asked what a specimen tree is. Helen Rubino-Turco, Leisure Services Director, stated that specimen trees are particularly good examples of a particular tree species based on the trees age, size and health.

A. Cahill – Asked how many of those trees would need to be removed. Ms. Scurlock stated hopefully only one or two.

K. Scurlock – Project Architect – Provided the following additional information about the proposed exterior improvements:

- ***The goal is to integrate both the 100 Mayflower property and the Beachland Park property into one cohesive site that functions together with the new community space and the park.***
- ***The main entry of the building will be located on the Mayflower side, both additional points of entry will be located on the park side of the building.***
- ***The main parking lot is also located on the west side with a dedicated drop-off area provided adjacent to the main building entry.***
- ***The tallest portion of the building, where the gym is located, is designed to take advantage of the topography so that portion of the building ties seamlessly into the other sections of the building.***
- ***A trail network is proposed to run through the site and connect into existing paths, into the neighborhood and onto the Trout Brook Trail.***
- ***The existing park amenities, such as the pool and sports field will remain with some enhancements proposed such as a new playground area. The existing dog park will need to be relocated, but the location is unknown.***

Ms. Scurlock then provided the following information regarding the architecture and the layout of the building:

- ***The design team was challenged by the variety of uses that needed to be provided for including the Senior Center, the relocation of the Faxon Library, a Community Center and general recreation space. The concept evolved as a hub-and-spoke design, with four quadrants***

designed to accommodate the four primary uses with a central community gathering space in the center.

- ***Building design and window placement were informed by the location of specimen trees in the project area with an emphasis on visibility of those trees from both inside and outside the building.***
- ***She noted that the Fibonacci Sequence informed their approach to design.***
- ***Regarding building materials, the team is taking cues from the natural surroundings with initial thoughts on using a faux-wood paneling product with steel and/or aluminum accents – all warm tones.***
- ***One of the primary objectives in building placement and overall design was to achieve a building that does not overwhelm the site or its surroundings.***

R. Giolitto – DRAC Chair – Stated an appreciation for the detailed explanation on the evolution of the project and overall design philosophy. He noted the importance of the building minimizing carbon footprint. Regarding building design, questioned the team's design approach to how the building meets the sky; noted that there is no defined stopping point.

K. Scurlock – Project Architect – Stated that they studied various options and made a conscious design choice to no not have a defined cornice line. They did not want the building to have an endpoint, but rather evoke a tree, which does not have a defined top.

J. McClure – DRAC member – Asked whether the gym section of the building has a different design. Ms. Scurlock indicated that it does, particularly with the sizes and placement of the windows. Ms. Scurlock went to state that the large volume of space that makes up the gym dictated a slightly modified design. Regarding the gym, Ms. McClure also asked whether after-hours access would be through the front door only. Ms. Scurlock stated that there may be other access points into the gym.

Ms. McClure then asked about potential traffic impacts associated with the project. Ms. Scurlock stated that they are having a traffic study competed and will be working with the Town on reviewing options to minimize impacts at both site driveways.

Ms. McClure asked where HVAC units would be located. Ms. Scurlock stated that they are still studying options for equipment locations.

Lastly, Ms. McClure suggested that more be done to better integrate the building sign into the overall design of the building.

A. Cahill – DRAC member – Made the following comments on the project

- ***Believes that in order for the project to be fully successful, all aspects of the plan need to be completed. Went on to say that this is a landmark project for the Town and must be done right.***
- ***Commended the team on the design work and in particular the sculptural elements of the building.***

- ***Encouraged the team to review opportunities to fix existing drainage problems in the athletic field at the east side of the park.***
- ***Asked that the team show all utility locations on plans and in renderings in future iterations.***
- ***Asked that the team show neighboring residential properties on the plans to better indicate context in the neighborhood and whether existing and proposed buffers are adequate.***
- ***Suggested that the team carefully review the number of parking spaces being provided to ensure an adequate supply is bring provided. In addition, asked that the team review drop-off locations.***
- ***Stated that the outdoor courtyards and amphitheater space are very successful and suggested that the team review other opportunities for outdoor programming.***
- ***Asked whether there is any connection between the indoor playground and outdoor playground.***
- ***Questioned whether two kitchens are really necessary and suggested that budgetary concerns arise and cuts need to be made to the plans, eliminating the second kitchen should be a top consideration.***
- ***Stated the importance of access control and building security, which may be complicated with multiple entries.***
- ***Suggested that the team carefully review material selection for exterior finishes and noted that composite wood products may not give the desired effect of mimicking real wood siding. Also suggested that the proposed color palette may be too dark.***

L. Pang – DRAC member - Stated that she appreciates the project, but expressed concern that the proposed driveway that connects Mayflower Street to South Quaker Lane may act as a cut-through for motorists. For this reason, she stated that the cut-through should be reconsidered.

R. Conary – DRAC member – Commended the team on designing a very attractive building that blends well into the park setting. Mr. Conary also expressed concern regarding cut-through traffic and suggested that the team review shifting on-street parking spaces to the south side, which may be safer. Regarding the range of site programming shown on the plans, Mr. Conary stated that he hopes all elements can be built, but expressed concern regarding the proposed location for the dog park given the proximity to Quaker Green.

J. Lawler – DRAC member – Stated that buffering the use from the homes to west of the project site will be important.

B. Flemming – DRAC member – Stated that he appreciates that proposed exterior finishes, particularly the rain screen, but is concerned with the overall budget of the project.

A. Cahill – DRAC member – Suggested the ream review sloped roof options as a sculptural element to screen mechanicals, if they need to go on the roof.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

4. Minutes from the April 10, 2025 Meeting – **Motion McClure; Second Cahill – Approved**

COMMUNICATION

5. None

TOWN PLANNER'S REPORT:

6. None

ADJOURNMENT: 6:20 PM

Cc: Rick Ledwith, Town Manager
Dallas Dodge, Corporation Counsel
Duane Martin, Community Development Director
Leon Davidoff, Town Clerk