



**CITY OF DANBURY**  
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PLANNING COMMISSION  
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MINUTES  
MARCH 2, 2011

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The regular meeting was called to order by Chairman Arnold Finaldi Jr. at 7:30 PM.

Present were Arnold Finaldi Jr., Kenneth Keller, Joel Urice and Alternates Helen Hoffstaetter and Fil Cerminara. Also present was Associate Planner Jennifer Emminger.

Absent were John Deeb, Edward Manuel, and Alternate Paul Blaszk.

Chairman Finaldi asked Mr. Cerminara to take Mr. Deeb's place and Ms. Hoffstaetter to take Mr. Manuel's place for the items on tonight's agenda.

Mr. Urice made a motion to accept the August 25, 2010 minutes. Mr. Keller seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

Chairman Finaldi said the next regular meeting is scheduled for March 16, 2011. The next meeting after that is scheduled for Tuesday, April 12, 2011. The regular meeting which had been scheduled for April 6, 2011 was cancelled and re-scheduled for April 12, 2011. At this time there is no other meeting scheduled in April because the next regular meeting date falls on Passover, so no meeting was scheduled for that date.

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PUBLIC HEARING:

7:30 PM – Danbury Hospital – Application for Special Exception to permit a use (“North Tower Clinical Addition”) generating more than 500 trips per day in the RH-3 Zone – 24 Hospital Ave. (#I12001 & #J12232) – SE #707.

Mr. Keller read the legal notice. Attorney Brian Smith, from Robinson & Cole said this is for a proposed 12-story North Tower expansion. It will connect Stroock Tower and the Blue Garage. The expansion will consist of 310,271 sq.ft. of gross floor area, 210,815 sq.ft. will be usable floor area and the remainder consists of mechanical floor area. This includes the relocation and expansion of the Emergency Dept., relocation of the Intensive Care Unit, a new 30 bed in-patient care unit and several floors for the future expansion of the Surgery Dept. and for an additional 43 medical/surgical beds. The Hospital expects that this will require an additional 150 employees.

The North Tower will create a direct connection between the Blue Garage and the new lobby. The expansion provides two entry points, one will serve the new main lobby and a second, separate entrance will serve the relocated Emergency Room. Additional

improvements include relocating the heliport to the new North Tower rooftop, miscellaneous site work, including significant blasting and excavation associated with the construction of the Tower addition, constructing a new 30-space Emergency Dept. parking lot, and the creation of a new and distinct main entry from Hospital Ave.

The Tower Expansion will be constructed in three phases, which are identified as Phases 1a, 1b and 1c. Phase 1a involves the installation of erosion control measures and temporary fence enclosures, the start of clearing and excavations, and the construction of deep building foundations on the east side of the site. Phase 1b primarily involves work associated with the North Tower, including the installation of site utilities, excavation and rock removal, foundation installation, grading and the construction of the tower. Throughout this it is expected that the 830-space Blue Garage will be fully operational. A revised site plan was approved to add 304 spaces to this garage and it should be done before this starts. They also constructed a temporary parking lot between the James B. Shaw driveway and the garage. The last phase includes the completion of the access from the parking garage to the new lobby and the construction of the new main entry. In order to meet the requirements, they need to provide 1,525 parking spaces and 68 handicapped spaces. The plans show 2,380 parking spaces and 77 handicap spaces.

He distributed printouts of the PowerPoint presentation that will be shown on the televisions while the various experts present the information to the Commission. This printout was designated Exhibit A. He said they would start with Morris Gross and Michael Daglio from Danbury Hospital.

Morris Gross, Vice-President of Danbury Hospital, thanked the Commission for hearing this tonight. He said working with the City on this has been great. He said he has been with the Hospital for 37 years, which is before the tower was built. The addition of the tower changed the Hospital greatly and allowed them to attract great doctors and add a lot more beds. They are now a world class facility but need to bring the structure up to match the reputation. He said the current standard of care calls for single rooms. The emergency room is just not big enough. It was built for 45,000 visits, but presently has 70,000 visits annually. The existing tower was built rather stringently so this time they are allowing extra space for future growth. The critical care units will keep same number of beds, but have more room. The existing tower that was built for 52 beds will drop down to 30 beds. They are allowing for storage, meeting space and family areas. Two floors will be left as shell to allow for future expansion. He said the existing space has lower ceiling heights which has been a problem because the new technology needs higher ceiling space. The heliport will be put on the roof instead of in a parking lot. He said during the demolition and construction the employees will be parking offsite and shuttle-bused in and out. The visitor's entrance will be moved to Locust Ave. and there will be no entry through the Hospital Ave. side. He said also to free up space on the campus, they have moved all outpatient services to offsite locations. They expect a reduction of 14,000 outpatient visits annually.

Attorney Smith then submitted the "cv's" of the various speakers. This was labeled Exhibit B.

Kyle Slocum, a Landscape Architect from the SLAM Collaborative, then spoke about the specific areas of the site that will be affected. He referred to pages 4-5 of the handout, saying the within the yellow line is the actual construction area. The gray building represents the existing structure. He said the areas covered in green are intended to have

green roofs for use by patients and visitors upon completion. During the construction, the blue garage will be used for employees, but once the tower is built, it will be for patients and visitors. He said they will be changing the topography of the area and leveling off much of the land. He said they already are exceeding the required parking but they need to put a better management plan in place for the use of the parking areas.

Steve Doherty, also from the SLAM Collaborative, said he did not want to be repetitive. He described in greater detail what the new lobby will be like. There will be a lot of public space for families and you won't have to exit the building to get to other parts of the Hospital. He added that it is designed to be flexible and adaptable with portions being able to be closed off if needed. Mr. Cerminara asked if there is a provision to add more levels to the parking garage. Mr. Doherty said there is not because based on the foundation, the proposed expansion will be the maximum height it can be.

Chuck Croce, PE from Tighe & Bond, gave a brief overview of the site utilities. He said there are three separate watersheds, and all of them flow to different drainage sites. He said these sites will be maintained. The stormwater management plan was prepared in accordance with the State regulations. A maintenance plan is included in the engineering report that was submitted with this application. He spoke about the new sewer extension and also discussed the fire protections systems.

John Hawley, Gilbane Construction Company, said they specialize in building public spaces. He said the planning for this project has been going on for literally months. This site is largely rock based and a substantial amount will have to be removed. He said it will require them to be extremely cautious because where the addition is being built is right next to where they do the MRI's and have other equipment that is sensitive to vibration. They will go through the full blasting protocol with the neighbors. One of the most important factors in this kind of project is to keep the construction activity away from the patients and the visitors. That is why the north side entrance is limited to employees. Mr. Keller asked specifically how they will deal with the blasting on Edgewood St. and Forest Ave. Mr. Hawley said they will do pre-blast surveys. Mr. Keller said there is significant residential development in this area. Mr. Hawley said the Hospital equipment located next to where they will be blasting is much more sensitive than the residential structures are. Mr. Urice asked where they will fit all of the vehicles that are necessary for a project of this size. Mr. Hawley said over 1,000 Hospital employees will be shuttle bussed in from an offsite location at the beginning and end of their shifts. Mr. Gross stepped in here, saying that the employees were told they have no choice. He added that they are spending to get the best shuttle service available. It is the same one that they used when they built Stroock and they were quite pleased at that time. He said they really only needed to free up 800 parking spaces, but they went with the 1,000 number, to be sure there would be parking spaces for patients. He said managed parking will be continued throughout the project and afterwards too. Mr. Urice asked the maximum number of employees during the day shift. Mr. Gross said 1,637. Ms. Hoffstaetter asked if they will be blasting during school hours. Mr. Gross said they met with the school and will coordinate with them to be sure they are not disturbed. He added that he and someone from Gilbane will meet with them on a weekly basis to keep them apprised of what is going on. There will be guards on the road to prevent the students from wandering into a dangerous area. Mr. Hawley said it is the same situation for the surgeons performing operations, they also want to know exactly when and where it will be done. Ms. Hoffstaetter asked if the rock removal will have any impact on the school session. Mr. Hawley said no rock work will be done on site. It will be put on a truck and taken to a gravel plant. Mr. Keller asked if the pharmacy will be

affected. Mr. Gross said it is located on the side that will remain open so it will not be affected.

Joe Balskus, PE, a traffic engineer from Tighe & Bond, spoke next. He described his background and the traffic planning experience he has had with hospitals in CT. He said they should have three documents regarding the traffic: a traffic study dated 1/24/11, traffic analysis update memo dated 2/16/11 and a response to the City Traffic Engineer's comments which is dated 3/2/11. He spoke about the existing conditions and the proposed improvements. He said he had done much additional work on this study so as to be sure it was accurate. He did additional traffic counts, field reviews and observations and extensive review of the data the Hospital provided. He said he built a model and found that the key intersections were Hospital & Tamarack Aves., Hospital & Locust Aves., and Osborne & Locust Aves. These are the most critical intersections where the congestion occurs. He said he is meeting with the City Traffic Engineer to discuss the trip generation since almost one-third of the building is not being used. He said after all his studies and calculations, he came up with an increase of 240 trips during peak hours. He used a modified ITE trip generation based on real Hospital data including the one-third of the building and the off-site movement of the employees as the variable. About 40% of the traffic comes from the Interstate; the remainder comes from the local area. He said Hospital Ave. will change to the major thoroughfare for the Hospital with the relocation of the main entrance and the emergency room. All on-street parking will be gone, both Hospital and Tamarack Aves. will be widened, and there will be traffic signal modifications. Mr. Urice asked how much stacking distance there will be to turn left onto Hospital Ave. from Tamarack Ave. Mr. Balskus said about 200 ft. Mr. Keller said the stacking is already significant there, so this will only make it worse. Chairman Finaldi asked if the ambulances coming off I-84 will get caught up in this stacking. Matt Cassavechia, Director of Emergency Medical Services, said he would like to answer that question. He said they are the largest of the ambulance services and they are headquartered in the red garage. The ambulances hardly ever use Tamarack Ave. for access, most of the ambulance traffic comes up Locust Ave. or Hospital Ave. Newtown and Bethel ambulances generally come in from I-84. He said they will continue to be housed on Hospital Ave. that will not change. They have been intimately involved in the traffic discussion regarding this project. They also do not want to get caught in stacked traffic because they cannot afford that kind of time. Mr. Cerminara asked if they use the emergency vehicle preemption on traffic signals. Both Mr. Balskus and Mr. Cassavechia said they do when they have to. Mr. Balskus said they are proposing significant improvements while complying with the City's Transportation Plan. He added that the improvements will be in place before the new traffic is added. So they plan to educate both the employees and the public so they know what to expect.

Andrea Rynn, Director of Public Operations for Danbury Hospital, said they are committed to keeping the public informed while they go through these changes. She listed the various methods they will use to get the news out to the public.

Attorney Smith said they are striving to address the requirements of high traffic generators. This meets the conditions necessary for approval of the special exception. They are enhancing and improving the appearance of the Hospital. They have tried to make all of their points to prove they can comply with the regulations. He then offered to answer questions from the Commission.

Mrs. Emminger said they have received a letter in favor of this from Robert Botelho, Victorian Associates. He owns property on Osborne St. and received a notice. She said all of

the staff comments have been received from the various City Depts. There are some minor issues which are currently being worked on to resolve them as quickly as possible.

Paul Estefan, Airport Administrator, said he is ready to sign off on this project but has one correction. He said the area the Hospital lands the helicopters on is a helipad, not a heliport.

Mr. Urice asked if there is no substantial bed increase, what creates additional trips. Mr. Balskus said the numbers didn't make sense, this is a theoretical increase which they will discuss with the City Traffic Engineer next week. Mr. Urice said since there will be a lot of people working on this project, will there be jobs for the people of Danbury. Mr. Hawley said although they are located in Glastonbury, they usually recruit their work force from the area where the project is located. The reason being that the cost for them to get to the site is cheaper. He added that they don't generally bring people in from the outside when there are people in town who can do the job.

Mike Daglio said they are looking at a substantial growth in the amount of in-patient services. They anticipate 4,000 additional patients over the next ten years. He said approximately 38,000-50,000 outpatient services have been moved off of the campus. A lot of testing and rehab services have significant traffic volumes, so they also will be moved.

Chairman Finaldi asked if there was anyone to speak in opposition and there was no one.

Mr. Urice made a motion to continue this matter. Ms. Hoffstaetter seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously. Chairman Finaldi said they would take a two-minute break to clear the room. The meeting was called back to order at 9:50 PM.

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NEW BUSINESS:

Petition of Crawford Holdings LLC, 62 Miry Brook Rd. (#E19018) for Change of Zone from RA-40 to R-O. Zoning Commission public hearing scheduled for 3/22/11.

Sympaug Properties Inc. – Application for Special Exception to allow “Indoor Field Sports Arena” in the IL-40 Zone – Shelter Rock Lane (#L15001) – SE #708. Public hearing scheduled for April 12, 2011.

Sympaug Properties Inc. – Application for Floodplain Permit – “Indoor Field Sports Arena”, Shelter Rock Lane (#L15001) – SE #708.

Chairman Finaldi said these would be on file in the Planning & Zoning Office at City Hall.

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OLD BUSINESS FOR CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION:

White Street Duchess Property LLC – Application for Revised Site Plan in acc. w/Sec. 10.D.7 of the Zoning Regulations for SE #556 approved 10/6/10 for One Stop, 276-280 White St. (#K13031).

Chairman Finaldi said they had received a draft resolution. Mrs. Emminger said she had included the condition requiring signage prohibiting tractor trailers greater than 50 ft. in length. Mr. Urice made a motion to approve this per the resolution including the condition prohibiting tractor trailers greater than 50 ft. in length. Mr. Keller seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.



CORRESPONDENCE:

Letter from Artel Engineering requesting six-month extension of approval for Subdivision #05-04 – Spruce Mountain Estates.

Mrs. Emminger explained that the new LOC (letter of credit) extends the date to March 16, 2012. Mr. Urice suggested that they grant the extension to a week before the LOC will expire, which would be March 7, 2012. Mrs. Emminger said the problem has been that the road is completed but Engineering cannot inspect it yet because of the weather. Mr. Urice made a motion to grant an extension to March 7, 2012 since the bond expires March 16, 2012. Ms. Hoffstaetter seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.



At 10:00 PM, Mr. Keller made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Cerminara seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.