

TOWN OF WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

THURSDAY

March 23, 2006

6:00 P.M.

MINUTES

The following is a record of the minutes of the Wallingford Town Council at a Special Meeting held on Thursday, March 23, 2006, in the Robert Earley Auditorium of the Wallingford Town Hall. Town Council Chairman Robert F. Parisi Called the Meeting to Order at 6:09 P.M. Responding present to the Roll Call given by Town Clerk Barbara Thompson were Councilors Michael Brodinsky, Lois Doherty, Stephen W. Knight, Robert F. Parisi, Rosemary Rascati, and Vincent F. Testa, Jr. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr. was also present, arriving at 6:32 P.M. Councilors Vincenzo M. Di Natale, Gerald E. Farrell, Jr., and Iris F. Papale have recused themselves from discussion and voting regarding the development of the Wooding Caplan Property and were not present at the Council table.

There was a Moment of Silence, the Pledge of Allegiance was said and the Roll Call was taken.

Chairman Parisi asked that the record show that Councilor Farrell, Papale and DiNatale have recused themselves from participation on this item. He called for Item 3 A - Sunwood Development Corporation, Robert Widenmann.

3. Presentation of Wooding Caplan Development Proposals

**A. Sunwood Development Corp.
Wallace Commons**

Robert Widenmann, President
John Gilmore, Vice President, Milone & MacBroom
Mark Arigoni, Landscape Architect, Milone & MacBroom
Milone & MacBroom, Project Engineers
Joan Molloy, Attorney
Stein / Trost Architecture

Mr. Widenmann said that they are here to talk about their plan for the Wooding Caplan property. He said that they would talk about some of the significant constraints such as conflict between residential and commercial uses around the property, limited access to the site and the visual standpoint of the site and how they dealt with them and that they would speak to the vision for the property and how they think it can look.

Mark Arigoni, Landscape Architect, acknowledged the extreme opportunity for the town that this site presents since most downtowns do not have a central core area that is not already developed. He called this site "new urbanism." He discussed the streetscape; architectural detail; exits and entrances to the site; points of access; the loft building with the office and that building's transition to the greenspace; the transition from the greenspace to the residential area. He talked about he parking and the requirements and about height. He said that the current theme of Wallingford is carried into the development, and he listed brick walks, street lamps, pear trees and that the common green space would be enclosed with an iron fence. He talked about the work-live studio type office/apartment over the commercial area in the mixed-use building. He said that the occupancy is projected for 2008. He gave a list of accomplishments of Milone and MacBroom, which is a multi-disciplinary firm of over 100 employees.

The floor was opened to the public.

Lucille Trzcinski, 25 Turnberry Road, member of the Wooding Caplan Study Committee asked if there would be space in the site that would be open to public and how would it be arranged. **Ms. Molloy** said that the development would be owned by all the unit owners in the residential and commercial units. As part of the declaration of condominium, an agreement would indicate that the public would have the right to come in and use the public space under certain circumstances to which lenders agree and to which all parties who purchase agree. **Ms. Trzcinski** asked how they see this project impacting the viability of the economic downtown. **Mr. Widenmann** pointed to the owners and life style choice; the market value of the property; that the new occupants will become users of businesses in town; the quality of construction and how they market to attract this kind of occupant; and the benefit of property taxes including auto taxes, personal property & commercial owners property taxes. **Ms. Trzcinski** asked about they determined their offer of \$950,000 to the Town and how he expects to turn a profit. **Mr. Widenmann** responded that their project is high quality and that they will be able to attract people who desire the lifestyle that this project will offer. He said many factors are taken into account to arrive at that price to the town.

Debbie Gross, Long Hill Road asked how many people can the common accommodate? **Mr. Widenmann** said that it would depend on the event and

restrictions associated with that event. **Mr. Gilmore** added that if you allow 40 square feet per person then 200 people can be accommodated. **Ms. Gross** also asked about townspeople having access to the common area. **Ms. Molloy** said that people would buy knowing that the public has the right to use the space and that the maintenance would fall under the responsibility of the Homeowner's Association.

Charles Berryman, 3 Briarwood Lane, asked if the commercial area would be part of the condominium association, who decides who owns the commercial units and what percentage the contractor would own. He asked about residential unit square footage. **Ms. Molloy** said that they would be a unit owner, yes. She said that permitted uses would be in the condominium declaration. **Mr. Widenmann** said 1200 to 1600 square feet.

Robert Krombel, 38 North Elm Street, asked about the property boundary to parking and to the buildings; who is their target market and what do they need from the town. **Mr. Arigoni** – 8 foot buffer; 25 foot road; 20 foot driveway; 25 to 50 feet to the building; 29 feet to eave; 35 feet to ridgeline. **Mr. Widenmann** added that their target market consists of two distinct markets - empty nesters and young professionals and that any restrictions would be by design of the units and life style. He said that the only assistance from the town would be with SBC for access to North Main Street.

Stephen Clark, 40 Apple Lane spoke about a newspaper article 3-6-06 reading from a prepared statement.

Robert Avery, 42 North Elm Street asked who would be responsible for environmental problem discoveries. **Mr. Widenmann** said that would be the town's responsibility.

Mr. Berryman asked about the Wooding Caplan Study Committee recommendation in regard to the RFP and the Rose Report.

Rick Tremini, 8 Rolling Meadow, commented on bedrooms in the units; access into the property site and that additional access is needed.

Michael Cassello, 175 North Street, read a prepared statement.

Ms. Gross asked about the process of presentations in relation to the public session.

Charles Flynn, 52 Academy Street, asked the Council how they make their decision, what's the process.

Kathleen Avery, 42 North Elm Street, asked about the dip in the land on North Elm Street near Academy Street which involves a water problem and asked what was planned for that area and would there be a landscape plan for that area and would it be open to the public?

Chairman Parisi asked the Council for their questions and said that it would be followed by public comments.

Mr. Knight asked about the setup for police parking.

Mr. Gilmore said that they identified 20 parking spaces and 6 or 7 shared spaces in the conceptual plan. He commented on their alternate access plan and on their plan that was prepared with Rose Report that relocates parking in regard to the impound area to bring parking closer to the Police Station. **Mr. Arigoni** added that in their alternate plan they feel their plan is flexible enough and will not sacrifice the design in working with the reality of the site. removes bldg;

Mr. Knight asked about pedestrian access on the driveway between the Caplan building and St. Paul's Church. **Mr. Arigoni** said that if the town wishes to pursue the pedestrian connection that their plan would incorporate a desirable connection once you get onto that property without reconstruction of the alleyway because that would require agreement with the property owners. **Mr. Widenmann** commented on coordinated parking with all parties.

Mr. Knight, referring to an SBC easement, asked if SBC had been contacted, and **Mr. Widenmann** said that, no, they had not. **Mr. Knight** asked if they build it, who will maintain it? **Mr. Widenmann** said that he assumed that is what SBC would be looking for and that it would be up to them including plowing. **Mr. Knight** asked about the loft building and if it will be apartments that are 1200-1600 square foot on the second and third floors or if it is intended to be commercial space. **Mr. Widenmann** said that they envision an architect or some who works out of their home in the large, one bedroom space that has ten foot ceilings. He said that it would be residential that would allow for some commercial. **Mr.**

Mr. Knight asked about plans for 390 Center Street. **Mr. Widenmann** said that they would be gutting the building, installing new mechanicals and electrical, re-point the brick, roofing, restore the front façade, that the first floor would be retail with a rear addition to the rear of the building with handicap access in future, that they would address parking, second and third floors would be residential

Mr. Testa commented on the loft building and the parking on the lower level and asked if there will be garages? **Mr. Widenmann** said that there would probably be a garage with one large overhead door with a 6 bay garage.

Ms. Rascati asked parking and 390 and the commercial building. She commented that the access now to Center Street is too narrow for two lanes and said that they really have to have the access to North Main Street. **Mr. Widenmann** said that he prefers to negotiate with SBC and that he envisions one flow of traffic and that they would work with the Town Engineer to determine entrance and exit locations. **Ms. Rascati** referred to a small green space on the drawing and asked if that area was for the owner-tenants. **Ms. Molloy** said that was correct. **Mr. Gilmore** said that it serves as a buffer from the parking area to the homes on North Elm Street and Academy Street. He said that they chose buffer space over parking spaces.

Ms. Doherty commented on property lines. **Mr. Widenmann** said that they want to work with the Caplans regarding the cement block building.

Mr. Brodinsky commented on their plan that shows one way access to Center and North Main and that other plans show 2-way access. He asked if one-way in and one-way out would make a difference to potential residents or to other people as opposed to two-way. **Mr. Widenmann** did not think it would make a difference to residents but is aware that Fire and Police look for two-way. He thinks that two-ways into the site is important with two means of egress but that one of them could be one-way and the other a two-way. **Mr. Brodinsky** asked if the SBC access is one-way. **Mr. Widenmann** said that it was two-way and that it's one way from Center and two-way onto North Main Street subject to going through Planning and Zoning and Engineering. **Mr. Brodinsky** commented on the alternative plan in regard to 50 parking places and the impound lot. He asked if the alternative plan affects their price. **Mr. Widenmann** said there is not adjustment in the price required with the alternative plan.

Chairman Parisi asked if the drawings were to scale and the response was that they were. He asked about the building height. **Mr. Widenmann** said that it's 35 feet to the ridge on the townhouse buildings and the large loft building is 39 feet. **Chairman Parisi** asked about dumpster locations. **Mr. Widenmann** said they are not indicated because they prefer the green rollup containers in residential areas and not to use dumpsters. Refuse handling in commercial use has not been worked out. **Chairman Parisi** asked if they will be renting and selling. **Mr. Widenmann** said that the townhouse condominiums will be selling and that he anticipates that all of the other units will be for sale. They might elect to keep some units as rental, and it would all be set up as a condominium association. **Chairman Parisi** asked if they would retain ownership of the retail space, and **Mr. Widenmann** said that would be his

intention. **Chairman Parisi** asked whether the retail would always be retail? **Mr. Widenmann** said if they are set up as commercial that would be deed restricted to remain commercial and that the commercial would be members of the association subject to maintenance such as snow removal. He said that their main goal is to sell the lofts and that the residences will not be rented if they do not sell and that they expect full occupancy in two years.

There was a conversation regarding rubbish removal. **Chairman Parisi** asked about their ideas for the commercial space. **Mr. Widenmann** said that the commercial space on Center Street would attract different business than the interior commercial space due to visibility on Center Street and that he envisions interior businesses as attorneys, nutritionists, etc.

Richard Krombel, 38 North Elm Street, asked about water problems on North Elm Street.

Lucille Trzcinski, 25 Turnberry Road, member of the **Wooding Caplan Study Committee** said that the committee will consider the proposals as they were given to them in the original proposal.

Robert Avery, 42 North Elm Street, commented on the aquifer on the property. **Mr. Gilmore** said that they probably have ground water problems with saturated soils draining down from North Main Street. He said that insulated, perforated pipe can be used in the drain and intercept the water which protects septic systems.

Stuart Hecht, 360 Woodhouse Avenue, Book Vault, read a prepared statement which address downtown vitality, parking, revisiting Zoning regulations on Center and North Main and having Wallingford be a destination site for the day.

Debbie Gross, Long Hill Road, read a prepared statement regarding the project and its proposals

Charlie Flynn, 52 Academy Street, asked the Council that once a developer breaks ground how long the town stays involved in the process.

Mayor Dickinson said that practically speaking that the town would stay involved throughout the construction process to ensure that the project was being carried out as agreed to by the town.

Tony Debaise, 278 North Main Street, commented on traffic problems and box stores on North Main Street Extension and now there will be another addition to the traffic.

Brian Ennis, made comments on maintenance comparing rental with condominium associations.

Vincenzo DiNatale said that he thinks there is a lot of confusion and that a lot of the speakers are waiting for the second part of the meeting when there is general discussion and are waiting for this developer to conclude.

Mr. Widenmann gave a summary of his proposal saying that the comments from the public are genuine and important to understand. He said that he is impressed with all of the proposals and thinks that they have submitted a plan that meets with the requirements of the RFP and that their proposal is compatible with the Plan of Conservation and Development that Planning and Zoning has developed for this area of the town and that they have applied the vision of the Rose Report and the Wooding Caplan Study Committee. He thanked the Council for considering their plan and they look forward to the Council deciding on a plan that is best for the town.

Recess commenced at 8:26 P.M.

B. Additional Public Comment

The meeting and the Public Session reconvened at 8:44 P.M.

Richard Krombel, 38 North Elm Street, thanked the Committee, the Town Council, the developers and the residents and read a prepared statement
Paul Morse, 61 Academy Street, recommends the Mario DiNatale proposal and asked the Council to look to the future for the Town of Wallingford when they make their decision and address a coordinated effort in the development of this property. He spoke about the elements of development density, traffic and parking in relation to the historic character and nature of downtown Wallingford.

Betsy Bradley, 49 Academy Street, recommends the Mario DiNatale proposal saying that the sensitive way that it was designed really creates and adds to the sense of community that Wallingford seeks to create.

Ed Makepeace, 50 George Washington Trail, said that even though he lives on the east side of town that he takes a great deal of pride through the efforts of the town, the Council, Wallingford Center, Inc. and the uptown businesses and property owners and Choate in the great deal of care everybody has taken in the appearance of the town. He said that the points that were important to him in his review of the proposals were low density as less than 30, high-end properties in relation to maintenance and to attracting empty nesters, lowering the impact

of traffic and parking problems and he strongly recommends the Mario DiNatale proposal.

Robin Morse, 61 Academy Street. Mr. Morse read her prepared statement that recommended the Mario DiNatale proposal because of the sensitivity to the historic character of the town, that it presents low density occupancy that fits the space, and that has a reasonable amount of commercial space.

Kathy Avery, 42 North Elm Street, recommends the Mario DiNatale proposal.

James S, 133 Fair Street, recommends the Mario DiNatale proposal. He said that he is very concerned about the increase in traffic and has parking concerns as well.

Patricia Sittnick, 139 Prince Street, prefers a park and somewhat likes Town Center plan.

Bob Gross, Long Hill Road asked the Council to give some thought to the following issues: parking in relation to keeping business downtown, the lack of open space in the downtown area for festivals which also helps the businesses and the cost and sale price of the land. He said to keep the land and use it as open space in the form of a park.

Robert Avery, 41 North Elm Street, urged the Council to consider the future of Wallingford in their choice and to consider the developer who followed their RFP.

Anthony Debaise, North Main Street, said that he would like to public to vote on what happens to this property and that in addition to the four proposals to have a choice to do nothing with the property.

Richard Krombel, asked about the timeline moving forward and asked if after the developer is selected if residents will still have opportunity to be part of the development process.

Mayor Dickinson said that there will be opportunity at Planning and Zoning and that the Council also wants to know, all those plus private conversations.

Mr. Krombel asked if there would be oversight of the process for accountability of the project.

Mayor Dickinson said lots of other departments involved for instance, Building Department, Engineering, Planning and Zoning, but no one person in charge.

Steven Clark, 40 Apple Street, asked how a referendum works.

Mayor Dickinson said that the Town Charter has specific requirements, and he referred Mr. Clark to the Law Department who has those provisions.

Mr. Flynn asked the Council to listen to the people speaking out.

Caryl Ryan, 200 Cheshire Road, Co-Chair Wooding Caplan Study Committee, asked if the public would be heard on March 28, 2006 when the Wooding Caplan Committee makes their report to the Council. **Chairman Parisi** said that he prefers the public to be heard tonight and over the last three nights. **Mayor Dickinson** said that she is asking if the Council will allow any public comments regarding their report. **Chairman Parisi** said that yes, public comment would be allowed.

Ms. Avery recommended having a park on the property, which could be used for festivals. She mentioned botanical gardens, a bicycle path and re-erecting two, stored historic homes on the property and for the town to use them as visitor, recreation and as educational and art centers.

Wes Lube, 15 Montowese Trail, asked the Council to not change our town, noted that not one developer reported performing a market study, pointed out that the proposal should present a project that people want and is saleable, that significant ground level commercial space is a negative aspect, that apartments over commercial space occupants are a stigma, and finally he expressed to the Council to make this development as saleable as possible. He spoke about property options.

Todd Urmachenski, 12 North Elm Street and 428 Center Street said to keep the property for the future and to not develop it and spoke with the Mayor regarding his water problem.


Donna Crandly, Vice President, Smith Craft Real Estate Group, went on the record to say that Smith Craft is present at the meeting.

Mr. Gross said he hopes that the Council takes more than three weeks to decide on which proposal they will select.

Mr. Knight made a motion to adjourn and **Mr. Testa** seconded. All Councilors present (6) voted Aye, and the motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:52 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Sandra R. Weekes

Meeting recorded by Sandra Weekes.

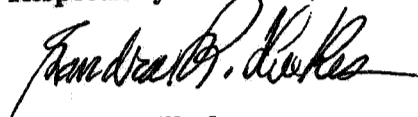
Robert F. Parisi, Chairman

Date

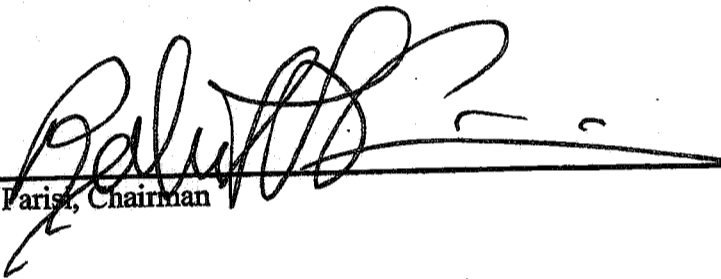
Barbara Thompson, Town Clerk

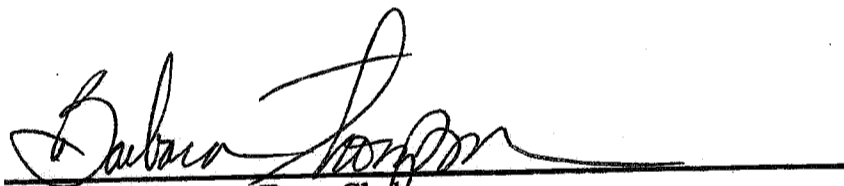
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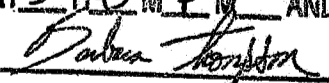
Respectfully submitted,


Sandra R. Weekes

Meeting recorded by Sandra Weekes.


Robert F. Paris, Chairman 9/12/06
Date


Barbara Thompson, Town Clerk 9/12/06
Date

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AT 3:45 P.M. AND RECORDED BY
 TOWN CLERK
WST