

Wallingford Planning & Zoning Commission

Special Meeting

Monday, March 30, 2026

6:30 p.m.

Room 315

Town Hall – 45 South Main Street

MINUTES

RECEIVED FOR RECORD

4-6-26

AT

3:47 pm

AND RECEIVED BY

Kevin Pagni

TOWN CLERK

Chairman Fitzsimmons called the meeting to order at approximately 6:30 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.

**Roll Call:** Present: James Fitzsimmons, Chair; Jeffrey Kohan, Vice Chair; David Leonardo, Secretary; J.P. Venoit, Regular Member; James Seichter, Regular Member; Casey Camire, Alternate; Cheryl DeGenova, Alternate; Joseph Sanders, Alternate; and Kevin Pagni, Town Planner.

Guests: Janis Small, Corporation Counsel, and Steven Allinson, Assistant Town Attorney.

**DISCUSSION**

1. Special Act 25-01 Housing Bill – Mandatory Zoning Changes discussion

Mr. Pagni reviewed the memo he provided, summarizing the needed changes, focusing on parking. The changes have to be enacted by July 1<sup>st</sup>. The new law allows parking regulations only for housing with 17 or more units, with 1 space per one-bedroom or studio unit and 2 spaces for two or more bedroom units. This affects the Incentive Housing Zone, the Town Center Zone, the fees in lieu of parking, and the table in 6-11 of the residential requirements. He explained that we can create up to two Conservation and Traffic Mitigation Districts encompassing no more than 4% of the land area of the town, which will act as an overlay district.

Chairman Fitzsimmons clarified that we need to update our regulations to remove the required number of parking spaces. He clarified that the fees in lieu of parking also need to be struck. Mr. Pagni concurred. Commissioner Fitzsimmons asked if the reference to residential parking affects all zones. Mr. Pagni said yes.

Atty. Allinson stated that the recommendation is to strike the parking requirements and create an overlay, based on what the act is giving us. With the Conservation and Traffic Mitigation Districts, we can create an overlay map that will allow us to put in the requirements for the 17 or more units. We can put the same regulations throughout the Town, but if it's not in a Conservation and Traffic Mitigation district, applicants can overcome the burden.

Atty. Small stated that the intent appears to be to identify an area of the Town where we have concerns about parking. Developers can rebut by doing a parking assessment. The Statute doesn't say how we are allowed to react to it.

Chairman Fitzsimmons clarified that areas of the town with no on-street parking are not addressed. Atty. Small replied that that may be an area for the Conservation and Traffic Mitigation Zone. Atty. Allinson stated that it can be a bizarrely drawn zone. We can have two of 4%.

Commissioner Camire asked about the definition of “residential housing developments” and if it includes standard, detached single-family houses such as the R15 or R11. Atty. Allinson replied that it doesn’t make a difference. He clarified that we cannot require parking minimums for housing under 17 units, though a developer can choose to provide parking. Mr. Pagini noted that most developers say that they can’t build without providing for parking. Commissioner Camire asked where the biggest impact will be. Mr. Pagini replied likely Route 5, Town Center, and South Colony. He stated that we can look at the DOT’s numbers to estimate.

Chairman Fitzsimmons noted that the Commission approved a project for four apartments and only two parking spots because it was near public parking. He expects to see more two-family houses turning into three family because they now don’t need to provide parking.

Commissioner Sanders stated that we need to respect the laws, but think of the existing neighborhoods with cars parked on the street. It affects traffic. How can the Town find a balance to avoid unsafe conditions? Mr. Pagini stated that this law wouldn’t limit police from making restrictions based on safety.

Commissioner Seichter noted that the key will be enforcing restrictions. People will be parking on front lawns because there is no other space. This will be a challenge, but it is not zoning. It is enforcement.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Scott Amore, 13 Jenna Road, stated that we need to find developable properties and identify areas for overflow parking and snowstorm parking. We need to look at big picture planning and work together as a community.

Chairman Fitzsimmons asked the Commission if there was a desire to move forward with the two Conservation and Traffic Mitigation districts. Consensus was to proceed. Mr. Pagini added that we can have two districts of around 500 acres each. Chairman Fitzsimmons noted that the districts can be created after we get the parking regulations corrected. He asked if staff could have the zoning text revisions ready for the May meeting. Mr. Pagini confirmed and asked if we are also adding the 17 or more units language to the regs. Atty. Small confirmed. Chairman Fitzsimmons confirmed that we will hold off on the Conservation and Traffic Mitigation District for now.

Mr. Pagini continued reviewing the memo, focusing on the changes affecting mobile homes. The requirement for 22 ft. max for mobile homes must be removed. We also have to modify Section 11.3 on the filing of protests. He explained the change.

Atty. Small stated that it makes it more difficult. The goal is to allow all kinds of development to go through with the least amount of scrutiny. This is not tied to just residential. We can revise the section or remove it. She suggested revising so we are in compliance with the law.

Mr. Pagini added that the Transit Community Middle Housing may need a definition of summary review instead of as of right.

Chairman Fitzsimmons asked for interest in adding the mobile home changes to the May meeting as well. Consensus was to proceed. He asked for and received consensus for changing the filing protest language to comply with the new law. The draft language will be reviewed in May.

Commissioner Kohan noted that the Regional Planner of the South Central Regional Council of Governments is putting together a template of all the changes to be done by July 1<sup>st</sup>. That may be helpful. Mr. Pagini added that they are also providing a consultant to help.

Atty. Small noted that we have to comply with the law, no matter what the regulations say. She added that the Statute also has things to be done over the next 5 years as well. She will try to come up with a timeline of what's next. She added that the Statute may also change.

## 2. Overall Discussion on housing throughout the Town – changes going forward

Mr. Pagini referenced correspondence from Mr. Wiedenmann and asked for suggestions for action items for the next year. Ideas include 55 and over housing and mixed-use development in the IX and WI zones.

Commissioner Seichter stated that there are vacant buildings in the IX district. We can think about carving out areas where housing may be appropriate. He noted that surrounding towns have found ways to have large developments. We don't have much available land. Despite recent regulation changes, we seem to be stuck. We need to look at where there might be opportunities due to underutilization.

Commissioner Sanders talked about what makes Wallingford unique. He stated that there is a perspective shift when you go from using something (renting) to investing in the town (purchasing a house). Cities are set up for transient populations that are not stakeholders. Wallingford allows people to be stakeholders. He agrees that 55 and over housing is needed. But we also need housing for young families. Is there a way to provide a range of housing stock? He noted that when we lose commercial real estate to residential, we never get it back for commercial, and it shifts the tax burden to residents.

Commissioner Camire noted that Wallingford has been ahead of the curve with its housing regulations. Middle housing for younger families is missing. We also need to preserve the local character. He asked if there are paths to come up with an administrative approval track for conforming 6.38 applications

instead of requiring a Site Plan. This could benefit smaller developers. It could potentially be extended to R-18s served by sewer. This is similar to what Meriden did, where water and sewer are present. Commissioner Camire suggested being creative. Maybe articulate some kind of design standards for certain types of projects, like a catalog of things that are automatically approved. He noted that we are currently redoing the POCD, we are not severely housing-constrained, and Wallingford is at an inflection point for affordability. There is a lot of support to allow building for young families. Retirees need senior living options. ADUs may be an option. This could also help get us back to two high schools.

Commissioner Kohan stated that the most immediate and opportunistic is the IX zone. A lot of buildings are underutilized. He can see allowing some sort of residential aspect. This should be at the top of our list. Other parcels include the Insilco property on Rte. 5 and Wallace Silversmith. We need an inventory of what's available. How do we make the regulations allow this? Mr. Pagini noted that the owner of Campus at Green Hill is bringing a proposal. 5 Research Parkway is looking at a mixed-use option. We can bring something forward too. Commissioner Kohan stated that we can look at adding other uses, too.

Chairman Fitzsimmons noted that there are more than two dozen projects that are approved yet not built. We can't make someone complete the project. Mr. Pagini stated that none of the owners of those properties is willing to sell either. Chairman Fitzsimmons referred to the memo from Mr. Wiedenmann. City water and sewer control is where developers will go. We need to look into the expansion of water and sewer. Maybe this can be part of the POCD. He clarified that residential is allowed on Rte. 5 by Special Permit.

Commissioner DeGenova stated that she understands that older folks are not moving out of their homes so young families can come in because there is no place to go. Chairman Fitzsimmons noted that there is an approved 55+ community that has not been built yet. Commissioner DeGenova suggested trying to find someone to build these communities.

Commissioner Seichter noted that we have to avoid spot zoning. Mr. Pagini noted that we could have a floating zone. Atty. Small noted that 8-30g would be allowed if the IX is opened to residential. She added that city water and sewer are not required for 8-30g.

Commissioner Leonardo suggested looking to see what works and what doesn't work anymore. Do we need water and sewer for development? There are options if we get creative. We can explore areas that are underutilized, not limited to 55 and older development.

Chairman Fitzsimmons asked if Water & Sewer is including any expansion in the POCD. Mr. Pagini replied no. He added that he has a map that he can share with the Commission.

Atty. Small suggested inviting Water & Sewer to come talk to the Commission.

Chairman Fitzsimmons asked the Commission for thoughts on ADUs. Consensus was to explore options.

Commissioner Seichter stated that we need to be conscious to make sure that we have some restrictions to ensure they conform to the primary structure.

Commissioner Sanders stated that what really works well for higher housing density should be pulled into the POCD. This Commission didn't create the affordability problem and can't solve it. Mr. Pagini stated that most of this should be in the POCD recommendations, which will be available to the Commission at next month's meeting.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Richard Paresano, 303 Highland Avenue, stated that this discussion is right on spot. Affordable housing is a big concept. We need to break it down. Look at affordable building and getting costs down, maybe using technology and innovation such as 3D printing. Look at affordable land. There is only so much land to work with. An example of innovation is a Costco in California that built an affordable community on its roof. He suggested looking at the Tracy section of town, maybe for a tiny home or modular home community. Look at affordable infrastructure, affordable regulations, and affordable value. He suggested that there be a condition on approved projects that they have to break ground in two years. He noted that other towns have Affordable Housing Commissions as a way to get the public involved.

Chairman Fitzsimmons noted that there is a State statute that approved projects have to break ground within 5 years, but due to COVID, everything was extended. Regarding Tracy, he noted that the burned-out building is on our agenda next month for a multi-family development. He explained the Yalesville Limited Business (YLB) District, which allowed adding apartments and was successful. Maybe we should see if the YLB regulations would work in Tracy. Mr. Pagini noted that there are potentially contamination issues in Tracy, and the zoning already allows for multi-family.

Nancy Leaman, 115 Parker Farms Road, noted that affordable is defined as 30% of your income, which is lower than the going rate for apartments. She noted that the value of her home doubled, which increased her taxes and insurance, so it is no longer affordable. She asked if there are any plans for rental units that are truly 30% of income and consideration for those with disabilities.

Chairman Fitzsimmons stated that we create regulations to allow builders to do stuff. He knows that the non-market rate is not really affordable. He noted that Wallingford does have a Fair Rent Commission.

Annette Nunez, 17 Field Drive, talked about housing for the elderly and asked about the state-approved money. Mr. Pagini replied that the Mayor has signed, and they are waiting for the State to reply. The funds are to be used for an architecture firm to do a viability assessment. Ms. Nunez asked about the proposed development on South Cherry. Mr. Pagini replied that it was approved but is now on the market.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons clarified that the question was about the State funding for the Old Choate Boat House, where they are looking at the viability and what can be built there.

Ms. Nunez stated that there are a lot of elderly people in Wallingford with nowhere to go. They don't want to move out of Wallingford. She mentioned the land by exit 15 in the industrial area. She mentioned a project that turned box cars into housing.

Carol Borsari, 30 Strawberry Hill, stated that she is in favor of ADUs. They are a benefit to the Town. She also loves the open space of the rural areas. We need more housing, but don't want to give up the character of the town. This is reflected in the survey.

Joann Hummel, 60 Deer Run Road, and Social Services for the Senior Center, stated that she gets many calls regarding affordable housing. She likes the idea of repurposing buildings for apartments or building tiny home neighborhoods. Wallingford has lots of opportunities for housing. Young people want houses where they feel safe. Seniors are living in unsafe environments due to stairs, the cost of utilities, and the cost of repairs. This discussion echoes what Wallingford Works for Housing has heard.

Commissioner Kohan stated that he would love to see a list of lots with housing opportunities.

Susan Gomes, 26 Edgewood Drive, referred to the three warehouses proposed for the Old Barnes Road area, and if they are not built, this would be a great residential development. She noted that people renting apartments are not always transitory. They spend money in town and build residency. We need to look at the full spectrum of affordability. We need to build residency, which will build the workforce, and then the school census will stabilize.

Mr. Paresano commented on the cost of land available. We should make a list of private, state, public, and wetlands. He noted that across from the Polish National Park is a small strip mall that is mostly empty. That's a possibility. There's an abandoned parking lot on South Cherry Street.

Ms. Nunez noted that snow removal is difficult when cars have to park on the street. She asked about the Kondracki Lane property. She asked who was advertising to invite development in Wallingford. Chairman Fitzsimmons replied that snow removal is a town issue. The Kondracki Lane project was approved, and the Economic Development Commission does some promotion to developers.

Mr. Amore noted that he likes the idea of exploring the IX zone for housing opportunities. He also likes ADUs and using the large garages that exist. The onus is on the Town to come up with developable land. He stated that Wallingford Works for Housing is happy to help.

Mr. Pagini stated that the State will be providing a list of parcels that they feel are developable. This is based on zoning, wetlands, slopes, and proximity to utilities. There is not a lot of vacant land left that's developable. We have a better shot at redeveloping.

Commissioner Seichter asked if anyone knew if the tiny home community on North Colony in Meriden is for rentals. Mr. Paresano replied that they are long-term leases and go for \$1,800 to \$2,000. Commissioner Seichter stated that 'affordable' is not really affordable. Many can't afford them. We need to have housing below the state affordability level. We need to find the sweet spot.

Commissioner Venoit agreed. We struggle with our responsibility for regulations, and hopefully stimulate interest. Where is the financial incentive? We can give the tools, but finance is the issue.

Chairman Fitzsimmons thanked everyone for participating and recapped what's next. For the May meeting, we will review the state-required changes to our regulations. We will look for other uses in the IX zone and look at encouraging ADUs. He proposed another housing-specific workshop in June to discuss these, and we will invite Water and Sewer to participate.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Commissioner Seichter: Motion to Adjourn the Wallingford Planning and Zoning Commission for Monday, March 30, 2026, at 8:10 pm.**

**Commissioner Kohan: Second  
Vote: Unanimous**

Respectfully submitted,  
Cheryl-Ann Tubby  
Recording Secretary

