

The Public Hearing opened at 7:05 PM.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ken Fortier (Vice-Chair), Randy Godaire, Dave Garceau (online), Pete Fiasconaro, Eric Beer, Helen Weingart, Alternate Dan Pearce, Alternate Peter Haines.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Doug Dubitsky (Chair), Alternate Bill Ireland.

ALTERNATES SEATED: Seat Dan Pearce for Doug Dubitsky, seat Peter Haines for Pete Fiasconaro who recused himself from the Public Hearing and left the table.

ALSO PRESENT: Zoning Enforcement Officer (ZEO) Jay Gigliotti, First Selectman Juan Roman, Selectman Joe Pinto and Recording Clerk Kathleen Scott.

K. Fortier read the Legal Notice that was published twice in the Chronicle. Application materials are available at the Town Hall, on the Town website or by appointment.

SUBJECT OF HEARING:

SP22-163-64-66 Willimantic Road- Mehak Realty, LLC- Special Permit Application for Gasoline filling station and convenience store per section 5.3.B.m:

ZEO J. Gigliotti reviewed the process for the special permit application for the Business Zone. The Public Hearing must be completed within 35 days of opening. A decision to deny or approve with conditions with the reason stated for the record must be made within 65 days of the close of the Public Hearing (the applicant can ask for a 65-day extension to allow for additional input or revisions). The review from the ZEO and Towne Engineering (3rd party consultant) are available on the website and part of the public record along with 2 public comments that came in prior to this meeting.

Tristan Wallace (representing the applicant) presented the plan for proposed gas station at 64-66 Willimantic Rd. with the following: site is a little less than 3 acres; 4,965 sq. ft. building with a drive-thru and fueling dispensers to the front; one way in and one way out (redesign of the site from 2019); 3 structures on the site (a house and 2 barns with not a lot of open space); Grading & Drainage Plan; the site is in the Business Zone and abuts the Residential Zone that requires a 50ft. buffer; Stone Water Management with ADS Chamber System (open chambers under the pavement that discharges if the flow is too high to the wetlands and to the road); oil water separators to improve water quality and reduce sediment; improved landscaping with different levels of plantings and fencing around the property to improve screening; architectural drawings to show what the building will look like; site plan (improvement on the previous plan) that meets all zoning and setback requirements, improved and cleaner 50ft. buffer.

The hearing was opened for public comment.

Public comments in favor of the proposed gas station in-person and online: None.

Public comments opposed to the proposed gas station in-person:

- Shirley Fiasconaro of 68 and 46 Willimantic Rd lives behind the property and has concerns with trying to pull out of her driveway with view blocked by tractor trailers parked in the breakdown lane, runoff into underground wells/pond/swamp, and light pollution.

- Sylvie Godbout of 305 Chaplin Woods Rd. has concerns with traffic nightmare and accidents (already a nightmare pulling out of her property), and the need for another gas station.
- Noreen Wall of 303 Chaplin Woods Rd. has concerns with noise, water with 2 well systems, lighting, accidents with a large group of people in and out of the condo community of 21-units, and the need for another gas station.
- Diana Alvarez of 36 Phoenixville Rd. has concerns with the need for another gas station with 2 other gas stations nearby, and tractor trailers parked on the road at nearby gas stations that blocks the view.
- Erin Jones of 193 Tower Hill Rd. has concerns with the need for another gas station that may cause more accidents (happens all the time in front of Zlotnick's).
- Karen Woodward of 63 Willimantic Rd. (business right across from the property) has concerns with trucks parking out front, traffic that gives no room for tractor trailers to backup with deliveries, poor site lines with fast traffic coming around the curve, and lighting that could affect their greenhouse and plants.
- Jeff Woodward of 63 Willimantic Rd. asked about the oil separator water quality maintenance and who does it.
- Peter Fiasconaro of 46 and 68 Willimantic Rd. referred to S1 and G1 and asked if the buffer goes all the way to the road (affects the site line pulling out of his driveway), has concerns with the appropriate use of the buffer that has light posts, fencing, a septic tank and leach field, and water overflow directed to his driveway (presented photos).

Public comment opposed to the proposed gas station online:

- Adele is listening and concerned about what is done.
- Don Slowik of 108 Willimantic Rd. has concerns with adding another runoff (already a storm drain that connects to the pond) in the wetlands area with a considerable amount of wildlife and plants, requested an environmental impact study for both that run into the Natchaug River, and asked to review the report from Towne Engineering.
- Derrick Caisse of South Bear Hill Rd. has concerns with the poor site view on the Route 6 curve, and hasn't heard anything about containment for spillage or leakage.
- Mike Healy of Lynch Rd. has concerns with too much going on at the site, potential traffic circulation issues, and parking at the back that is inconvenient for a quick stop.
- Peggy is looking for information and different opinions (hasn't formed opinion yet).

Tristan Wallace (representing the applicant) responded to public comment (S1 – site layout).

Truck Traffic and Traffic itself – Site is large enough with traffic flow for trucks to enter and stay within the site. Site Line – Required to do site line analysis that goes to DOT with no major concerns. There is a tree in the DOT right-of-way that can be removed. Lighting – New LED style meant to avoid bleeding off site. Light Poles – Will move out of the buffer and revise the lighting plan. Buffer – Regulation is for 50 ft off the property line (property line ends where the right-of-way begins). The front yard setback has curb cuts designed to make it easier for trucks to enter and exit. Stone Water System (G1) – Analysis done to match or reduce the amount of peak flow that is leaving the site. Systems have large enough storage capacity to hold stone water back and infiltrate into the ground. Environmental Impact with potential spill – Contingency Plan required for all fueling stations (guidelines and training from DEEP) with double lined and reinforced fuel tanks. Oil Water Separators – Cleaned annually with disposal offsite. Maintenance Plan includes quarterly inspection and is required as a condition of Wetlands approval.

Public comment in favor of the proposed gas station in-person and online: None

Public comment opposed to the proposed gas station in-person:

- Noreen Wall asked what happens if all the plans for stone water doesn't work.
- Sylvia Godbout asked if there are plans for heightened sounds or advertisements (noise carries).
- Pete Fiasconaro commented that the plan presented is much better than previous plan and has concerns with what is done to site lines for vehicles trying to pull out when tractor trailers park on the apron

(presented photos from Zlotnick's), fence not enough to block sight, sound or debris – also needs 6ft of earth and berm topped with 6ft trees (presented photo of his front yard that points to the back of the property), and asked if there is a Cleanup Plan (Item #23 from Towne Engineering).

Public comment opposed to the proposed gas station online:

- Derrick Caisse has concerns with the property not being a good site for a gas station with wetlands behind it and a retention next to it.
- Don Slowik asked if the Army Corp of Engineers has been notified and has concerns with no Public Hearing for Wetlands who decided there was no significant impact.
- Laura is gathering information and hasn't made up her mind.
- Mike Healy presumes the applicant will make revisions to address comments from Town Engineering and would like to review after resubmission.

Tristan Wallace (representing the applicant) responded to public comment.

Contingency Plan – has built in safety factors environmentally related to spills (gas station design dictated by DEEP with alarms for spills and double-lined tanks). Stone Water & Maintenance – Hooded catch basins with sumps. Systems have isolator row to eliminate sediment. Fueling Station – Limited area around the dispensers with grooves that capture spills (smaller spills evaporate quickly, spill kits and people trained to handle for large spills). Sound Advertisement – no plans for Advertisements and the gas station will close at midnight. Screening – Trees with a fence does the same job as a berm would do for screening (landscaping architect is used for Landscaping Plan – L1). Army Corps of Engineers – Not required to notify (only gets involved if resource area is considered navigable water or if doing work within the resource area). Trucks at the roadway – There is no need for trucks to be on Route 6 to service them. The owner commented about having several similar sites (Marlboro, Franklin, Preston, Ledyard) with no issues that meet all requirements and invites the Commission to visit them. Lighting doesn't bother the neighbors.

Public comment opposed to the proposed gas station in-person:

- Diana Alvarez asked where the drive-thru window is located (on the south side) and has concerns with the difficulty in turning across non-stop traffic on Route 6 (blocked view with trucks parked on both sides of the road that is not safe), and the need for 4 gas stations in a 6-mile radius (high traffic area with potential for more accidents).
- Shirley Fiasconaro has concerns with the long wait turning left out of her driveway (dangerous for her children that drive), and concerns with tractor trailers pulling out when they are tired of waiting. The owner responded that trucks are able to use the property to turn left or right (people in a rush to enter or leave can cause accidents).

First Selectman Juan Roman asked where the filling stations for the underground tanks are (south of the building) and what happens to traffic (the loading area is off the travel path with room for traffic to get around them).

Public comments opposed to the proposed gas station online:

- Mike Healy asked for addresses for the Preston and Ledyard gas stations.

Public comments opposed to the proposed gas station in-person:

- P. Fiasconaro commented that the applicant has addressed the majority of items in the site plan review requirements and zoning regulations 8.7a1 and has concerns about the potential for a large fuel spill to travel hundreds of feet underground keeping in mind the amount of wetlands in this area.

Motion to continue Public Hearing (8:12 PM) to the next meeting on March 10, 2022, by E. Beer, seconded by R. Godaire. All in favor, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by,
Recording Clerk Kathleen Scott