

**WETHERSFIELD PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING
OCTOBER 8, 2003**

The Wethersfield Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing on October 8, 2003, at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, Connecticut.

Members present:

Joseph L. Hammer, Vice Chairman
Richard Roberts
George Oickle
Robert Jurasin
John Hallisey
Scott Murphy
John Adamian
Philip Knecht
Matthew Cholewa

Members absent:

Earle Munroe, Chairman
Theresa Forsdick, Clerk

Also present:

Peter Gillespie, Economic Development Manager/Town Planner

Vice Chairman Hammer called the public hearing to order at 7:30 p.m. as Chairman Munroe was out of town.

APPLICATION NO. 1408- 03 -Z. Colvest Wethersfield, LLC seeking Site Plan and Design Review approval under Article XXXI, 167 - 137 of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations for the construction of two buildings having a total of approximately 22,960 sq. ft. located on the east side of Silas Deane Highway in an Industrial Zone at 1080 Silas Deane Highway.

Mr. Daniel Kleinman principle in the law firm Levy & Droney representing the applicant stepped forward and gave a brief description of the application which was being continued from the previous meeting. He told the Commission the 4.67 acre parcel was on the eastern side of the Silas Deane Highway and currently occupied by a 30,000 sq. ft. single story steel frame and masonry structure. The southern portion is occupied by Dal Tile warehouse and showroom while the northern portion was most recently occupied by Town Fair Tire although is now vacant. The building was constructed in 1959 and used as the 7-Up bottling company and then the Rheingold Beer distribution center. In the proposed plans the existing buildings will be removed and replaced by 2 new commercial buildings, a 13,000 sq. ft. retail pharmacy and a 9,800 sq. ft. multi tenant retail commercial structure. Both structures will be serviced by new water and sanitary sewer connections as well as a natural gas and underground, power and telephone service. He then introduced the members of the development team. Peter LaPointe Director of Construction and Real Estate for the Colvest group, John Heagle civil engineer ,with Megson and Heagle, Stephanie Fuss, landscape architect with Stephanie Fuss Associates LLC., Bruce Hillson traffic engineer with Traffic Engineering Solutions, and Frank Colaccino, managing member of the applicant. He went on to say that since the previous public hearing they had conducted meetings with Town staff to help refine the site plan and accommodate many of the concerns of the Commission. The site plan had been modified with many changes which would be discussed in greater detail in the course of their presentation but included the reduction of the number of parking spaces, limitation of access to the site, relocation of the ATM machine, increased landscaping, and realignment of the main driveway entrance. They had reduced their comments and responses to writing and distributed through the Town Planner a memorandum (dated September 29, 2003) and titled Site Plan and Review Comments and Responses and asked that it be marked as an exhibit. He said that their goal had been to meet the application criteria of §167-140 of the Wethersfield code, and he

believed that the Commission would be able to see that they had done so. He felt that it was an excellent plan and that it was consistent with the Plan of Conservation and Development and would benefit the Town both aesthetically and in revenue and was therefore worthy of their approval. He mentioned that in the course of the previous public hearing a number of concerns had been raised by Commissioners and he went on to briefly address those concerns. The first issue involved the proposed drainage and runoff leaving the site. He directed the Commissioners to examine a memorandum from Michael Turner, Town Engineer (dated September 30, 2003 - on file) which reviews the drainage computations and drainage area maps prepared by their civil engineers and concurs with their findings that the post development runoff will be less than the predevelopment runoff. In addition there had been questions about whether the applicant needed some sort of an easement or legal right to drain surface water across the abutting property to the east owned by CL &P. He submitted a copy of the deed from their predecessor in title Oran P. Kilburn, Paul E. Monahan and Eugene J. Hennessey to the Connecticut Power Company dated Decembers 15, 1955. Volume 164, page # 527 of the Wethersfield land records whereas the grantors in that deed reserved to themselves, their heirs and assigns the right to discharge surface water across and over the conveyed premises. In addition the Commission had questioned whether or not the applicant had made contact with the Silas Deane Revitalization Committee. At the time of application the applicant had not been aware of the Committee nor had any representative of that Committee contacted them or the previous owner. Since then the applicant had made themselves aware of the Committee and had conducted a meeting and reviewed the plan with the chairman of the Committee Mr. Paul Courchaine they had also the opportunity to meet with members of the Economic Development Commission. The Planning and Zoning Commissioners had previously inquired as to whether there had been communication with the next door neighbor to the south, Walgreen's Center. Mr. Kleinman said that a letter had been sent on September 26, 2003 to the owner of the property, Prime Development Group attention Mr. Leo Fields in Hamden to discuss and review the plans, but there had been no response from them. He also added that legal notice had been sent to all abutting property owners.

Commissioner Oickle asked if Prime Development was the owner of the property. Mr. Kleinman said that they were listed as the owner on the land records and they would have the legal interest in any decrease in value or any abutter's possible usage concerning the property. It would not be appropriate he said to contact individual tenants.

Mr. Gillespie said that legal notice is sent to all abutters by return receipt. He couldn't say for certain if a receipt was returned from Prime Development but it certainly had not been returned undelivered.

Mr. Peter LaPointe said that the tax assessor's records list the owner as Prime Development Group although Michael Turner, Town Engineer had given them Mr. Fields name. In addition to public notice sent to the owner, Mr. Turner had also given them a couple of phone numbers from his personal phone book. 2 for Mr. Fields and 1 for his project manager and they tried all 3 of those numbers repeatedly without success.

Mr. Kleinman said that although they had gone above the legal requirement and had still been unable to contact Mr. Field, they had made direct contact with the owner abutter to the north, and they do not oppose this application.

Commissioner Oickle said that his reasons for being concerned about this application are obvious. He is concerned about the drainage, even though they say there is less drainage going down there. Because they have made every effort above and beyond to contact the owners and it's in the record, and he felt satisfied with that. He thanked them for their effort.

Mr. Kleinman went on to address issues about Silver Cove Plaza, also owned by Colvest Group which had been brought up by Commissioners at the previous meeting. There had been some question as to whether or not the site near Silas Deane Highway and Jordan Lane had outstanding items on its punchlist. He mentioned a memorandum from Michael Turner (dated September 30, 2003 - on file) which address this issue and commented that all items had been completed and signed off on. It also noted that that since taking over management of the site the Colvest Group had done an admirable job in terms of the pavement maintenance and the guide rail repairs, as well as litter patrol and pick up. The memo concluded by saying that he could only speak favorably of Mr. LaPointe and his management firm on how they have responded to our concerns since taking ownership of the site.

Mr. Kleinman said that they were heartened by Chairman Munroe's comments at the end of the last meeting which said that the Commission is pro-economic development and he added so are we. However there are some time

limitations that need to be brought to the attention of the Commission. In particular he said it concerns the leasing of the building. Although Town Fair Tire's lease is up, Dal Tile has up to 10 years remaining on its lease depending on certain circumstances, and indicated that there is a window of opportunity here to move to a different type of development. He then introduced a representative of the owner Third Generation Realty LLC to explain this further.

Mr. Howard Segal representing the partnership that owns 1080 Silas Deane Highway stepped forward to explain that they had the opportunity to terminate the existing lease with Dal Tile through an option if they act within a very small window of time. He said that as the Commission desires to move into retail as opposed to industrial and commercial space, the opportunity is available for the applicant to take our lease with them and enter into the termination of the present lease otherwise we would have a 10 year commitment with Dal Tile and most likely try to fill the space with an additional commercial or industrial tenant.

Vice Chairman Hammer asked how long a window they were talking about. Mr. Segal said that it would only be about a couple of months.

Mr. Peter LaPointe stepped forward and distributed photographs of the property as it currently exists and speculated that the property is currently economically obsolete, and inappropriate in terms of the Town's desire to develop the east side of the Silas Deane Highway as commercial property. He said that what his group is proposing to do is redevelop the site with 2 new commercial buildings. He then showed the site plan which had been revised in response to the Town staff and Commission concerns. He went on to say that the new plan shows the delineation of the wetlands at the rear of the site, the dumpster enclosures and the signalized entrance. They had gone back to CVS in response to the Commission's concerns and gotten approval for changes to the 2 driveways and both have been reconfigured. The signalized main entrance is now a full access driveway allowing movement in all directions. It has also been moved farther north in order to more closely align it with the driveway across the street. For this they also needed to gain approval from the adjacent property owner due to the tight proximity to the property line. In the previous plan the additional driveway had been proposed as a right turn in and right turn out, and it would now be right turn in only. The walk up ATM has also been moved away from the south travel lane and they have added a sidewalk from the Silas Deane Highway to the parking lot. He also mentioned that the drive-thru is a double lane, the outside lane being a pneumatic tube. Further changes include a landscaping plan with raised planted islands in the parking lot instead of striped bituminous islands. An additional suggestion from the Commission had been to move the buildings closer to the road and move the parking behind the buildings. He said that they had no power to unilaterally move the parking but their first response was that parking in the rear would be of no use to the tenants. But he would allow a representative for their principal tenant CVS to speak to that suggestion.

Mr. William LaRose, Director of Development for CVS in the Connecticut market stepped forward and said that about 18-24 months ago a site plan had been approved for a Walgreen's across the street. He explained that it represented the current trend in marketing for drugstores; a free standing building with a parking field out front and along the side which allows the patient or customer convenient access to the front door and a double drive-thru for added convenience. Once the store opened up the Colvest Group approached them with the opportunity to relocate from an older in-line location across the street to a free standing situation with parking out front, which would allow them the opportunity to compete on a level playing field. He said that if the parking were to be moved to the rear, then CVS would no longer be interested in the site; we would just as well stay where they are.

Commissioner Hammer asked if there were any changes possible from CVS's standpoint which would allow a compromise between a streetscape and a field of parking out front. Mr. LaRose felt that this proposed layout gives them the best convenience for their customers as well as supports the corporate prototype which they currently have.

Commissioner Adamian explained that the Town has been trying to encourage developments to move buildings closer to the street and place parking in the rear. He asked how this new development would be different from the Newington and Glastonbury CVSs which had their parking in the rear. Mr. LaRose said that those situations would probably last another 4 years. He said that the corporate prototype is different now, and if they were to rotate the store in order to place the parking in the rear then the entry way ends up being in the rear which is the same side as the drive thru and the delivery door which then raises safety concerns. He added that the Glastonbury location was relocation into a historic district and while the parking is off to the side it is also severely under parked.

Commissioner Cholewa couldn't quite understand why having the front door on the side along with the parking lot wouldn't be just as convenient if it was in the rear as in the front. He also said he wasn't sure how much discretion they would have to force them to move the building at all but he would hope that CVS would be flexible in helping the Town to do what they want and not have big parking fields along the street. He also commented that the only difference between Newington, Glastonbury and here was that they were able to force the issue and he wasn't sure if Wethersfield could. Mr. LaRosa said that they were just trying to be on the same competitive playing field. Any changes in the layout would require changes in the way the corporate prototype is laid out and if it's not convenient then it's not competitive.

Commissioner Cholewa said that he had been at the Glastonbury and the Newington stores and they seemed to be doing fine so he didn't think they would be closing them down. It just seemed to him that he sensed a lack of willingness to cooperate.

Commissioner Jurasin wanted to be clear that the store they wanted to compete with was the Walgreen's because he pointed out that although they do have a row of parking in the front, the bulk of their parking was on the side. He added that he never parked in front and that their entrance was located somewhat diagonally due to a creative design which put it equally accessible from the side or the front. This design still gives them a drive thru and minimizes the setback off the street which he felt was to their advantage because the customer could see the destination instead of just a parking lot. Although he admitted that he was not a marketing person, he pointed out that this type of a design could work. He then asked how many employees they would anticipate, between the 2 buildings.

Mr. Larose said that the CVS would have perhaps 20 employees in total and he wasn't sure how many would be required for the other retail. Commissioner Jurasin then speculated that even if half as many more were projected then there were enough employees to move an entire line of parking to the rear for required employee parking. Mr. LaRose said that he didn't think there would be a problem with moving the building up one bay width.

Commissioner Roberts asked how far the setback is from the Walgreen's site when compared to the site plan here before us. His recollection was one row of spaces facing the Silas Deane plus one row facing the building and then there is the building. He thought that would translate to about 1/2 the distance shown here tonight. He thought this type of configuration more pleasing than either of the other layouts discussed which he had found to be challenging driving experiences.

Commissioner Oickle said that he still had a problem with the second driveway even if made a right turn in only and wondered why they thought that they needed it. He wondered what would happen if they denied the second driveway altogether seeing that they were trying to reduce the number of driveways. His feeling was that the site would generate a lot of traffic and a signalized entrance would be safer.

Mr. Larose felt that he would have to defer to the traffic engineers for their expertise. However he said that they do look for more than one means of ingress/egress servicing the site, and to either access the parking field or the drive thru. This second driveway gives 2 means of ingress and allows access to the signalized egress. Commissioner Oickle thought he would feel better if they had a slow down lane like the bigger shopping centers.

Commissioner Jurasin said that putting aside his personal opinion, he wanted to know the answer to the question about the driveway being denied. Mr. Larose said that he would have to take that question back to the real estate committee; it would have to be a corporate decision.

Commissioner Murphy wanted to compliment the applicant for trying to address the concerns that the Commissioners raised last time. He said that although he is one who feels that they could do a little better he understands that there are some constraints with the site. He wondered if they could address the feasibility of a possible reorientation in terms of the 2nd building.

Mr. Frank Collaccino said that they not only have to address the needs of CVS but they have a signed letter of intent from Starbucks for the 2nd building and whenever there is a national tenant everybody likes the parking in the front. He said that while the Commission is talking to people here, they do not have the final authority here. Any time you

diminish the parking you have to go back to the corporate committee as they did after the last meeting. He said that what attracted CVS to the location was the free standing aspect and the parking field right out front. Customers vote with their feet, they want to park as close to the front door as possible this is something these retailers have learned from thousands of other locations across the country. He pointed out the Silas Deane Highway has one of everything and the parking is out front. The Walgreen's next door site has 2 rows of parking out front. If we were to turn CVS where would we put the other buildings, all the tenants want visibility. He said that he knew that CVS would not approve parking in the rear.

Commissioner Cholewa said that while he was correct that there are developments that have been approved with parking in the front, but the Town has had a change of heart. They were stuck between the applicant saying this is what we have always done and what our current goal is. He said that he appreciated the representative from CVS being here to answer their questions and concerns and wondered if they had looked at reorientation the buildings and sharing parking with Walgreen's.

Mr. Collaccino said that while the site is deep it is not wide and there is not a lot of frontage. Although he recognized what they were trying to do with the 1987 Master Plan that he had seen he wondered what had been going on since then. Commissioner Cholewa said that the Plan of Conservation and Development was put together in the last few years. But Mr. Collaccino said the plan that he saw had been made in 1987 and they had approved many developments since then with parking out front. He didn't see putting the buildings out front here, with the all the rest of the 3 or 4 miles with parking out front. As a town you start with one they would not get the national tenants that they want. He said that in the other situations that had discussed the areas were smaller and there was a lot of walking traffic, the Silas Deane was not that kind of area.

Commissioner Murphy said that he didn't think they wanted to see the perfect become the enemy of the good. He realized that the site might not allow the perfect situation but it might come down to just how much parking will go out front. But he did wonder if there wasn't some sort of compromise that might include reorientation of the buildings possible. They were unwilling to entirely abandon all their aspirations and if they were to look at these proposals they would see some progress toward their goal. He didn't know how much latitude they had in this regard which would make the situation uneconomic if they were to force the situation. But he thought some additional dialogue would be helpful. Mr. Collaccino said that the only way to reorient the buildings would be to turn it sideways, however they would never rent the buildings in the back, there would be no visibility. They have to put another building on the property to make it economically viable for the developer.

Commissioner Adamian said that from his years of experience as a retail leasing broker he could relate to what Mr. Collaccino was saying but at the same time the Town was trying to accomplish something here. He wondered what would be the benefit of locating the buildings one or 2 rows closer to the street. Commissioner Murphy said that the one redeeming virtue of this site is the current existence of green space and some of us are unwilling to trade all that in for more asphalt. Although perhaps maybe the gain of moving a few rows to the back while retaining the rest of the parking may be marginal.

Mr. Collaccino said that at the last meeting they heard the Commission's concerns about the loss of greenspace and they had actually hired a landscape architect to address this issue and would like to continue with the presentation in order to present that.

Mr. Peter LaPointe said that the original site plan showed 189 parking spaces while the revised plan is down to 170 while still meeting the regulation requirements of 153 parking spaces, with wider aisles to accommodate landscaping. He understood that they were looking to decrease impervious surfaces in the new regulations with the current site plan 22% of the lot is pervious, 38% overall is pervious if the wetlands are taken into account.

Mr. Bruce Hillson stepped forward to talk about the changes in terms of the driveways that had taken place since the last meeting. The full access driveway opposite the other shopping center is currently a signalized intersection; the site drive would become its 4th leg. This drive has been shifted about 8-10 feet northerly from the previous plan to align it more with driveway on the opposite side, so that it is right up snug to the property line with only about a foot to spare. In order to do this it requires rights to be secured from owner for the radius return in front of the abutting property and

any grading. At this time discussions are going well and it is their expectation that permission will be granted. The other I drive was proposed as right turn in and right turn out, the out has been eliminated and it is just a right turn in now. He said that Commissioner Oickle had suggested a deceleration lane to slow down traffic into the site, but for a smaller site like this they proposed angling the last 100-125' so it begins to flair, so that cars are nearly off of the road before they reach the entrance is typically used. It also softens the corner so that any vehicle following behind can do so without having to slam on the brakes. This satisfies CVS's needs and the rest of the development and makes it a safer entrance.

Commissioner Oickle asked if he saw any conflict with the right of way at the existing Walgreen's right hand bound north traffic coming out slowly.

Mr. Hillson said that vehicles leaving Walgreen's have to find a gap, people that are destined for this driveway shouldn't be in this lane anyway. Although everyone agreed that there are always drivers who will do the unpredictable. But generally speaking vehicles wishing to enter this site will be in the right lane by the time they get to the Walgreen's exit.

Commissioner Oickle asked him to please explain the phasing of the traffic signal. Mr. Hillson said that this plan had been submitted to the State Department of Transportation, Rocky Hill office and it will also be reviewed at the main office in Newington. Presently the signal controls 3 legs of the intersection, a left turn phase in the north bound direction; a left turn lane in both directions, a thru phase in the north and south bound followed by the side street, the site drive is currently unsignalised. They looked at it with the site drive ways operating at the same phase and reported what the operating levels of service would be in the study. We have since looked at it with split phasing if that is what is needed and found that the levels of service would remain C or better at all times; B at morning peak and C during mid day afternoon and Saturday mid day period. They are still very early in their discussions with DOT and when they complete their discussions with the abutting property owner and have determined exactly where they are and what they are doing.

Commissioner Oickle said that he realized they had not done studies of Maple Street or Mill Street but he wondered if tie ups at those intersections would affect those levels of service. Mr. Hillson said that their studies have only analyzed getting on and off the site and the overall operation of the intersection.

Commissioner Hammer asked if he thought the intersection operated better with the additional right turn only entrance as opposed to just the signalized intersection. Mr. Hillson answered that although he realized that the Commission was trying to discourage additional driveways it was his feeling that any time traffic could be siphoned off of the road way system so that the traffic does not impact the signalization it was a safer situation.

Commissioner Jurasin thought that there was value in the right turn driveway although he thought Commissioner Oickle concerns were valid. He thought it would be useful to know whether there were higher than normal accidents for this kind of road way usage. Once they are in the site he had a safety concern the first 3 parking spaces as a vehicle enters the aisle. If a car were backing out of a space at the same time a vehicle were to enter there could be problems. He would like to see those 3 spaces removed and replaced with another island planter which would give more green space and improve the safety operations and they would still be above the parking requirements. He didn't know the signage on the Wethersfield Shopping Center island but if there wasn't a do not enter facing the street, he suggested putting one there, especially for the site traffic sot they are not entering the exit lane and perhaps those tracks in the road to keep cars from veering into the thru traffic. He said that the way that he reads the analysis on the Wethersfield Shopping Center approach to the intersection, was that the right lane exiting has a right turn only, but the inside lane has a combination straight thru and left; which means that if a car wants to come into this site from that drive by definition they would be coming into the out lane. The only solution he could think of would be to make the inside lane an inclusive left lane, the outside lane a combination straight thru and right. He wasn't sure how that would affect the levels of service but he was more concerned with safety than levels of service.

His last comment in regard to that intersection concerns the existing southbound left turn lane; he hadn't seen any cueing analysis to know whether or not they feel comfortable that the length that exists now is long enough for the traffic generated by this facility. He thought that if its not then there will have traffic wanting to turn south bound left

blocking the thru lanes on the Silas Deane Highway. He wasn't sure what that would mean, but one of the things they have wrestled with is trying to provide enough storage capacity for left turn lanes in new developments without taking away storage from facilities that are already there. He also wanted to know how large the delivery trucks servicing the site would be and where would they stop to load or unload and how they would get there. He also wanted to comment on the orientation of the parking aisles in front of the building. He said that usually you want the orientation to be perpendicular to the building so that people are walking down the aisles and not through parked cars while other cars are trying to find parking spaces. Mr. Hillson said that a sign in the driveway to the plaza is easy to do as long as its in the right of way or permission is granted by the other plaza. Skip lines are something they can discuss with the DOT and if they agree that is something they can do. He said that converting the driveway coming off of the Wethersfield Shopping Center left lane shouldn't be a problem, and looking at the traffic the left turn is heavier than the right turn. He said that as far as the cueing in the southbound lane, he would have to take a look at that and get back to Mr. Gillespie with a memo in the next day or 2. As far as the onsite issues he would defer to Mr. LaPointe.

Mr. LaPointe said that modifying 3 parking spaces was certainly something they could look into. He said that the full sized tractor trailers servicing CVS would enter by the signalized intersection, their loading dock is in the rear next to the cardboard compactor immediately adjacent to the loading dock.

Commissioner Jurasin asked if that means that this was no longer a one way north bound any longer the way it's indicated on the plan. Mr. LaPointe said that they have the arrows to indicate the movement of traffic around but it has to be two-way in this area to get the trailer trucks in and backed up to the dock and they also need 40' of cueing in front of the dumpsters.

Commissioner Jurasin said that this would be something that should be changed on the site plan because by not having the south bound arrow makes one think it is one way. He wanted to know about loading and unloading at the other building as well as how the tractor trailer would leave the site. Mr. LaPointe said that the smaller tenants don't typically need the larger tractor trailer trucks and their loading and unloading should be around the back of the building. If Starbucks does have a drive thru then they would have to make a maneuver and go out along the north side of CVS. If there is a drive-thru then they will go back down the side of the Starbucks building.

Commissioner Jurasin said that drive-thru or not the indication is that it is not a two way but an east bound lane only, and it should be indicated. Mr. LaPointe said that they want to get it back to the signalized intersection without going through the parking lot.

Commissioner Jurasin asked for comment about the orientation of the parking aisles. Mr. LaPointe said that did not and don't see a problem with pedestrians walking over two rows to get to the building.

Mr. Gillespie said that although he could see the reason for concern he could also see the main travel lanes also functioning to some extent for the pedestrians. He would have to see what the impact would be if they were to change the orientation of the parking aisles. Commissioner Jurasin tried to picture families pushing shopping carts moving between the parked cars and what might happen if they couldn't fit the cart through.

Mr. LaPointe commented that the proposed arrangement was like the situation in the lot here at the Town Hall. Commissioner Jurasin said that this was correct and they complained about it all the time!

Commissioner Murphy said that presumably you would still need 2 of the 3 travel lanes that are still parallel with the Silas Deane Highway and then in addition you would need the travel lanes that line up with the new orientation of the lot and you would end up with quite a lot less parking spaces. Commissioner Jurasin said that while he didn't know the answer to this situation his concern was for the customers darting up and down between the vehicles.

Mr. LaPointe wanted to say that they had a number of other centers that are laid out this way and they have never had any safety issues.

Commissioner Cholewa asked if there was room in the rear for employee parking. Mr. LaPointe said that there would actually be 16 parking spaces eliminated because they interfered with the truck movement.

Commissioner Cholewa said that the reason he asked was because they tend to get a lot of criticism about the aesthetics along the Silas Deane Highway and one of those issues concerns it looking like a sea of asphalt. If some of the parking spaces in front are moved to the rear then maybe they could replace those spaces with green space. Mr. Colaccino said that employees also like to park as close as possible to the entrance and that it was a constant battle to get them to park in designated areas. Commissioner Roberts commented that there won't be a battle if there aren't parking spaces in the rear to go to.

Ms. Stephanie Fuss landscape architect, President of Stephanie Fuss Associates of Glastonbury stepped forward and told the Commissioners that she was registered landscape architect in Connecticut and Massachusetts some of her recent clients were CVS, Walgreen's, Stop and Shop, ESPN and Disney World wide Services. She said that she had a working relationship with the Colvest Group for a few years and every project she has done for them have been installed as designed and well maintained. A couple of weeks ago she was approached about improving the landscape plan on the site. She then outlined her landscape plan. She said that the 2 very large trees existing on the site should be saved and she felt that with the large expanse of the Silas Deane Highway and its scale of large structures she wanted to continue the scale by replacing the 2 small crab apples with sycamore trees with a foundation of plants which would include 3-4' high and wide evergreen inkberries in the corners of the parking areas.

Commissioner Cholewa mentioned that at the CVS in Berlin there were plantings in front along the road that screened the parked cars, and he wondered what this lot would have to screen the parking lot.

Ms. Fuss said that although she did not have the inkberries going all the way across the lot they were evergreen and the deciduous shrubs next to them would be about the same height. In between there would be daylilies. In the middle of the islands there would fountain grass surrounded by junipers. The parking lot trees, would be ZelKovas and would grow to a height of 50-60', their leaves turn red in the fall and are often used as a replacement for the American elm because of their similar shape and growth. The north side she said would have burning bush, and more of the ZelKova trees and inkberries.

Commissioner Cholewa asked how the plants would hold up to 6' of snow piled up on them. He was told that these selections are chosen for their outstanding hardiness even in adverse conditions.

Commissioner Jurasin said that the plan sounded great.

Ms. Fuss remarked that there is a slope which would have to be stabilized quickly with lawn area and a retaining wall.

Commissioner Oickle asked if she couldn't do anything on the south side. Ms. Fuss said that the rear area is wooded and that Walgreen's had a few junipers, but she felt it was really important to get the lawn in quickly to retain the soil.

Commissioner Roberts asked if all the existing plantings were all on the abutting property. Ms. Fuss wasn't sure and couldn't really tell though she thought that some of it might be on their property but there would have to be some grading done in the area.

Mr. LaPointe then showed the Commissioners full color renderings of the proposed site plan. He said that their intent has always been to have 2 related but architecturally distinct buildings with large store front type windows. Both buildings will have a very large front canopy covering a 7' sidewalk and supported by massive brick columns. The same type of canopy covers the drive thru area. The brick walls of the CVS building are divided by vertical brick piers and geometrical patterns made up of courses of soldier course brick in relief and are capped by substantial crown molding under which there is an efface fascia. The second building will also be a brick building, but instead of the efface on the sign band there will be a cream colored clapboard. The 2 front corners of the 2nd building will be capped by a Hartford green raised seam hip metal roof. It is a decorative structure, a corner accent which will generate shadow lines and will be higher and protrude farther out than the slightly lower canopy which will also be covered with the same metal and will have the same sign band across the front. He said that they think that the buildings are very attractive and like the look. They had spent a great deal of time laying out the site plan and came in with a myriad of changes they have made in response to Town suggestions and they are very anxious to go forward with this project.

Commissioner Adamian said that overall he thought that the design was very attractive but that the facade on the CVS

above the columns looks like an oversized sign and he wondered if there was perhaps a more muted color combination possible and to make it more tasteful.

Mr. Colaccino asked what he had in mind. Commissioner Adamian suggested perhaps surrounding the lettering outside the border with grey instead of the bright white, to tone it down. Mr. Colaccino thought they could do that.

Commissioner Oickle asked if the Town had reviewed the architectural details. Mr. Gillespie said that he is not an architect and there are no architects on staff but the applicant had been asked to speak with the Silas Deane Revitalization Committee and hear their comments. He said that Town had discussed the architecture with the applicant in the hopes of getting the highest quality project as possible. This prototype is the first one to be built in this area so there is no example to look at, but in the Commission packets there are photographs of a development in North Haven with a similar design for the second building. He said that it was his understanding that there was more flexibility possible on the design of the 2nd building than there would be on the CVS building because that is their corporate prototype. However one thing he pointed out was the difference in scale between the 2 buildings, the CVS has the taller roof line makes the 2nd building look smaller and it is not a small building. His comment was that perhaps the 2nd building could be made to look more similar in height and scale to the CVS by making the spaces have an interior clerestory. The 2 buildings are so close to each other they almost appear to be touching. The drive thru in back appears to be behind the 2nd building. He wasn't sure that color changes would help since they want the buildings to be distinct from each other.

Commissioner Adamian said that although CVS has a prototype, they have to admit that there are many different designs already out there. He wondered if perhaps the front facade on the CVS couldn't just be lowered to be more in line with the end posts on the 2nd building. he thought that it would make a much more harmonious design, while still allowing CVS to keep its identity.

Mr. Gillespie said that he assumed that CVS is the more important tenant and perhaps the Commission could vote tonight on that part of the application while allowing the applicant to come back with modifications for the 2nd building.

Commissioner Roberts suggested that they come back with revised architectural renderings for the 2nd building once they know who their tenants will be, before they could come apply for a building permit for that building. Mr. Gillespie said that this was standard procedure that he was used to. As long as it was understood that certain things could not happen until that occurs he would be comfortable with that.

Commissioner Jurasin said that he would like to hear the applicant address Commissioner Adamian's suggestion of reducing the height of the canopy to the height of the end posts. Mr. Colaccino said that while they could live with Mr. Gillespie's suggestion with regard to the architecture of the 2nd building but they do have time constraints. He suggested that perhaps they could raise the height of the 2nd building instead of lowering the CVS because this is the one CVS of this type in the area. The others are all of the older prototype so you will probably get the only one. They are a New England company and they have designed this building to be complementary to New England area.

Commissioner Hammer asked what sort of feedback they had received from the Silas Deane Revitalization Committee. Mr. Colaccino said that they were mainly concerned with the placement of the buildings.

Mr. Paul Courchaine Chairman of the Silas Deane Revitalization Committee stepped forward and told the Commission that the only issue the Committee had was the location of the placement of the buildings and that amount of asphalt being added to the Silas Deane Highway. They didn't really discuss the architecture but he did mention that in Stamford, there are regulations requiring uniform signage for all new developments. He also said when they had met with the applicant their response to the desire for the Town to require new developments to place the buildings closer to the road and place parking in the rear was that "the horse was already out of the barn". Their Committee reaction was that this would be an opportunity to get the horse back in the barn. He understands that they do have time constraints and he would be the last to say that they do not want good economic development on the Silas Deane but they are working as a non-authoritative body trying to convince people of what they should be doing relative to the Plan, the Commission has the enforcement capability to do that. Their Committee has not yet met to discuss this application but they will at the next meeting.

Commissioner Hammer asked if the landscape plan helped from his perspective. Mr. Courchaine said that he was familiar with the designer and the plan was fine but did mention to them that they should speak with the tree warden before taking down any trees.

Mr. Kleinman said that while they certainly want to cooperate with the Silas Deane Restoration they did not want their application being used as the litmus test and they should not be subject to any scrutiny not given to any other applicants.

Mr. Colaccino said that they have some leeway in terms of the colors however they would have to go back to their corporate committee for any other changes. This is the CVS prototype this is what they want to build there. If one were to look at the scale of the Walgreen's this proposal is certainly no more massive. He said that they have tried to address every comment that has been made and they have tried to work with them. In terms of the 2nd building they would be willing to sit down and discuss the architecture with them.

Commissioner Hammer said that he wanted to thank them and appreciates all of their cooperation but this is certainly an important location on the Silas Deane Highway and one of the more major developments they have before them at this time and they wanted to get the best possible result for it. Mr. Colaccino said that while he understood their concerns they also wanted to get the best possible result.

Commissioner Oickle asked how the lettering on the buildings would be lit. Mr. LaPointe said that they would be backlit channel letters and he anticipated the same type on the other building.

Commissioner Oickle noted that there was no consistent signage plan for the second building but noted that they would be discussing that when the applicant returned with their revised plans.

However he asked if the architecture was compatible with the architecture of the surrounding buildings. Mr. LaPointe answered that in their opinion it is, certainly more attractive than the drug store next door. The buildings were designed for New England by a New England company and they did fit compatibly with the other buildings.

Commissioner Cholewa wanted to know what the answer was concerning moving the employee parking to the rear and creating more green space for the front of the property. Mr. LaPointe said that parking in the rear of the property is of no value for the tenants and they can't force employees to park in the back. He said that one may be successful today but eventually the employees will end up in front, and certainly those people working the late shifts aren't going to want to park back there or the managers aren't going to want to walk them back there so the young ladies won't be able to park back there.

Mr. Mark Walker President of the Wethersfield Chamber of Commerce, stated for the record that the Chamber supports the relocation of CVS and welcomes Starbucks to Wethersfield. They encourage any reputable and national business to come to Wethersfield. A goal of the Chamber is to occupy all the vacant buildings on the Silas Deane Highway. We also like to encourage any businesses that come to Town to reach an amicable agreement with the various Commissions Committees and Town agencies. He said that they refrain from taking a stance on any of the logistics or specifics involving the building itself.

Commissioner Jurasin pointed out that for the record this was not the first development to be required to eliminate front parking and place its buildings closer to the street the new development at the Puritan location has no parking between the street and the front sidewalk due to discussions between the developer and the Commission. He then asked about the signage plan for the site itself. Mr. Hillson said that he would envision the right turn entrance would be stop controlled as it reaches the parking lot and there could be stop signs at the ends of the aisles as they reach the main driveway and perhaps they would have to put some overhead lane use signs for the left turn lane and then there would be do not enter signs at the site end of the access drive.

Commissioner Jurasin was incredulous that the applicant could think that the Commission could approve the site plan unless they know all those issues of approval, and he was not so sure that he was comfortable with that. Mr. Gillespie said that the original plan showed signage on the interior of the site at the appropriate locations although it had not

been modified to reflect the most recent changes and though that may be a skeletal outline was appropriate at this time.

Commissioner Oickle said that he had been around long enough to see that there were quite a number of issues and outstanding loose ends to feel comfortable closing the hearing on this.

Commissioner Jurasin said that he hadn't made up his mind about whether to close the hearing but he did not want to be stuck in a situation where they approved something based upon Staff and the DOT review and approval only to find that there are inconsistencies between Staff and the DOT; because all of that is our responsibility. That's why he wanted to bring up the question; where is the traffic control plan? He said that he had heard everything that was said here tonight about whether or not they could put parking in the rear or not.

Commissioner Jurasin wasn't sure if everyone else had received advanced notice but apparently the Silas Deane Revitalization made the same suggestion.

Commissioner Roberts thought that all of these issues could be dealt with by generic stipulations except where Staff or DOT requires significant restructuring. He said that the applicant knows whether there is a game on or not or not and whether they need to return here in 4 months because DOT wants to change the configuration or not, the only legitimate reason to keep the hearing open would be if there is any negotiation possible in the parking question.

Commissioner Knecht said that he had 20 years of experience in retailing and that the parking in the rear for employees worked reasonably well in the morning and day but not at all in the evening. He added that they always wanted to get as much parking as close to the store as possible, safety issues are something they all need to be concerned about.

Commissioner Murphy said that they might add as a condition that the information requested on the cueing studies be satisfactory to staff and if not, they return here. There were also some very good suggestions such as angling the right turn entrance and making it a semi-deceleration lane, eliminating the parking spaces in the front adjacent to the access drive. The one thing that would tempt him to keep the hearing open would be if there was any possibility of creating more green space in the front by eliminating parking spaces. He counted 30 spaces out front which if eliminated would add a significant amount of green space. He wondered if there was another possibility which allowed them the number of parking spaces they required while still satisfying the Commission's desire for more greenery. He thought he had heard that they currently have proposed more parking than is necessary. He then mentioned that they are currently considering amending their regulations and maybe it is that they require too much parking. He was less interested he said in what the current requirements are and more interested in what the applicant might be willing to tolerate. If that was the issue then there might be potential for a solution that satisfies both parties.

Mr. Kleinman said that this was a very good suggestion and asked for a brief recess to allow the applicant to sound reasonably intelligent when they addressed it.

Vice Chairman Hammer called for a brief intermission.

When the hearing was resumed Mr. Kleinman said that they had caucused and took the suggestion about creating more green space. He said that they would acquiesce to removing the 3 parking spaces as well as the entire front row, 23 spaces and increase the green space in the front. They would add 16 spaces in the back which would still leave them 2 additional spaces over the required number. In addition they would relocate the ATM to a spot which would free up additional green space. His suggestion was to leave the area that they remove in front designated as retained or reserved parking in the event that it is found that the tenant mix is such that they might need it. He was prepared to accept as an approval that they be allowed to modify the site plan to remove those 23 parking spaces to increase the amount of green space.

Commissioner Hammer asked if they were intending to propose that the property owner would have the absolute right to come back to us to build out or we would have the right to decide whether it was appropriate. Mr. Kleinman said he thought the later.

Commissioner Roberts suggested that conceptually they have to conclude for themselves whether adding in more green

space is the functional equivalent to moving the buildings closer to the street.

Mr. Kleinman said that would have accept the lot as it is and accomplish what they all want to soften the view of the buildings and the bituminous surface because in this situation they had no flexibility whatsoever with the building because CVS's view is what it is. They had an outstanding landscape architect and they would work with the Commission to come up with a plan that would satisfy everyone.

Commissioner Cholewa appreciated the efforts on the part of the applicant and thought that the Commission should move forward tonight as a gesture to the applicant.

Commissioner Hammer asked if the added parking in the rear would obstruct the delivery truck. Mr. Colaccino said that happened 3 maybe 4 times a week and if necessary CVS could ask any employees parking there to move. The ATM would be moved where the 3 parking spaces would be removed and face the opposite side of the traffic aisle.

Commissioner Adamian said that in other shopping centers if a car paused in front of a building for a moment, the police would immediately show up and require them to move. It seemed to him that the pedestrian walkway was a sliver on the site plan and he asked if this had all been signed off by the Fire Marshal. Mr. Gillespie said that the Fire Marshal had signed off.

Commissioner Roberts pointed out that the other buildings had no sprinklers and the fire lane had to be maintained to allow access for fire vehicles in the case of a fire. Mr. Gillespie agreed and pointed out that these buildings as all newer buildings are sprinklered buildings. They have their own sprinklers and do not require the same fire lane clearance.

There being no one else who wished to speak in favor or in opposition to this application, this portion of the hearing was declared closed.

There being no one else who wished to speak, the public hearing was closed.

Joseph Hammer, Clerk Pro Tem

**WETHERSFIELD PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
PUBLIC MEETING
OCTOBER 8, 2003**

APPLICATION NO. 1408- 03 -Z. Colvest Wethersfield, LLC seeking Site Plan and Design Review approval under Article XXXI, 167 - 137 of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations for the construction of two buildings having a total of approximately 22,960 sq. ft. located on the east side of Silas Deane Highway in an Industrial Zone at 1080 Silas Deane Highway.

Commissioner Oickle motioned to amend the plan to close the southerly driveway entrance but receiving no second the motion failed to reach a vote.

Commissioner Jurasin was concerned that the signalized driveway still contained some safety issues but he liked the idea that they had moved the driveway farther to the north. Mr. Gillespie pointed out that the revised plan was a vast improvement over the previous plan and if there were any significant changes then they would be required to come back to the Commission.

He said that based on his conversations with neighbors and the Wethersfield Shopping Center everyone was interested in cooperating to make it a safe and successful project.

Upon motion by Commissioner Cholewa, seconded by Commissioner Adamian and a poll of the Commission it was unanimously voted to APPROVE Application No. 1408- 03 -Z. Colvest Wethersfield, LLC seeking Site Plan and Design Review approval under Article XXXI, §167 - 137 of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations for the construction

of two buildings having a total of approximately 22,960 sq. ft. located on the east side of Silas Deane Highway in an Industrial Zone at 1080 Silas Deane Highway with the following stipulations:

1. The applicant shall prior to the issuance of a building permit provide copies of the DOT plans, application and approval of the proposed storm water drainage, curb cut and signal and phasing plan to Town Staff.
2. The plan shall be revised to reflect the use of processed stone in lieu of gravel for the sidewalk construction.
3. The plan shall be revised to provide details of the proposed light standards and poles.
4. The applicant shall prior to the issuance of a building permit provide plans and details and obtain the approvals for all proposed food service establishments from the Central Connecticut Health District
5. The future walk up ATM facility shall be relocated to the area opposite the one way entrance from the Silas Deane Highway detailed plans and landscaping shall be provided to Staff prior to issuance of a building permit.
6. Provide staff with revised plans which address modification to the proposed pavement marking, signage and turn lane alignment from the Silas Deane Highway into the site and to the exiting pattern from the Wethersfield Shopping Center.
7. Eliminate the 3-5 parking spaces adjacent to the right turn entrance only lane.
8. Modify the CVS sign panel in terms of colors to reduce the scale of the sign and the façade in that area.
9. No building permit shall be issued for the 2nd building until revised architectural and building plans are approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission.
10. Modify sheet C1 as it relates to the proposed signage plan for the internal traffic layout as well as the traffic movements at the entrances and exit to the site.
11. Modify the flair of the right turn entrance only lane along the Silas Deane Highway
12. Revise the parking plan to eliminate the 23 parking spaces along the front row parallel to the Silas Deane Highway and add a note identifying them as reserve spaces; add 16 parking spaces in the rear of CVS; modify the landscaping plan along the front row with the understanding that based upon perspective future retail users the applicant may apply for and obtain the approval of the Planning and Zoning Commission as conditions warrant.
13. Revise the landscaping plan to add appropriate landscaping along the southerly property line adjacent to the property of Prime Development LLC.

Commissioner Jurasin left at this point.

APPLICATION NO. 1409-03-Z. Red Lobster seeking approval under Article XXXI for a change that is insignificant-installation of metal awnings, located in a Planned Development Business Zone at 13224 Silas Deane Highway.

Mr. Steve Bensen stepped forward and submitted photographs showing the new corporate prototype for the Red Lobster restaurant chain. He said that although the building shown had a sort of tower structure, and a mansard roof the only change they were suggesting at this time for the existing restaurant on the Silas Deane Highway was the addition of awnings over the front windows. There would be lights which would wash light over the awnings but not anywhere else on the site or the environment.

Upon motion by Commissioner Oickle, seconded by Commissioner Roberts and a poll of the Commission it was unanimously voted to APPROVE Application No. 1409-03-Z. Red Lobster seeking approval under Article XXXI for a change that is insignificant-installation of metal awnings, located in a Planned Development Business Zone at 13224 Silas Deane Highway.

APPLICATION NO. 1273-03-Z. Wells Road

Mr. Wesley Sargent , PE from Close Jensen and Miller appeared before the Commission to explain that a subdivision requirement had been to install a small yard drain in the southeast corner of the lot and connect it to the existing storm drainage system in the south side of Wells Road which would then connect with the drain across the road. When the builder tried to get a permit for this the connection was denied by DOT citing the reluctance to allow private homeowners to cut the road.

In a memorandum form Michel Turner, Town Engineer (dated October 8, 2003) it was suggested that there would be 2 options available to the homeowner. One would be to require a catch basin and underground drywell at the location of

the yard drain. Mr. Sargent's calculations indicate the need for 500 gallons of storage. This would limit post development flow to that prior to development. The second option would be to waive the requirement for the storm drain installation and let storm water runoff overland as with virtually every other subdivision plan. Mr. Turner supported this option since drywells do not historically do well in Wethersfield due to the clay soils.

Mr. Sargent said that calculations of pre-development and post indicate that runoff did increase slightly from 15 cfs - 21 at peak. He agreed with Mr. Turner that to put the water back into the soil when there is a house just down hill would not be a good idea.

There was discussion that concluded that runoff would go off the site into Wells Road and ultimately down to catch basins on the Silas Deane Highway.

Upon motion by Commissioner Cholewa, seconded by Commissioner Oickle and a poll of the Commission it was unanimously voted to modify the conditions and WAIVE the requirement for the storm drain installation as per Mr. Turner's suggestion for Application No. 1273-03-Z with the following stipulation:

1. The grading plan to be approved by the Town Engineer

Vice Chairman Hammer left at this point and Commissioner Murphy was appointed acting Chairman.

APPLICATION NO. 1397-03-Z. Town of Wethersfield seeking approval to modify the Landscaping Plan approved on April 15, 2003 for Silas Deane Middle School, 551 Silas Deane Highway.

Mr. Charles Viani Vice Chairman of the Silas Deane Middle School Projects Committee stepped forward to request approval for changes to the approved landscaping plan. He said that the parent's organization requested that the 2 gardens on the northwest side of the building be designed and planted by them. They did their own design and we forwarded it to our architect. The parents plan was ambitious but when it came to doing it was only reasonable to do 2 of the 3 parking lot islands shown on the plans. Their proposal was to move the existing rhododendrons and junipers. They had to relocate the junipers already, not because of arrogance on their part but because they had severe erosion on the corner of the building. Their construction manger came to them with their architect and requested that they be planted there. There were already some there; this just made it denser.

Commissioner Oickle asked what was under that slope. Mr. Viani said that they were going to efface that whole corner. There had been a tank in the area but it had been replaced. There is no way of changing the slope, except to place the junipers there in order to contain the soil and avoid the mowing which would be impossible.

Mr. Viani added that the sycamores will not be planted until the spring in order to prevent shock to the trees. Another issue concerned an awning in the area where the children will be dropped off. They had already denied at least 6 awnings because they insist that they be practical and aesthetically pleasing. He said that the Building Committee is taking a lot of heat for the front of the building. He suggested that they defer to the Commission for the decision and that it could end up going before the Council as well.

Upon motion by Commissioner Oickle, seconded by Commissioner Roberts and a poll of the Commission it was unanimously voted to APPROVE the modification to the approved landscaping plan in Application No. 1397-03-Z.

APPROVAL OF [MINUTES OF: September 18, 2003](#)

Upon motion by Commissioner Oickle and seconded by Commissioner Roberts and a poll of the Commission it was voted to approve the minutes with the following changes;

1. On page # 18 Application 1408-03-Z was never a public hearing item because they had it had been Tabled.
2. The vote on Application No. # 1410-03-Z. should read Aye and Nay only and not Aye: Nay
3. Richard Sitnik is no longer on the Commission and Frank Chuang has resigned and their names should be deleted from the members absent

Aye: Oickle, Roberts, Murphy, Hallisey, Knecht, Adamian

Abst: Cholewa

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 p.m.

Joseph L. Hammer, Clerk Pro Tem