



SUSTAINABLE WEST HARTFORD COMMISSION

June 3, 2024

7:00 PM, Room 407, Town Hall

SPECIAL MEETING MINTUES

1. Call to Order -7:04 PM
 - *Jim Fishman Y*
 - *Kimberly Hughes Y*
 - *Aditee Madkekar Y*
 - *Christy Matthews N*
 - *Ted Newton Y*
 - *Alejandro Paiuk Y*
 - *Bernard Pelletier Y*
 - *Stephen Sack Y*
 - *David Sagers Y*
 - *Rachael Virgin Y*
 - *Patricia Wilson Y*
 - *Student Reps: Nathaniel Goldschmidt*
 - *Town Staff: Catherine Diviney, Katherine Bruns, Leon Davidoff (Town Clerk)*
 - *Public: Diane Duva, Reiner Reichenberger, Andrea Yuliano*
2. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes – *Approved (10-0, before Aditee arrived)*
3. Town Clerk – *Leon Davidoff addressed the Commission by thanking members for their service, recognized the important work of the Commission, and spoke about guidelines and procedures, including Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and right for the public to know. Topics covered included meeting notice, agendas, minutes, text/email communication between commissioners (don't do it), social media (posting as yourself vs a commissioner), and working groups, which are not subject to FOIA, as long as there is no quorum of commissioners. He reminded Commissioners that if they found themselves in a position where they can no longer attend meetings, to please resign so another community member can participate. There was Q&A discussion about communication and outreach channels to underrepresented community audiences, as well as how to get Town Council to utilize the Commission as a subject-matter resource (per the Commission ordinance). The Commission is looking for additional Town support/ideas. Town Clerk's office may be able to help.*
4. Community Comment & Communications (max 3 min each)
 - *Tree removals on Blvd (K. Kennedy) – Moot communication - tree removal decision resolved by Tree Warden at public hearing in favor of keeping trees. BUT - highlights questions: a) Should Commission have process for dealing with time-sensitive communications? b) Is it Commission's role to weigh in on daily operational matters?*

- Waste/UBP (C. Matthews) – *Communication, which included comments against UBP, were received and will be taken under advisement.*
- Climate Action Plan (C. Matthews) – *Communication, which included content suggestions for developing a new Town Climate Action Plan, was received and will be taken under advisement. The Commission is already considering revising its current Energy Plan into a Climate Action Plan.*
- West Hartford Center Plan – comments (P. Wilson), or support for Opinion A (PBC)
 - *Pat Wilson described some of the issues/perspectives about Option A. Ed Pawlak the PBC Chair would also like the Commission to support Option A (see **attached** letter and <https://we-ha.com/letter-a-center-for-the-people/>). There was discussion about whether the Commission has enough information to make its own decision or if it's in their purview. Does Commission have a decision-making rubric for this? Decision to support or comment was deferred to the next meeting.*
- *Diane Duva offered congratulations to Waste Work Group on their outreach efforts for UBP and voiced her support for the “common sense” proposal and her hope that Town Council listen to the recommendation of the Commission and move it forward at June 25 vote.*
- *Process for Communications to Commission (especially if time-sensitive) – Catherine and Bernie shared some initial thoughts (with input from Town Corporation Counsel) on establishing a formal process for handling communications that come into the Commission. A written summary will be provided for review and vote at next meeting.*

5. Ongoing Business

- Working Group Reports, discussion as needed
 - Communications & Outreach - n/a
 - Nature-Based Solutions – *Only 31 spots remaining for Wed 6/5 6:30 pm in-person workshop at Noah Webster Library. Your Home is a Habitat: Part 1 (installing a pollinator garden at your home).*
 - Energy / Buildings – *Commission still interested in Asylum Ave development. Jim has reached out to a lawyer involved in project. Todd Dumais, Town Planner indicated to Catherine that Commission’s communication about development was discussed at May 9, 2024, Design Review Advisory Committee (DRAC) meeting even though not reflected in minutes. Dave Sagers is also working to get an audience with Town Planner on some environmental review aspects he has researched. Dave expressed wish that Sustainable WH Commission would be asked to review all proposed developments, similar to the Chamber’s Econ Dev Committee. There is still an open question of what to do with New Building, Sustainability checklist.*
 - Waste – *The results of the waste public survey will be made public Tues/Wed. Generally positive public response. Support Letters count = 400 to date.*

6. New Business - none

7. Staff Report – incl. Sustainable CT, federal program \$ - deferred to next meeting

8. Calendar Updates – 6/5 Your Home is a Habitat library event, 6/6 Eversource/CT Green Bank – Solar & Battery Storage, 6/6 Public Works, Facilities & Sustainability Cttee Mtg (*in-person presentation – 6 pm, Rm 400*), 6/8 & 6/9 Celebrate! WH, 6/25 Town Council vote on UBP 1 year pilot (*Rachael noted that during Public Comment period - every person in room will be allowed to speak (3 min max), if they wish.*)
9. Next Steps & Agenda for Next Meeting -
 - 6/24– Guest: Town Equity Coordinator (postponed from 6/3) – *Adrienne Billings-Smith has accepted invitation.*
 - Discussion of decision-making framework/materials – *Not discussed, these materials will be included with agenda for 6/24*
10. Adjournment – 9:03 PM

Anyone requiring auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or modification of policies or procedures to participate in a meeting, service, program or activity of the Town of West Hartford, should contact Suzanne Oslander, ADA Coordinator, at suzanneo@westhartfordct.gov or (860) 561-7580, as soon as possible, preferably seven days beforehand.

West Hartford Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission

Edward Pawlak, Chair
38 Westland Avenue
West Hartford, CT 06107
860-305-7587
ecosys88@gmail.com

April 19, 2024

Mayor Shari Cantor
Town of West Hartford
50 South Main Street
West Hartford, CT 06107

Dear Mayor Cantor:

I am writing on behalf of the West Hartford Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission to express our deep disappointment with the latest plans for West Hartford Center that were revealed at public meetings last week. What is most distressing is the degree to which the design features from prior plans that favored pedestrians and bicyclists have been removed and supplanted by modifications that benefit automobiles. Even though it is *people* who make the Center a vibrant commercial destination, the latest plans allocate the majority of space to *automobiles*, which not only create unsafe conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians, but also detract from the charm of the Center.

At present LaSalle Road is 70 feet wide. The "Option A" plan presented to the public earlier this year dramatically shrunk the road width to 36 feet. But the most recent "Design Direction" plan shows a 60 foot wide road, which means that 24 feet of public right-of-way space has been taken away from people for automobiles.

Currently Farmington Avenue is 60 feet wide. The "Option A" plan would have reduced this to 38 feet, but the "Design Direction" plan shows a 50 foot wide road. Twelve feet of space has been taken away from people and given to automobiles.

The consequence of these major revisions is that these roads will be much wider than necessary, and there will be far less space allocated for people (sidewalks, dining, benches, pocket parks, etc.). There will no longer be room for separated bike lanes on Farmington Avenue. Safe cycling to the Center, which would reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, will not be feasible.

The driver behind the auto-centric design of the latest plan is the conversion of most of the parallel parking shown on the earlier plan to diagonal parking lanes on both roads. The diagonal parking lanes are 18 feet wide, while parallel parking lanes are only 8 feet wide. The slight bump in the number of on-street parking spaces created by this change dramatically shrinks the space left over for people. Moreover, it is completely unnecessary, since the town's consultant acknowledged that unused parking spaces are plentiful in the Center, even during times of peak demand. Diagonal parking lanes are less safe because of the difficulty seeing cars and people when backing out of the lane.

The town's consultant showed us what a human-scale redesign of the Center could look like ("Option A"). Sadly, the town appears prepared to reject this design in favor of one that maximizes on-street parking at the expense of "people" space.

The new auto-centric design is in conflict with many important aspirations town leaders have expressed in the recent past. The new plans are inconsistent with the town's Complete Streets Policy, and its goal of becoming a gold level bicycle friendly community, because they do not include low-stress bike lanes, unlike prior plans. The automobile-friendly plans clearly conflict with the town's goal of being a sustainable community, as defined by the Sustainable CT program. Wide roads are dangerous for pedestrians who choose to cross outside of crosswalks (a very common practice in the Center), and thus are inconsistent with the town's goal of becoming a Vision Zero community. The narrow sidewalks and dining areas will be insufficient to accommodate all of the new pedestrian traffic that will be generated by the recently approved large residential developments in and near the Center.

It is one thing to express aspirational goals for our town. It is much more difficult to take actions that, although they will benefit all of the visitors to the Center, may be unpopular with small but powerful stakeholder groups. Yet that is what leadership is all about. Strong leadership requires vision and courage. We implore our town leaders to seize this generational opportunity and endorse a human-scale plan (Option A), and reject one that overwhelmingly benefits automobiles. Let's make our Center even better, a commercial and cultural resource unlike any other in the region.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. M. Pawlak', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Edward M. Pawlak, Chair
West Hartford Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission

cc: Town Councilors
Mr. Rick Ledwith, Town Manager
Mr. Duane Martin, Director of Community Development
Mr. Greg Sommer, Town Engineer
West Hartford Pedestrian and Bicycle Commissioners
Mr. Jack Dougherty, Bike West Hartford

Your Home is a HABITAT

Will you join the millions of people converting part of their lawn space into a pollinator or native plant habitat? West Hartford Libraries are partnering with the Sustainable WH Commission and local organizations to offer you the tools you need to begin!

When: June 5, Wednesday, 6:30-8:00pm

Where: Noah Webster Library Meeting Room

REGISTER HERE or scan the QR code below:

Topics will include:

- Understanding your garden ecosystem, soil conditions, sunlight
- Determining the best size and location
- Design considerations, plants that are right for your space
- Installation tips, watering, & mulch
- Our favorite resources to help you get started



**SCAN AND
REGISTER!**



Energy/Buildings WG Report – 6/1/24

Hello Sustainable West Hartford Commission - In preparation for the June 3 here is the Energy Working Group Report.

On May 22 at 6PM via Zoom the Energy Working Group conducted a meeting. In attendance:

- Jonathan Humphries
- Stephen Sack
- Chris Feely
- Bernie Pelletier

The takeaways from that meeting:

- follow up with Catherine and Todd Dumais on the status of the proposed checklist for new building in West Hartford - ***attached below for reference***
- conduct a library event to brief the town on IRA benefits - these are still being worked out so this a future event
- develop role based material for residents, renters, business owners, and the town on energy efficiency and renewable action steps that can be taken
- engage Kristen Gorski on solar canopy benefits
- ask Catherine Diviney to brief the commission on status of EV charging
- address the Elmwood business owners on energy efficiency - they meeting at 8:30 on the first Friday of the month - usually 6 to 10 business attendees - topics to include EEB program - renewable programs - case studies

Bernie

Good afternoon!

Building Group which is subset of Energy Working Group:

I have no new information and have not been doing separate research. The attachment to a previous email from Bernie called "New Building and Renovation Sustainability Checklist" is an excellent framework to provide to the appropriate town agency / official for consideration by developers. Maybe Catherine can provide feedback as to where this should go in the event our Commission approves its format.

I have reached out to Robin Pearson (a good friend) who is the attorney for the 1700 and 1800 Asylum development team. This is specifically what I asked for: "Robin, do you think the 1800 Asylum Developer would be willing to provide a 30 to 45 minute overview (followed by a brief Q&A) of sustainability efforts to the West Hartford Sustainability Commission? As you know, this commission (which I am on) has no power or authority in West Hartford. I know it would be well received by the commission. Some of the items would include renewable energy integration, energy efficiency, water conservation, waste reduction and recycling, resilient infrastructure, sustainable land use planning, etc. What do you think? Jim"

I will let you know when I hear back from her. I thought Todd Dumais asked the developer for this presentation to our Commission during a May 9th DRAC meeting. I am not sure anybody on our Commission has heard back from Todd.

Have a great weekend,

Jim

New Building and Renovation Sustainability Checklist

West Hartford is a prosperous and growing community. The town has a focus on sustainability in all its forms. New building development is an opportunity to start fresh and embed sustainability into a building from the very beginning.

We have developed this checklist as a mechanism for the town to bring the principles of sustainability to bear on new projects. Along with DRAC's review of design and Planning and Zoning's review of code compliance we hope to make this part of process as the town permits a new building or substantial renovation effort.

1. **Renewable Energy Integration:** Developers prioritize the incorporation of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and geothermal energy to power the development. This involves building orientation and design that supports renewable energy adoption. It may involve installing solar panels on rooftops, wind turbines in open areas, or geothermal heating and cooling systems.
2. **Energy Efficiency:** Implementing energy-efficient technologies and design strategies is crucial. This includes using energy-efficient lighting, HVAC systems, appliances, and building materials to reduce overall energy consumption and lower operating costs. Exceed the Energy Code requirements with Passive House design.
3. **Air Quality Improvement:** Developers aim to enhance indoor and outdoor air quality by implementing strategies such as proper ventilation systems, filtration systems, and the use of low-emission materials and paints. Green spaces and planting trees also help improve air quality by absorbing pollutants.
4. **Water Conservation:** Water conservation is a key consideration in sustainable design. Developers integrate features such as low-flow plumbing fixtures, rainwater harvesting systems, graywater recycling systems, and drought-resistant landscaping to minimize water usage and promote efficient water management.
5. **Waste Reduction and Recycling:** Minimizing waste generation and promoting recycling are important aspects of sustainable development. Developers may incorporate recycling centers, composting facilities, and waste-reduction strategies into the design of the development to divert waste from landfills and promote a circular economy. During construction and for the life of the development.
6. **Sustainable Transportation Options:** Developers encourage the use of sustainable transportation options such as walking, cycling, and public transit by incorporating pedestrian-friendly designs, bike lanes, and convenient access to public transportation hubs. Electric vehicle charging stations may also be installed to support the use of electric vehicles.

7. **Community Engagement and Education:** Developers may engage with the local community to raise awareness about sustainable living practices and encourage residents and businesses within the development to adopt sustainable behaviors. Educational programs, workshops, and community events focused on sustainability can help foster a culture of environmental stewardship within the development.
8. **Climate Change Adaptation:** Developers assess the potential impacts of climate change, such as rising temperatures, extreme weather events, sea-level rise, and changing precipitation patterns. They integrate adaptation measures into the design and planning process to mitigate risks and ensure the long-term viability of the development.
9. **Resilient Infrastructure:** Developers prioritize the construction of resilient infrastructure capable of withstanding extreme weather events and other climate-related hazards. This may include designing buildings to withstand high winds, flooding, and seismic activity, as well as implementing green infrastructure solutions like permeable pavements and green roofs to manage stormwater runoff.
10. **Natural Disaster Preparedness:** Developers incorporate emergency preparedness and response plans to ensure the safety and well-being of residents and occupants during natural disasters. This may involve establishing evacuation routes, emergency shelters, and communication systems to facilitate rapid response and recovery efforts. Incorporating a Microgrid, allowing the development to be used by the community during a natural disaster.
11. **Sustainable Land Use Planning:** Developers consider the vulnerability of the site to climate change impacts when determining land use patterns and zoning regulations. They prioritize the protection of natural ecosystems, wetlands, and coastal areas to preserve biodiversity and enhance the resilience of the surrounding environment.
12. **Energy and Water Resilience:** Developers implement measures to enhance the resilience of energy and water systems within the development. This may include diversifying energy sources, incorporating energy storage systems, and establishing redundant water supply systems to ensure continuity of service during extreme weather events or other emergencies. Again, Microgrid.

By focusing on these criteria, developers can create large, complex, multi-use developments that not only minimize environmental impact but also promote a high quality of life for residents and visitors while enhancing long-term sustainability which we expect as a wealthy concerned and extremely desirable community.

Waste WG Report – 6/1/24

Good morning!

The WWG has continued to meet weekly throughout May, and has had great public engagement and Town Council letters of support generated at events over the past month:

- Trash Talk presentation at Noah Webster Library
- Booth at Public Works Open House
- 3 Tabling events outside Morley Elementary

Upcoming events:

- June 1- Booth at WH Farmers Market
- June 6- Presentation to PWFSC Sub-committee
- June 8-9- Booth at Celebrate WH
- June 8- Trash Talk at Unitarian Church
- June 17- Trash Talk at Library (Zoom)
- June 25- Town Council Vote

Tools in our kit:

- Simplified web address with info, slideshow presentation, and flyers: <https://bit.ly/whtrash>
- Displays in Town Hall and Public Works lobbies
- QR code (attached) that populates letter to Town Council in *most* email platforms
- Flyers in English, Spanish, and Portuguese



Waste Survey:

- Developed by Public Works and DEEP; generated a lot of public response. Final analytics and results still being compiled.

Thank you!

Rachael