



Issued April 17, 2025

**DESIGN REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2025
ROOM 400, TOWN HALL, WEST HARTFORD, CT**

Call to Order/Roll Call: 4:30 P.M.

DRAC ATTENDANCE: Chair, Ray Giolitto; Committee Members; Angela Cahill, David Hines, Jenna McClure and Liz Pang. Alternates: Rick Conary

ABSENT: Brian Flemming and Jim Lawler

Staff: Todd Dumais, Town Planner; Brian Pudlik, Senior Planner

REFERRAL FROM THE TOWN PLANNER:

1. **230 Newington Road & 60 Brook Street:** Study session preparatory to the submission of a potential new land use application for the redevelopment of 230 Newington Road and a portion of 60 Brook Street. The applicant contemplates the construction of twenty-seven (27) multifamily residential townhomes, along with associated site improvements, including parking, site lighting, landscaping and site drainage.

T. Dumais – Town Planner – Introduced the project

C. O’Neil – Project Architect – Provided additional introductory information about the proposed project and provided some context as to existing site conditions. Mr. O’Neil stated that the proposed project would consist of the following:

- ***54 residential units contained within 2.5-story, low-rise buildings with both townhomes and flats. The architecture is “classic country/ farmhouse” style with white siding and black windows. Corner buildings will have wrap-around porches and most units will have decks.***
- ***Courtyard areas will be provided between the buildings and parking will run through the center of the development.***
- ***Some type of clubhouse building will be provided, but its exact use has not yet been determined.***
- ***A dumpster enclosure will be provided adjacent to the clubhouse building.***

J. McClure – DRAC member – Stated that the buildings have a nice scale and appear to fit nicely within the site, but plans should be updated to show adjacent existing buildings to better understand context. Ms. McClure also stated that she would like to understand more about the clubhouse building once the team has fleshed out its vision for that building. In addition, she would like to see site details such as utilities, meter locations, lighting, etc.

A. Cahill – DRAC member – Asked that the team show the existing homes at 222 and 244 Newington Road on their site plan so that potential impacts to those properties could be better understood. She also stated that the plans should clearly show the building's relationship to the watercourse and the relationship to 60 Brook Street. Regarding specific details, she asked that meter locations and associated screening be shown. Overall, she stated that the scale and placement of the buildings appear appropriate.

L. Pang – DRAC member – Asked what the use of 60 Brook Street is and how that use would be screened from this development. Regarding the proposed dumpster location, stated that its placement right at the front of the site seems odd since it is so visible to everyone pulling in. She suggested that landscaping be added in that area to screen it.

R. Giolitto – DRAC Chair – Asked that the plans be updated to better show the wetland and upland review boundary. In addition, asked that a turning template be provided for a trash hauling vehicle.

R. Conary – DRAC member – Stated that the parking provided (58 spaces) seems inadequate to support 54 units and suggested they review the zoning requirements to ensure they are providing what they need. Mr. Conary also expressed a concern regarding emergency vehicle movement through the site and suggested the team provide a turning template to show full access. Regarding building placement, he pointed out that the existing building on the adjacent property to the north is quite close and asked whether the buildings could be shifted south. The development team stated that wetlands were in part dictating building placement, but they will review options. Lastly, Mr. Conary asked whether a bridge was considered to connect this parcel to the shopping plaza to the north. Both staff and the development team noted the challenges and impracticality of installing a bridge.

D. Hines – DRAC member – Stated that the proposed development is a refreshing change from the many higher density projects that have recently come before the Committee. He asked that adjacent homes be shown to better understand context. Given the proximity to the watercourse, Mr. Hines noted that flooding could be a concern and suggested that the team review potential flood plain elevations. Regarding the dumpster location, suggested that its position could potentially be swapped with the clubhouse and agreed that a turning template for a trash hauling vehicle would be important to demonstrate access to any proposed dumpster location.

R. Giolitto – DRAC Chair – Stated that he echoes the comments of the other Committee members with respect to density and scale. He asked that additional details be provided on architectural features such as gutters, leaders, window and edge trim, vent locations, etc.

A. Cahill – DRAC member – Asked the development team to ensure renderings are consistent with landscape plan so the project is depicted accurately.

FORMAL REFERRAL FROM THE TOWN PLAN & ZONING COMMISSION:

2. **137 North Main Street** – Application (SUP #1448) of The American School for the Deaf, requesting approval of a Special Use Permit to construct a lighted multi-sport court, a multi-use track and synthetic turf infield area, together with associated site grading and drainage.

Motion: A. Cahill; Second: D. Hines – Vote 6-0 – To table this item to the April 24, 2025 Special DRAC meeting

3. **137 North Main Street** – Application (SUP #1429-R1-25) of The American School for the Deaf, requesting approval of a Special Use Permit to construct a new +/-2,442 square foot maintenance garage in lieu of the previously approved, but never built garage in the adjacent parking lot to the east.

Motion: A. Cahill; Second: D. Hines – Vote 6-0 – To table this item to the April 24, 2025 Special DRAC meeting

REFERRAL FROM THE TOWN PLANNER:

4. **2526 Albany Avenue:** Study session preparatory to the submission of potential site plan application for site and architectural updates to the existing gas service station located at 2526 Albany Avenue.

T. Dumais – Town Planner – Introduced the project

R. Khoda – Project Architect – Stated that the goal of the project is to convert the existing vehicle service station into a convenience store. In doing so, they propose to eliminate the garage doors on the south side of the building by building out a storefront with a new main entry and added fenestration. Fiber cement panels in warm, contrasting tones would be used to clad the building and to generally modernize the architecture. All rooftop mechanicals will be screened with a metal mesh screen wall. The existing gas station canopy will remain, as will the pumps.

D. Hines – DRAC member – Asked whether the State DOT plans for this intersection would impact their project. The project team indicated that they were unaware of the State’s plans for the intersection, but would comply with whatever is requested or required. They further stated that at this time, they have no intention to modify the existing aprons.

R. Giolitto – DRAC Chair – Asked whether the garage at the northeast corner of the building will remain. Mr. Khoda stated that it would remain and would be used for storage.

R. Conary – DRAC member – Stated that the proposed change is a nice improvement. He then asked whether the dumpster enclosure would be repaired and would landscaping/site be generally cleaned up. The project team indicated that the enclosure would be replaced and the site would be cleaned up, including the landscaping.

L. Pang – DRAC member – Stated that she liked the proposed changes and that her only concern is the dumpster enclosure. Noted that she is pleased it is being replaced.

A. Cahill – DRAC member – Commented that the proposed architecture is in keeping with the general aesthetic of the Bishops Corner commercial district. She echoed the comments of other Committee members around the importance of site clean-up and also stated the importance of screening any mechanical equipment. Lastly, Ms. Cahill suggested the team develop a night time rendering for the next meeting with DRAC.

J. McClure – DRAC member – Stated that the proposed changes are generally good, but noted that actual mechanical equipment should be shown on the plans/renderings. Ms. McClure asked how signage would be done and team stated with a channel letter or pin mounted style. Regarding the easterly façade, Ms. McClure suggested the team explore other color options, particularly for the garage door that will remain, that will allow it to blend in more effectively. As it is the contrasting color accentuates the garage, which is not ideal. Lastly, she stated that material samples would be helpful for the Committee to see when the project comes back.

R. Giolitto – DRAC Chair – Asked whether they planned to do any work on the canopy, particularly where it meets the building. Mr. Khoda said they did not believe they needed to make any adjustments to the canopy. Regarding the site plan, Mr. Giolitto suggested the parking spaces at the southwest corner of the site may be problematic due to travel speeds on Albany Avenue and the reduction in speed that would be required to maneuver into those parking spaces. He suggested that it could create a dangerous condition at that site entry. The group discussed the fact that if the southeast entry off of Albany Avenue were closed, parking could be added in that area, which would be much safer.

A. Cahill – DRAC member – Asked whether any canopy would be provided over the new door for weather protection. Mr. Khoda indicated that one could be incorporated, but the existing roofline does project beyond the face of the building by a small amount, which does provide some protection for the door.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

5. Minutes from the March 20, 2025 Meeting – **No action taken by the DRAC**

COMMUNICATION

6. None

TOWN PLANNER'S REPORT:

Discussion of rooftop mechanical screening at 15 Dinah Rd for Cora Cora

T. Dumais – Town Planner – Stated that new kitchen equipment associated with the build out of Cora Cora in Blue Back Square necessitates new ventilation equipment and screening on a lower roof area with visibility from the ground and by residents of the apartment units that are immediately adjacent.

The Committee generally had concerns with the visibility of the equipment even if screened, particularly from perspectives at a higher elevation like Webster Walk. Concern was also raised regarding how close the equipment would be to the residential apartment windows and HVAC intakes. They asked that the restaurant and Blue Back Square explore alternatives for equipment placement, such as running an exhaust pipe up the side of the building to get it above the residential units.

ADJOURNMENT: 5:46 PM

Cc: Rick Ledwith, Town Manager
Dallas Dodge, Corporation Counsel

Duane Martin, Community Development Director
Leon Davidoff, Town Clerk