

# Town Times

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## Plans to Redevelop Sealy Property Met With Opposition

by Nancy Dzija Vaughan

WATERTOWN — General plans to redevelop the Sealy manufacturing site in Oakville met with opposition from neighbors during a Planning and Zoning Commission Public Hearing on Wednesday, May 5, on proposed Sealy Oakville Center Planned Development District regulations. The hearing was continued to June 2.

Three local businessmen, Joseph Yamin, John Lombard and Leonard Mecca, working together as a possible developer of the property, joined Attorney Franklin Pilicy in presenting an overall concept for the site. The trio has not yet closed on the property, but Mr. Lombard said he has had the land under contract four times in the past and stepped away due to constraints or issues that presented itself prior to closing. The proposed changes are a way of moving forward, so that development potential is locked in for possible tenants and for the developer.

Mr. Pilicy began by noting that the property sat undeveloped for more than 30 years due to environmental issues. The former factory was only recently torn down and the area remediated to the point that various uses are now acceptable.

Although most of the environmental issues are now resolved, restrictive zoning remains in place, making the area less attractive, Mr. Pilicy said. The proposed text amendment to the zoning regulations and map change would allow a new Planned Development District, with new uses and new regulations that could be attractive to potential developers. New uses could include retail, medical, professional and residential tenants.

Mr. Yamin was blunt in saying that there is currently no interest from any possible tenants. It was something he repeated multiple times during the hearing, as neighbors pressed for more information on what types of stores or restaurants might be seen in the future.

Neighbors were especially concerned that fast food restaurants might be included in the

mix, along with other traffic generators. They said the streets around the parcel could not handle additional traffic.

Mr. Lombard said the trio planned on taking a slow, deliberate approach to redevelopment, if the regulations are approved and they are successful in purchasing the land. He said that they, as developers, need to make something of quality to attract quality tenants. This area could become a new centerpiece for Oakville, he said.

Mr. Yamin said part of the inspiration for the development of the land came from projects such as Blue Back Square in West Hartford and another project in North Carolina.

Although generally remediated for environmental contamination, there are still two areas that need special consideration, Mr. Yamin said. One area is what he described as a “no build” area and another is a “no disturbance” area. Residential use in any part of the parcel could not happen without additional remediation and state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection approval.

Commissioners seemed generally in favor of the concept as they asked questions of the three developers. Commissioner Daniel DiVito said he was excited to see possible redevelopment of the site and Commissioner Daniel Gillotti said it was a positive thing for the area.

When given their opportunity to ask questions and comment on the proposal, neighbors were less enthusiastic. Some noted they were in favor of seeing the land redeveloped, but just not in the way it was being described. A few noted a report done on behalf of the town by Advance CT, which suggested small shops and restaurants that would cater to the local community would have the greatest chance of success.

Traffic generated by a larger development was often cited as a reason for opposition. The possibility of drive-through restaurants also generated concerns of people “hanging out.” One neighbor, Liz Wasiutynski, said neigh-

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NEW U.S. CITIZEN — Shown are members of Troop 140 celebrating Mary Jane Concepcion’s newly minted U.S. citizenship. From left, Gina Vadney, Lynn Mancini, Michele Skarpa, Mary Welch, Jeanne Ralicki, Alex Mercer, Michael Cihal, Karen Grendzinski, Mike Mercer, Nate Garbrecht, Jace Kiernan, Greg Stroehle, Gavin Worth, Kyle Sarracco, Kitsune Vadney, Colin Christie, Alex Puttock, Oberon Vadney, Conner Garbrecht, Mary Jane Concepcion, Steve Christie, Jake Grendzinski, Bob Bernier, Noah Welch, Charlie Stroehle, Ryan Johnstone, Ray Johnstone and Gavin Garbrecht. Please turn to page 2 for the full story.

## Board Congratulates Students Who Received Student Leadership Award

by Linda Zukauskas

WATERTOWN — The Board of Education, meeting Monday, May 10, congratulated middle and high school students who were selected by their principals to receive the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education Student Leadership Award.

Selected because of their exceptional leadership skills, they are Isabella Lombardo and Brayden Gambee from Swift Middle School and Fiora Lena and Ashley Czujak from Watertown High School.

The board also recognized students who were accepted into music festivals for the 2020-2021 school year.

The Northern Regional Middle School Festival accepted cellist Wyatt Brandt and the Northern Regional High School Festival accepted Noah Ryan, who plays the bass clarinet.

The Northern Region High School Music Festival and All-State Music Festival accepted Soprano Ruth Fomo, Tenor Jordan Elliott, Soprano Clara Pizzolorusso, and Jesse Kaye on Bb clarinet.

Superintendent Dr. Alison Villanueva described the efforts of

school nurses in all Watertown schools to present a certificate of thanks for their work during the pandemic.

They are Bianca Perez and Carrie Petrucci from John Trumbull Primary, Georgianna Karlak from Polk Elementary School, Sarah Simmons and Karen Albino from Judson Elementary, Ann Terzigni from Swift Middle School, Michelle Spagnoletti and Anne Marie Walker from Watertown High School, Annie DeMayo from St. Mary Magdalen, and Maureen Galvin from St. John the Evangelist.

During the meeting, Gino Faiella, facilities manager, presented a comparison of rates regarding electricity and natural gas.

He had obtained pricing from three suppliers for the board’s review; all delivery is provided by Eversource.

Information regarding photovoltaic panels and co-generation facilities at the schools was included in the reports.

Liberty Power is providing electricity until December 2021 and Mr. Faiella said he is tracking pricing for natural gas, heating and diesel fuel.

Dr. Villanueva noted that the

school district is talking about joining the town to obtain better pricing through an economy of scale.

Chair Leslie Crotty confirmed that Titan Energy, listed in the report, was involved with the photovoltaic and co-generation installations.

At her request, Mr. Faiella explained that the co-generation systems burn natural gas to produce electricity and latent heat is pumped back into the system to heat the pool water. He agreed with her that the key is to save money.

The facilities manager addressed another question regarding consortium purchasing, which he has been investigating.

Dr. Villanueva said that the school district’s business office had been looking into such pricing prior to Mr. Faiella joining the district and that additional pricing information would be brought to the board.

Following his presentation, Mr. Faiella recommended pricing from Titan Energy, although there might be other factors to

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