

TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD

TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

February 13, 2018, 6:31 p.m.

Legislative Chamber, Town Hall
50 South Main Street
West Hartford, Connecticut

In re: Application on behalf of Steele Road,
LLC, seeking approval of an amendment to Special
Development District 139, located at 243 Steele Road,
known as the Residences at Steele Road.

1 APPEARANCES:

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3 COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

- 4 Mayor Shari Cantor
- 5 Leon Davidoff
- 6 Chris Barnes
- 7 Mary Fay
- 8 Denise B. Hall
- 9 Chris Williams
- 10 Beth Kerrigan
- 11 Liam Sweeney
- 12 Ben Wenograd
- 13 Dallas Dodge

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11 TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD OFFICIALS:

- 12 Peter Privitera, CFO, Acting Town Manager
- 13 Patrick Alair, Corporation Counsel
- 14 Essie S. Labrot, Town Clerk/Council Clerk

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16 FOR THE APPLICANT, STEELE ROAD, LLC:

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- 17 Alter & Pearson, LLC
- 18 701 Hebron Avenue
- 19 Glastonbury, Connecticut 06033
- 20 By: Robin M. Pearson, Esq.

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1 PRESIDENT CANTOR: We will call the
2 6:30 p.m. public hearing to order. This is an
3 application on behalf of Steele Road, LLC, seeking
4 approval of an amendment to Special Development
5 District 139, located at 243 Steele Road, and known
6 as the Residences at Steele Road, requesting approval
7 of a new 30-unit residential building in the
8 northwest area of the property and associated sites,
9 including landscape, parking, and stormwater
10 management design changes.

11 Roll call, Ms. Labrot.

12 MS. LABROT: Mr. Barnes.

13 COUNCILOR BARNES: Present.

14 MS. LABROT: Ms. Cantor.

15 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Here.

16 MS. LABROT: Mr. Davidoff.

17 COUNCILOR DAVIDOFF: Here.

18 MS. LABROT: Mr. Dodge.

19 COUNCILOR DODGE: Here.

20 MS. LABROT: Ms. Fay.

21 COUNCILOR FAY: Here.

22 MS. LABROT: Ms. Kerrigan.

23 COUNCILOR KERRIGAN: Here.

24 MS. LABROT: Mr. Sweeney.

25 COUNCILOR SWEENEY: Here.

1 MS. LABROT: Mr. Wenograd.

2 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: Here.

3 MS. LABROT: And Mr. Williams.

4 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: Here.

5 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you, Ms. Labrot.

6 We will start with a presentation from the applicant.

7 MS. PEARSON: Good evening, Madam Mayor
8 and members of the Town Council. It's a pleasure to
9 be here this evening on behalf of the applicant,
10 Steele Road, LLC. My name is Robin Pearson. I'm an
11 attorney with the law firm of Alter & Pearson in
12 Glastonbury, Connecticut.

13 As you've heard from the reading of the
14 notice, this is an amendment to Special Development
15 District 139, at 243 Steele Road, and it's known as
16 the Residences at Steele Road. The application
17 requests an amendment to allow construction of a new
18 building, a 30-unit building, which would be Building
19 No. 7 within the complex. I have already provided to
20 the Town Clerk a copy of the signed affidavit. The
21 sign has been posted for the required seven full
22 days, and indeed more, prior to the public hearing;
23 in fact, there have been two signs along Steele Road.

24 Our format of presenters this evening are
25 as follows: We begin with Geoff Sager, who will

1 speak on behalf of the owner of the property, Steele
2 Road, LLC, and also the Metro Realty Group, Ltd.,
3 which is the developer and operator of the Residences
4 at Steele Road, and he's going to give, for your
5 benefit, an overview of some of the history that
6 brought us to this particular point in time and also
7 specifically why the applicant is now proposing a new
8 and additional Building No. 7 for this development.

9 He is going to be followed by Chuck
10 Coursey, of Coursey & Company, and Chuck, as some of
11 you may recall who sat on prior applications with
12 regard to this property, has worked consistently with
13 the applicant since the applicant started working on
14 this particular piece of property to coordinate
15 activities, to bring information to the neighboring
16 communities and the immediate residential abutters,
17 and all the while seeking input through this process
18 as to their concerns, their interests, and their
19 feeling about each iteration of this development as
20 it's gone forward. You should have a copy of his
21 report to date, recently updated, and he will spend a
22 few minutes to review for you the effort with regard
23 to bringing information about Building No. 7, this
24 particular proposal, to the community.

25 He will followed by Tom Daly, who is our

1 P.E., the engineer, for this particular proposal. He
2 is with Milone & MacBroom, and he's going to describe
3 for you basically the site plan changes that are
4 going to take place with regard to this particular
5 application.

6 He will be followed by Mark Vertucci.
7 Mark Vertucci is the traffic engineer that has been
8 associated with this development from its conception.
9 He is with the firm of Fuss & O'Neill, and he will
10 also update you. I think his presentation is quite
11 interesting, not only because he will talk about the
12 implications with regard to traffic generation with
13 this new building, but also he can bring you up to
14 speed on what the study of the results of current
15 conditions are with regard to the site as it is
16 currently configured and also how that relates back
17 to what the applicant projected in terms of traffic
18 projections with regard to the prior report.

19 Also here this evening is John Stewart.
20 He is the applicant's landscape architect. He is not
21 going to make a presentation, but if you do have
22 specific questions with regard to landscaping, he is
23 here; I want to put that on the record.

24 Also here is Charlie Nyberg, who is the
25 architect working on this development. He's here,

1 should you have any questions on the building design.
2 Although, frankly, Building 7 has the same design
3 elements as the rest of the development that has
4 already come to fruition, and so those elements that
5 were previously acceptable are being carried through
6 with regard to this proposed Building No. 7.

7 At the conclusion of our presentation,
8 and we will be using a PowerPoint and slides, for
9 both your benefit and also for the audience, I'll
10 just quickly summarize the staff and agency comments
11 received to date and review the reasons as to why we
12 believe this application is worthy of your approval.

13 So with that, I would like to call up
14 Mr. Sager.

15 I should also introduce Kyle Richards,
16 who is going to be pushing buttons and is an integral
17 part of the Metro team, so you should know who he is.

18 MR. SAGER: Madam Mayor, members of the
19 West Hartford Town Council, my name is Geoff Sager.
20 I'm here on behalf of 243 Steele Road.

21 (Referring to PowerPoint.) So I'd like
22 to begin, if I may, with actual photographs, so
23 that's an actual photograph. I know that you're all
24 familiar with the community. So, the pictures really
25 tell the story, and I wanted to show you some of the

1 pictures of the community.

2 So, that's the entrance. Steele Road is
3 comprised of six buildings and a clubhouse. This is
4 the elevations of the buildings. Each building has
5 13 garages. The garages open to a corridor in the
6 buildings.

7 Our clubhouse. So that is a picture of
8 our clubroom in the clubhouse. Fitness, we have both
9 cardio and weights. Another shot of the clubroom.
10 We have a billiards room.

11 This is a shot of a two-bedroom
12 elevation. You see the dinette from a different
13 angle. The master baths have double vanities.

14 So, I'm not going to emphasize the
15 structures too much. I want to talk more about who
16 lives in the community and the investments that we've
17 made in the community. So, our community is
18 comprised of 160 homes; it's 100 percent occupied.
19 The buildings were all pre-leased as they were
20 constructed, which is rare; I've never had that in my
21 career. We have more women living in the community
22 than men, very few school-age children at five, a
23 total of 242 persons.

24 Our median age 32. The median income, as
25 you can see, is quite high. Occupants per bedroom is

1 quite low. Empty nesters, right around the
2 25 percent we had projected. The one difference in
3 that is that I hadn't anticipated that virtually all
4 of the empty nesters would either be long-time West
5 Hartford residents or people with a connection to
6 West Hartford, usually a son or a daughter. I had
7 envisioned people selling homes in the Valley, moving
8 to be closer to the center, and really what we have
9 is virtually all West Hartford residents. So aside
10 from the empty nesters, three-quarters of our
11 community - it's interesting and I think we had
12 discussed this at the time of the application in
13 2014 - 62 percent, roughly two-thirds, coming from
14 outside of Hartford County and 42 percent from
15 outside of Connecticut. So, these are the states
16 they hail from and the countries.

17 We have representation from virtually all
18 the area's major employers. I would define our
19 resident profile broadly as professional; it runs the
20 gamut in seniority and the industry sector. We have
21 a lot of healthcare, biotech, life sciences in
22 general, doctors, nurse practitioners, researchers, a
23 lot of engineers. I'm sure you're aware that the
24 defense and aerospace companies are hiring lots of
25 engineers. And we have educators from local

1 institutions, such as the University of Saint Joseph
2 and the University of Hartford.

3 There had been limited concern expressed
4 in 2014 - I know you weren't all on the Council in
5 2014 - that the community might be loud and it might
6 not fit in with the surrounding neighborhood, and I
7 hope we've demonstrated otherwise, because I think
8 the community presents as very quiet and I think it
9 fits in very well.

10 We actually have members of the immediate
11 neighborhood who moved into the community. We have a
12 lot of people living in the immediate community who
13 have parents in the community. We also have, as I
14 mentioned, a lot of people from the Greater West
15 Hartford community: again, parents, sons and
16 daughters. So, interestingly, we have over 100
17 residents from outside of Connecticut. The reason
18 I'm embellishing this point -- I shouldn't say
19 embellishing -- emphasizing this point, excuse me, is
20 that contrary to the view of some pundits, we do in
21 fact attract to this region a broad and diverse group
22 of young professionals who are coming here from all
23 over the country and, in some instances, all over the
24 world. If you take out our empty nesters and you
25 look at the remaining population, the remaining

1 77 percent, our median age is 29 and a half, so we
2 have very successfully attracted that elusive
3 demographic that the pundits will suggest to you is
4 only interested in leaving Connecticut. And to
5 emphasize that point, what I read in the paper is not
6 consistent with what I see in my business.

7 So, perhaps most importantly, I wanted to
8 provide you with an update of our community
9 engagement and the investments we've made in the
10 community, especially for those of you not here in
11 2014. So, there are various things we did off-site
12 after the outreach to the community. We installed a
13 pedestrian walk-face to Elizabeth Park, so it's on
14 all four corners, so people accessing Elizabeth Park
15 have the benefit of being able to push the traffic
16 button and shut the lights down in all four
17 directions.

18 There had been a lot of testimony from
19 residents on Stratford Road that there was a lot of
20 cut-through traffic avoiding the light at Steele and
21 Albany and that they were coming down the street at
22 high rates of speed, obviously a danger to their
23 children. And working with the Engineering
24 department and with the neighborhood, we designed a
25 dead-end street, which we call a hammerhead, that's

1 the shape of it, and it's complete with granite
2 curbing; you see the vertical granite bollards. We
3 have a cobblestone emergency access and gate.

4 We met continually, even after the
5 approval, with the residents of Steele Road, because
6 we hadn't reached a consensus as to what it is they
7 wanted. The problem was that Steele Road was just
8 all asphalt, kind of looked like a runway, but it was
9 very inviting psychologically to a driver to travel
10 at high rates of speed, and after a lot of meetings
11 with the residents on Steele Road, especially those
12 north of Stratford, we arrived at a solution, and we
13 went through a lot of solutions and offered some much
14 more expensive solutions, but this is the solution
15 that they wanted. You have a flush cobblestone
16 median 3 feet wide, and the objective was to narrow
17 the travel lanes so that, again psychologically to
18 the driver on the street, they're going to slow down
19 a little bit because they have less room to maneuver.
20 In the interest -- and Mark Vertucci, our traffic
21 engineer, is here this evening and he will tell the
22 result of that install on the speeds. In the
23 interest of full disclosure, I do want to mention
24 that one of the residents on Steele Road objected to
25 the visual aesthetic of that cracked seal that you

1 see there. In the depictions we had done of the
2 install, we hadn't shown that; it, frankly, hadn't
3 occurred to me, but we needed it. It's part of the
4 construction methods required by the Engineering
5 department. So, we also paid for two flashing
6 speed-limit signs that the Engineering, I think it's
7 the Engineering department, moves around on Steele
8 Road. They try to put them in different positions so
9 that drivers that drive there every day don't become
10 used to them.

11 And for those of you who might not know,
12 although I'm sure you all do, across the street from
13 us is the School for Young Children, owned by Saint
14 Joseph, the University of Saint Joseph, owned and
15 operated by. So, there had been a lot of testimony
16 that parents dropping off children at the School for
17 Young Children in adverse weather conditions and
18 otherwise were queuing along Steele Road and
19 discharging the children and that it was a dangerous
20 condition. So to resolve that, what we did is, we
21 constructed at our cost, at no cost to the University
22 of Saint Joseph or the school, and this is a
23 commitment we made in perpetuity for as long as it
24 remains a school, 24 parking spaces, and those
25 parking spaces are used by the teachers at the School

1 for Young Children, and that frees up 24 parking
2 spaces at the school, so now the parents can drive
3 onto the school premises to discharge the children.
4 I do think from time to time there's still some
5 discharge on Steele Road, but it's certainly a lot
6 less than it was.

7 The University of Saint Joseph recently,
8 kind of after the fact, this did start last summer,
9 requested if we could help them with a pedestrian
10 connection between their campus and the McAuley
11 sidewalk system to get them to the School for Young
12 Children without having to go onto Asylum, so we
13 installed this at our cost over this last summer.

14 Our proposal for Building No. 7. The
15 building is situated in the northwest corner of the
16 site. We did not file the application until we had
17 an opportunity to sit down with our neighbors. We
18 met with the president and the CFO of the University
19 of Saint Joseph, and the CFO is here this evening,
20 and we also met with representatives from McAuley,
21 and until we had their acceptance and endorsement of
22 our proposal, we did not even file our application
23 here, because I think it's quite obvious when you
24 look at this plan, the distance from Steele Road and
25 the proximity to those two neighbors, that, to me,

1 was my biggest concern and I wanted to talk it
2 through. There were things that came up in those
3 conversations and modifications that were made to our
4 application as a result, and, as always, the outreach
5 proved to be very beneficial; it was very informative
6 for us.

7 This is the building itself that we're
8 proposing. It's very similar to the other buildings
9 on the campus. It's a little bit deeper, and the
10 reason for that is that when we initially built the
11 six buildings, they included six units that were two
12 bedrooms plus a den, so that is our largest unit.
13 There's the floor plan now. It's 1,638 square feet.
14 It's the size of a home. We had never built a unit
15 that big before, and we thought we were kind of
16 taking a chance, and in fact, I now have a waiting
17 list for those units, for at least another six. I
18 have a waiting list of eleven people, but six are for
19 this unit, and two-thirds of them are empty nesters
20 who are interested in moving in. But in the new
21 building that we're proposing here, Building No. 7,
22 we would add six of this style unit. So, it's 30
23 apartments overall: twenty one-bedroom units, four
24 two-bedroom units, six of this two-bedroom plus den,
25 fourteen garages, and an elevator in the building.

1 If this were to be approved, three of the seven
2 buildings would have an elevator.

3 So why should this community grow? The
4 main reason is that you, the Town Council, the Town,
5 has created, through its planning, its approvals,
6 just by the very nature of your community, you've
7 created a place where people want to live, and all
8 I'm doing is giving those people the ability to live
9 here. We think there's a clear shortage of the unit
10 that I just showed you that is predominantly empty
11 nesters and longtime West Hartford residents. I also
12 believe in the long-term value of West Hartford, and
13 this gives us the ability to make another investment
14 in West Hartford, but I honestly believe that we are
15 providing a very good solution for West Hartford
16 residents for the very long term, because we have --
17 just in the outreach that we recently did, part of
18 that outreach was to residents in our own community,
19 and when I heard the testimony from people about how
20 they couldn't find a place to live, they had looked
21 for years, nothing was right, then this came along
22 and was perfect, we would hear this from seven or
23 eight couples that were there, and then they would
24 tell stories of seven or eight couples who weren't
25 able to get in for one reason, because we were full.

1 But whether it's those empty nesters or the
2 demographic that we -- that elusive demographic,
3 there are a lot of other units being constructed in
4 other towns, but I would submit to you that these
5 people want to live in West Hartford, and we don't
6 think it's a good idea for them to go elsewhere; we
7 believe this is the place for them to be.

8 I would just sum up by saying I believe
9 that we've done since 2014 what we said we'd do, and
10 I also want to thank you for the approvals that we've
11 received to date, because it's been quite a privilege
12 to build this community, and I also want to say it's
13 been terrific to work with people at the Town,
14 extremely -- they're vigilant in protecting the town,
15 but they're extremely professional and business
16 friendly, and I mean this sincerely, it was a real
17 pleasure to work with them.

18 Our projections on traffic were accurate.
19 I think the quality and consistency of the
20 construction is what was represented. We delivered
21 on time. If Building 7 were to be approved, we'll be
22 a million-dollar taxpayer in the town. I know when
23 we initially made our proposal, there's always the
24 question, How's this going to work out? But, you
25 know, I would hope now that you have more confidence

1 in our ability to perform.

2 That concludes my presentation. Thank
3 you.

4 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you, Mr. Sager.

5 MR. COURSEY: Mayor Cantor and members of
6 the Town Council, my name is Chuck Coursey, and I
7 reside at 21 Walbridge Road in West Hartford,
8 Connecticut. I conducted the neighborhood outreach
9 for this application. Before you, please find an
10 updated Outreach Report that I distributed before the
11 meeting.

12 Before I begin with a summary of my
13 outreach efforts, I want to talk about what outreach
14 is and what it isn't. First and foremost, what it
15 isn't, it's not an opportunity, it's not going out
16 and trying to find support for the project; that's
17 not the idea. True outreach is going out early on in
18 the process to, one, provide an overview of the
19 project from neighbors, give them a chance to ask
20 questions, and, most importantly, find out what their
21 concerns are and, if possible, address those
22 concerns.

23 The West Hartford Town Council, you've
24 always encouraged developers who are coming into town
25 to propose new projects that developers should do an

1 extensive outreach of the neighborhood in advance of
2 any public hearings. Customarily, that outreach has
3 been 300 feet from the property in question; that's
4 neighbors, residents, businesses, property owners
5 within 300 feet. I go beyond that 300 feet, and in
6 this instance, that was no exception; we did go well
7 beyond 300 feet of the property. The outreach that
8 we conducted included Buckingham and Trumbull Streets
9 to the south, Stratford Road and Steele Road to the
10 north and west. In total, there were 75 residential
11 homes on Steele, Stratford, Buckingham and Trumbull.
12 As Mr. Sager said, we also had discussions with the
13 University of Saint Joseph, which also includes the
14 School for Young Children, as well as the Mercy
15 Community.

16 New this year, which wasn't present in
17 our last outreach efforts for this project, were the
18 237 residents of Steele Road, 243 Steele Road, and we
19 had invited all of the residents who live on Steele
20 Road to come for an informational session that at the
21 clubhouse that Mr. Sager had showed you earlier on.
22 For that meeting, the Residences at Steele Road, we
23 had a sign-in sheet there. Mr. Sager talked a little
24 bit about the meeting; it was very nice, a lot of
25 people. The couples that were there are folks that

1 I've known and their kids for years. As Mr. Sager
2 said, there was one couple there in particular that
3 moved there specifically because one of their
4 children lived on Stratford Road.

5 You can see some of the concerns or
6 issues that were brought up by some of the residents.
7 I think the most pressing one for the residents there
8 was that they wanted more lawn furniture around the
9 pool, but there were also some other issues that they
10 were concerned about: construction times during the
11 construction of the project and access and how that
12 would impact them.

13 The objective, again, for outreach is to
14 have substantive discussions with folks individually,
15 hopefully, so that there's an open dialogue. The
16 first thing that we did, we had three meetings that
17 we invited folks to. The first meeting was for
18 residents on Steele Road, the next meeting was for
19 residents on Stratford Road, and then the third
20 meeting was for residents of Buckingham and Trumbull.
21 As was in the past, we found that the concerns that
22 folks had seemed to be similar to where their
23 neighborhood was, so we kept it under those same
24 groupings. We only had one person who attended any
25 of those meetings, and I believe you have heard from

1 that individual.

2 After we had these three sessions, again,
3 my job is to go out there and look for trouble. I
4 want to engage people, I want to talk to them; that's
5 the only way that I can find out what the concerns
6 are and the only way that we can work to address
7 concerns. I then went through the 75 names that we
8 had, and I attempted to reach all of them by phone;
9 some of them I was successful in reaching, many I
10 left messages. You can see, through the Outreach
11 Report, that a lot of people chose not to return my
12 phone calls. Not to be deterred, I walked the
13 neighborhood after that, and on a third attempt, I
14 left letters in people's doors, not their mailboxes,
15 asking them if they would like to have a presentation
16 and an opportunity to ask questions and raise
17 concerns, I'd be more than happy to meet with them.

18 So from the report, you'll notice that
19 some folks did not have any immediate concerns, that
20 I talked to, and most of them reached back to me.
21 You will find that there were three folks in
22 particular that did have some concerns. One, which
23 Mr. Sager already mentioned, was Mr. Lee, and his
24 concerns were not specifically about the addition; it
25 was, again, about the cracked seal on the pavement.

1 Mr. Kevin Martinez, from 268 Steele Road, had a
2 concern about traffic, and he was hoping that there
3 would be a four-way stop sign at the Stratford,
4 Steele and Mercy intersection. And, then, Ms. Holly
5 Fortner, at 39 Stratford Road, she said that while
6 the project successful now, she worries about the
7 future viability as the market changes in the future.
8 Again, I worked very hard to go out there and tried
9 to meet with people face-to-face, gave them every
10 opportunity to have that interaction.

11 With that, I would be more than happy to
12 answer any questions that you might have.

13 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,
14 Mr. Coursey. Any questions? Mr. Williams.

15 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Madam
16 Mayor.

17 Mr. Coursey, thanks for your
18 presentation. I wasn't on the Council in 2014, but I
19 have an understanding of the history and what was
20 done. You performed the outreach in 2014; is that
21 correct?

22 MR. COURSEY: Yes.

23 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: Okay. So in terms
24 of your outreach this time around versus 2014, did it
25 change at all? Did you hit the same doors? Was the

1 scope different at all?

2 MR. COURSEY: The initial outreach was
3 the same for both; again, that was Stratford,
4 Buckingham, Trumbull and Steele Road. I started with
5 the 500 feet. Your Council, you encourage
6 developers -- although it's not a written resolution,
7 perhaps it might be one day, you encourage developers
8 that they should reach within 300 feet of the
9 property; we went further than that. The interest
10 then, as the project -- we did the outreach, it grew
11 beyond that. We had people from the golf club area
12 that were very -- since it was a new project, they
13 had an interest in it. We had people in the Morley
14 area who had interest in it. We ended up doing a
15 couple of meetings where we invited those groups as
16 well.

17 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: Okay. So, just so I
18 understand, the answer would be, then, on the initial
19 phase in terms of you actually hitting doors, it was
20 the same in 2014 as now?

21 MR. COURSEY: Yeah.

22 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: The difference is,
23 subsequent to your initial outreach --

24 MR. COURSEY: It was actually a
25 recommendation by the Council that we go out there

1 and actually have a public meeting, where we
2 invited -- and, again, I'm not one -- I don't believe
3 public meetings are the best way to do outreach,
4 because you don't have the opportunity to do that
5 individual one-on-one. Sometimes you get people that
6 are shy who don't want to speak at a meeting, so what
7 I do is, I make every effort to be able to talk to
8 somebody individually, face-to-face, on their turf,
9 not in a public meeting. But the Council back in
10 2014 had asked that we schedule a town meeting, more
11 or less, that was open to the entire town and
12 advertised for that purpose.

13 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: Okay. Just to be
14 clear, though, you did outreach in, you said, the
15 golf course neighborhood?

16 MR. COURSEY: Yes, they were included in
17 the town-wide meeting.

18 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: But what does that
19 mean? Does that mean they got notices sent out to
20 them?

21 MR. COURSEY: No, there weren't notices
22 sent out for that. We had a notice in the paper and
23 we -- there was a golf club association, Hartford
24 Golf Club Neighborhood Association, not affiliated
25 with the golf club, and they had actually emailed

1 their members to let them know. So you had different
2 neighborhood groups that were informing their
3 members.

4 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: And you had another
5 one at Morley, is that what you said?

6 MR. COURSEY: No. We just had that one
7 meeting.

8 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: At Morley?

9 MR. COURSEY: No. It was at Town Hall.

10 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: But you mentioned
11 Morley.

12 MR. COURSEY: The Morley neighborhood,
13 yeah.

14 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: Okay. All right.
15 And so for this application, same sort of due
16 diligence, other than knocking on the doors, was
17 knocked on; is that correct?

18 MR. COURSEY: No. The knocking on the
19 doors in the immediate neighborhood, it was the same
20 as last time.

21 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: Correct. The other
22 things were different?

23 MR. COURSEY: Right.

24 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: All right. Thank
25 you.

1 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,
2 Mr. Williams. Anyone else? Okay. Thank you,
3 Mr. Coursey.

4 MR. COURSEY: Thank you.

5 MR. DALY: Good evening. For the record,
6 Tom Daly, with Milone & MacBroom. I'm a Professional
7 Engineer and the engineer on this particular project.
8 I know Geoff walked you through the location of it,
9 but I would like to take a moment to kind of give you
10 little more detail.

11 (Referring to PowerPoint.) So as you
12 can see, there is an overall site plan. As you saw,
13 as Geoff presented, located at the bottom of the map
14 is Steele Road, so if you're standing on Steele Road,
15 we're talking about the far, far back right corner of
16 the property. You will also see on the right-hand
17 side of the map, there's the access drive-in to
18 McAuley. You can see the McAuley building up in the
19 upper right-hand corner, and then located to the
20 top-most part of this map is actually the University
21 of Saint Joseph. We have Trumbull and Governor
22 Square on the left. This, to orient you, north is
23 pointing to the right.

24 So, as part of our application, we keep
25 on referring to Building 7, and that's really the

1 darker-shaded building that you're seeing in the
2 upper right-hand corner. The area of Building 7
3 today is currently occupied by basically a sloped-up
4 lawn area, so actually this area is about --
5 currently today, it's about 4 to 6 feet higher than
6 the parking lot directly adjacent, and right on the
7 back side of that is really just a high, tall grass
8 area.

9 Currently, there's also a sanitary sewer
10 that runs through here that serves McAuley that we'll
11 have to relocate, and there's a paved ditch that runs
12 through there that was actually installed back in the
13 day. Directly to the left of Building 7 is our
14 stormwater management basin; it was designed for both
15 this project and the McAuley project.

16 So there's a little blowup, we focus in.
17 We have Buildings 4 and 5 to the south. There's
18 really a couple of components. One of the items --
19 so, we're not modifying any of the driveways or the
20 road network here; we're really building upon
21 existing infrastructure that exists today. But as we
22 build Building 7, we currently have parking located
23 on that side of the existing entrance drive, so we
24 have to relocate that. So just to the north of
25 Buildings 4 and 5, we'll be installing about 20

1 parking spaces there. Also, to the south of
2 Building 7, we'll be putting in about 20 spaces in
3 that location. Your regulations call for 1.5 spaces
4 per unit, we're at 1.6, so we still exceed that. My
5 experience, going out on the site many times, is that
6 parking ratio is working quite nicely for the
7 project, so we wanted to maintain that same type of
8 ratio.

9 What you can see also to the top right is
10 an application that might have been before you in the
11 past. This is the new building that the University
12 of Saint Joseph has built, and they had put in a
13 cul-de-sac and turnaround here. We had to get it off
14 Google Earth because it's fairly new. Located to the
15 right, as I said, is this access drive that goes to a
16 back loading dock at McAuley.

17 This was probably more appropriate for
18 TPC and Wetlands, but as I said, located to the left
19 of the building is our stormwater basin. We had to
20 make some slight modifications to that, and we also
21 had to re-route some drainage and sanitary sewer
22 systems around the building.

23 In terms of landscaping, the approach
24 here was to mimic the palette of materials that if
25 you go out there to this building, it's going to look

1 like it was just the same as part of the overall
2 project, so those same type of palette of materials
3 that you saw wrapped around the existing building
4 will be mimicked around here. One element that we
5 are adding, as you can see, is a large evergreen
6 screen that is located along the property line. When
7 we first built this project, we did put in a
8 chain-link fence along there; it was simply just a
9 dividing line, because we obviously had young
10 students at the Gengras Center on that side, so we
11 put that fence in. I think part of the screening is,
12 we're going to be doing a heavy evergreen screen
13 against that, just to create a visual buffer both for
14 us, because there's a parking lot right on the other
15 side, and also for the University of Saint Joseph.
16 So the project actually settles in very nicely to the
17 landscape; it's really off in a separate area. We
18 still meet all the standards required by your
19 regulations. We didn't have to come forth and ask
20 for any waivers on the zone applications.

21 With that, I'd be more than happy to
22 answer any questions now, or I'd be more than happy
23 to come back later on, whatever is the Council's
24 choice.

25 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you, Mr. Daly.

1 Any questions for Mr. Daly?

2 COUNCILOR FAY: I have one.

3 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Ms. Fay.

4 COUNCILOR FAY: Thank you very much.

5 A quick question: The building, at least
6 optically, looks much bigger than the others. I
7 don't know what the correct question is.

8 MR. DALY: Charlie Nyberg just asked me
9 the same question. (Referring to PowerPoint.) The
10 depth is similar, except for these two appendages,
11 and those are -- correct me if I'm wrong, those are
12 to accommodate those units that Geoff was explaining
13 to you. But to give you some context, Building 4 is
14 a width of 185 feet, this building is 218, so it's
15 approximately 18 percent longer; same height, but the
16 length is longer for this particular building.

17 COUNCILOR FAY: Thank you.

18 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you, Ms. Fay.
19 Mr. Wenograd.

20 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: Right now, is there
21 anything at that property currently in that space?

22 MR. DALY: In this area?

23 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: Yes.

24 MR. DALY: Located right now in, I'd say,
25 about the first 20 feet is a sloped lawn, and then as

1 you get over the top of the hill, it's tall grass,
2 it's meadow, wildflower type of thing.

3 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: All right. I'm just
4 noticing -- I'm reading the health department's
5 letter of approval in your packet. Actually, it's
6 our understanding that the application proposes
7 demolition of an existing structure. I don't know
8 whether that was their mistake or some --

9 MR. DALY: I think they took the last
10 letter and wrote it forward. Also, the other thing
11 is, we did have their letter when we initially
12 submitted, so we submitted the original letter in the
13 packet, but subsequent in your packet, you should
14 have a new updated letter from -- what's the date of
15 the letter you have there?

16 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: You're right, that
17 is an old one.

18 MR. DALY: You should have in your packet
19 a new updated letter from Steve Hewitt that he
20 corrected that.

21 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: Oh, okay.

22 MR. DALY: It was from a time at some
23 point, that's how we approached it, but there is no
24 structure there.

25 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: And that hasn't

1 updated in terms of the capacity currently?

2 MR. DALY: Connect. Frankly, it's really
3 MDC water and sewer, but your regulations kind of
4 refer to the Health District as if it was a septic
5 system, but we went through the process and they did
6 provide that letter.

7 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: Thank you.

8 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,
9 Mr. Wenograd. Ms. Kerrigan.

10 COUNCILOR KERRIGAN: Thank you, Madam
11 Mayor. I don't know whether this is the appropriate
12 time to ask this question, and unfortunately having
13 received this and not really having a moment to read
14 through it, I don't want to duplicate what Ben's
15 questions were. Can you just talk a little bit about
16 the wetlands and the watercourse and all that kind of
17 stuff?

18 MR. DALY: Sure. (Referring to
19 PowerPoint.) Currently today, if you see that little
20 dot right there, that was flagged as wetlands, and
21 what happened is when McAuley was built, I think they
22 did an expansion of this building here. Their storm
23 drainage discharge is right here, and they built a
24 settling basin, which is kind of a depression that
25 any road sands come off, it has a place to settle out

1 before it goes into the bigger basin. What happened
2 is, it never got maintained, so the sand built up,
3 cattails grew, and the wetlands scientist chose to
4 flag it as wetlands. If we didn't flag the
5 wetlands -- frankly, it's the opinion of our wetlands
6 scientist, it probably shouldn't have been flagged
7 because it was a manmade sediment trap.

8 COUNCILOR KERRIGAN: Should or should
9 not?

10 MR. DALY: Should not have been flagged.
11 It was a manmade sediment trap that didn't get
12 cleaned out, so it got cattails in it. But if you
13 recall, before -- maybe you do or don't. Before our
14 application, there was a previous application for a
15 large assisted-living facility, and they were going
16 to partially reconstruct the convent and put an
17 expansion for an assisted-living facility. The
18 project was approved but never went forward. But the
19 soil scientist on that application flagged the
20 wetlands, so we felt we had to kind of stick with
21 those wetlands flagging and go forward and present it
22 to the commission as such, as opposed to trying to
23 argue about whether it's a wetland or not. That
24 assisted-living facility actually had a driveway
25 going through that wetland pocket that we're talking

1 about and then received approval for filling it. At
2 the time, we initially -- there was also a small
3 wetland pocket located here, probably smaller than
4 from me to you; it was actually a paved ditch and the
5 pavement broke up and the cattails were grown. So
6 someone took a fairly liberal approach to flagging of
7 the wetlands, but we said, That's the record, we're
8 not going to argue with it, we're going to go forward
9 as such. So before, we got a Wetlands approval to
10 fill this one, and we recently have received Wetlands
11 approval to fill this wetlands pocket. We have that
12 sediment trap that I just talked to about; while it
13 does provide a value to capture those sediments
14 before they go down, we'll be replacing that right
15 here.

16 One of the presentations we gave to the
17 Wetlands commission, and we actually took it out of
18 the presentation here because we didn't think it was
19 germane, the basin when we came on the site really
20 had no value to it; it was basically a paved ditch
21 that went through a lawn area. If you get a chance
22 to go out there today, it's a very diverse
23 environment now: wildflowers, very producing plants.
24 It's really a testament to both John Stewart, for his
25 planting plan, and Metro to do it. You've got to see

1 the before and after. It really came out fantastic.
2 And that was the part the Wetlands commission, I
3 think, felt that that was a positive and very much a
4 trade-off filling that small manmade wetlands.

5 COUNCILOR KERRIGAN: Thank you.

6 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,
7 Ms. Kerrigan. Any other questions for Mr. Daly?
8 Mr. Wenograd.

9 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: I can't find what
10 you're referring to in our documents. I don't see
11 anything other than the 2014.

12 COUNCILOR DODGE: (Indicating.)

13 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: That's Wetlands.
14 I'm still looking for Health. I see DRAC, but I'm
15 not finding Police or Fire, which we usually see as
16 well, so I'm not sure whether we've got everything.

17 MR. DALY: In terms of staff comments,
18 we've received Planning comments and Engineering
19 comments. There it is.

20 PRESIDENT CANTOR: I will read this for
21 the record.

22 MR. DALY: Okay. And as Robin indicated,
23 we actually met with the Engineering staff and
24 addressed all of their concerns, and then we
25 addressed the revised plans before you. The letter

1 that you may not have in your packet was like the
2 last thing to come in.

3 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: Okay. Thank you. I
4 want to make sure that we have everything. Again, in
5 terms of the -- I see this letter dated January 31st,
6 obviously late. I don't see a report from Police and
7 Fire.

8 MR. DALY: I've only see an email. I
9 thought I saw an email or something saying it was
10 simply there was no comments that we saw besides the
11 Engineering and Planning; all the other staff
12 departments had signed off.

13 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: We'll make sure that
14 it's in here.

15 PRESIDENT CANTOR: It was in the manila
16 folder with the --

17 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: That one?

18 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Yes.

19 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: Thank you.

20 MR. ALAIR: I have a copy of the
21 package, if you don't. It's several pages put
22 together with a memo from Todd Dumais --

23 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: I see that.

24 MR. ALAIR: -- dated February 2nd, and
25 paper clipped to it are the email chain from Fire,

1 ending with the Fire comments, and a couple of pages
2 down is a copy of that Health District. I can give
3 you the copy.

4 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: No, as long as
5 someone has it. Thank you.

6 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,
7 Mr. Wenograd. Anyone else? No? Thank you,
8 Mr. Daly.

9 MR. VERTUCCI: Good evening. I'm Mark
10 Vertucci. I'm a Senior Transportation Engineer at
11 Fuss & O'Neill in Manchester. I'm also a Registered
12 Professional Engineer and a Professional Traffic
13 Operations Engineer. Fuss & O'Neill did prepare a
14 Traffic Impact Statement for this development
15 expansion, dated November of 2017, and I just wanted
16 to briefly go over the findings of that study for you
17 here tonight.

18 (Referring to PowerPoint.) Just quickly
19 to orient you, the site is located here, on the west
20 side of Steele Road. Steele Road here, running
21 north-south on the map; Route 44, Albany Avenue,
22 running east and west across the top of the screen;
23 and Asylum Avenue, running east and west across the
24 bottom of the screen. As part of our traffic study,
25 we did review these intersections that are circled in

1 green, so Albany at Steele, Steele at Stratford Road,
2 the site driveway, and also Steele at Asylum.

3 As Geoff Sager had mentioned earlier,
4 there were some traffic-calming improvements that
5 have been installed on Steele Road here. Between
6 Albany Avenue and Stratford Road, there's a flush
7 Belgian block median that had been installed by Metro
8 Realty after the last application that we had.
9 Traffic, as I'll present to you in a little bit, the
10 speeds on the road have actually gone down, as a
11 result of that installation, by a couple miles per
12 hour, which obviously is good news.

13 Also as Geoff mentioned, Stratford Road
14 here in the plan is no longer connected up here to
15 the north at Bretton Road. It is now a cul-de-sac
16 and it's a two-way traffic road, so we eliminated
17 here any potential for cut-through traffic that could
18 have occurred from the development up here to
19 Route 44 heading towards Hartford.

20 I did want to briefly describe some of
21 the traffic counts that we did out here. We went
22 ahead, given that the development, the 160 units, is
23 now in place, we went back out and re-counted all of
24 these intersections and counted the site driveway to
25 get an idea of what this is actually generating in

1 comparison to what we projected in our original
2 traffic study back in 2014. So we did
3 turning-movement counts at each of our study
4 intersections during the morning and the afternoon
5 peak hours of traffic; these are typically the
6 highest traffic hours of the day. The morning peak
7 hour was 7:30 to 8:30 a.m., and the afternoon peak
8 hour was 4:45 to 5:45. What the counts indicated was
9 that this existing, fully occupied development of 160
10 units is actually generating less than what we
11 projected by our 2014 traffic study, which utilized
12 ITE rates; these are Institute of Transportation
13 Engineers trip projections, the industry standard of
14 what we normally use to project traffic volumes for
15 developments. Specifically what we had in the
16 morning peak hour of traffic, we had projected in
17 2014 that this development would generate 82 trips;
18 the actual count was 68 trips, so it's about
19 17 percent lower. And in the afternoon peak hour, we
20 had projected 100 hundred trips, and it's actually
21 generating 74, so about a 26 percent reduction in
22 what we had projected.

23 So as far as the additional 30 units,
24 what will they add to the traffic already on the road
25 network? We decided we would go ahead and be

1 conservative and use those ITE rates. Even though we
2 have evidence here that they are high, we went ahead
3 and used them again, and the ITE rates would indicate
4 for the additional 30 units that these units will
5 generate 11 additional trips in the morning peak-hour
6 traffic and 14 additional trips in the afternoon
7 peak-hour traffic. So as you can see, these are
8 really de minimis numbers here. If you consider the
9 fact that the traffic is coming out of the site
10 splitting basically 50/50 to the north and south, so
11 at any one point on Steele Road, you're only adding
12 between five and seven cars; that's a trip, roughly,
13 every eight to twelve minutes, so it's really a
14 negligible increase in traffic. So what this is
15 saying, again, is additional traffic generated by the
16 proposed additional 30 units, when you include that,
17 the entire Steele Road development will now be 190
18 units and will generate fewer trips than what we had
19 projected for the 160-unit development back in 2014.
20 Obviously, those trip rates were approved by the Town
21 and approved by the DOT at that time.

22 Looking at some of the other
23 intersections, we re-counted all of these as well,
24 and without getting into specifics on all the
25 movements, I'll say they were substantially similar

1 to what our projections were three years ago. The
2 movements, we had some movements that went up, and we
3 expected them to go up due to, you know, the
4 additional development here, but there were also
5 several movements where we expected a traffic
6 increase and they didn't change at all. Some of the
7 movements actually went down that we expected to go
8 up. So, overall, there's been no substantial change
9 in the traffic operations or the overall traffic
10 volumes at or for the study intersections.

11 We also looked at crash data. Seeing as
12 three more years have elapsed, we looked at the
13 latest three years of crash data from the UConn
14 repository, and similar to our conclusion three years
15 ago, we did not identify any crash patterns in the
16 study area; there were no abnormal crash rates.
17 Again, that is consistent with our 2014 study
18 findings and indicative that the additional traffic
19 from the Steele Road development has not compromised
20 the safety of any of the study intersections.

21 Lastly, I wanted to hit on the speed that
22 I referenced earlier. We did do some traffic counts
23 back in -- speed counts with a tube counter across
24 Steele Road back in 2014, and those two counts
25 recorded speeds of 40 miles per hour in the

1 northbound direction and 39 miles per hour in the
2 southbound direction. The Town has since redone
3 those speed counts in 2016, so this is after our
4 traffic-calming improvements were implemented, and
5 the new speeds, so the latest speeds recorded, were
6 37 miles per hour in both directions, so there has
7 been a two- to three-mile-per-hour reduction in the
8 speed on Steele Road, which is indicative that these
9 traffic-calming improvements have a positive impact
10 on the speeds of traffic on Steele Road.

11 So just to conclude, the additional 30
12 units proposed here will generate a minimal amount of
13 additional traffic on the adjacent road network;
14 again, we're talking between 11 and 14 trips in the
15 peak hours. The existing development trip generation
16 is less than what we had projected three years ago,
17 and the sum of these existing trips plus the
18 additional trips from the 30 units are going to be
19 less than the total projected traffic that we had
20 three years ago for the 160-unit development. So
21 essentially what we're saying is, we could add these
22 30 units, still have less traffic than we projected
23 three years ago, and those original projections were
24 approved by the Town and the DOT at the time.

25 I did want to note, as I mentioned the

1 DOT, lastly, that this development, since we are
2 expanding it, we do have to go back to the Office of
3 the State Traffic Administration for an
4 administrative approval. So pending an approval here
5 at the Town, we would then go ahead and submit to
6 OSTA for their administrative review and approval. I
7 will note that when they looked at this three years
8 ago, they had no comments on the application, and,
9 also your Engineering department has reviewed our
10 traffic study and did not have any comments on it,
11 either.

12 With that, I can either take any
13 questions you have now, or I can turn it back to
14 Robin and she can make some closing remarks.

15 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,
16 Mr. Vertucci. Are there any questions for
17 Mr. Vertucci? Mr. Williams.

18 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Madam
19 Mayor. Just a couple of follow-ups. So, just for
20 clarity of the record, the current traffic is less
21 than what you originally projected, correct?

22 MR. VERTUCCI: Traffic currently
23 generated by the development, correct, is less.

24 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: But fair to say
25 because there are building there, there has been an

1 increase in traffic on Steele Road since the
2 construction?

3 MR. VERTUCCI: Correct, some of the
4 movements on Steele Road have experienced an increase
5 in traffic, consistent with or less than projections
6 we had before.

7 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: Fine, but there has
8 been an increase in traffic. So now that there's
9 going to be an additional building on the property,
10 fair to say that those roads will experience another
11 increase in traffic?

12 MR. VERTUCCI: A very, very de minimis
13 increase.

14 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: But an increase,
15 right?

16 MR. VERTUCCI: Very small.

17 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: "Small" is sort of a
18 subjective statement, and your report is based on
19 objective measures, right?

20 MR. VERTUCCI: Yeah. We typically don't
21 have the benefit of actually having a real count for
22 a development.

23 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: Right.

24 MR. VERTUCCI: This is something I can
25 say that, you know, we're pretty confident here we

1 have real data that's showing our numbers are less
2 than what the industry standard would project, and as
3 a result, you know, the net total traffic that we're
4 going to have after this additional 30 units is still
5 less than the net total traffic projected for 160
6 units three years ago that we had already presented
7 back then would have a minimal impact.

8 COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: No, and I appreciate
9 it. The punch line, though, is that we have
10 increased traffic, and so I just objected to the word
11 "small," because there are people in the community
12 who are concerned about the level of traffic, and I
13 think as long as we focus on the objective numbers,
14 the issue of whether it's small or de minimis should
15 be left up to the community. But thank you, sir.

16 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,
17 Mr. Williams. Anybody else? No?

18 I think we did receive an email with a
19 question on the backup on Steele Road and Fern
20 Street, and I just wanted to -- it doesn't look like
21 that was part of the review, and I just wanted to
22 know if you had any comments. I just received it
23 later this afternoon.

24 MR. VERTUCCI: Right. You know, I did
25 see that comment, and there was some discussion about

1 this three years ago. Fern is obviously off to the
2 south of Asylum, so this was beyond the limits of our
3 study area. What we did have here, we had projected
4 20 percent of the traffic on Steele would head to the
5 south towards that intersection. Although we
6 re-counted this intersection, it's hard to say what
7 percentage of the traffic actually is going south
8 there, but what I did do was, I compared the counts,
9 the overall traffic counts, on Steele south of
10 Asylum. Actually, I've got it over on my chair. But
11 generally speaking, without getting into the numbers,
12 we actually saw in the afternoon that the counts are
13 lower today than what they were. The actual existing
14 counts are lower than what the existing counts were
15 in 2014 in the afternoon peak hour; in the morning,
16 they were slightly higher. So, again, there wasn't a
17 large increase in traffic on Steele Road south of
18 Asylum.

19 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you. Anything
20 else? All right. Thank you, Mr. Vertucci.

21 MR. VERTUCCI: You're welcome. Thanks.

22 MS. PEARSON: I would just ask
23 Mr. Vertucci, the real numbers, do you have them
24 readily accessible?

25 MR. VERTUCCI: I do.

1 MS. PEARSON: Just so you know, we have
2 them available.

3 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you, Attorney
4 Pearson. I think Mr. Davidoff had a question.

5 COUNCILOR DAVIDOFF: Thank you, Madam
6 Mayor. Attorney Pearson, thank you to your
7 presenters this evening with respect to what changes
8 you want to make to the SDD, the engineering comments
9 to the traffic, and the community outreach, but what
10 has been not mentioned yet in your presentation, and
11 I do have a question, was in 2014, the Council was
12 dealing with an application that originally was
13 submitted that was 200 units, and it was felt that
14 that was too dense for the parcel, and the applicant
15 submitted an application for 150 units, which we
16 passed, I think it was a vote of eight to one, at
17 like three o'clock in the morning. And then there
18 was an amendment to increase it from 150 to 160.
19 This evening you're asking the Council to increase
20 the parcel from 160 to 190, which, in my
21 calculations, is 10 units less than the 200 you
22 originally sought in 2014. I'd like to get an
23 explanation from the applicant with respect to the
24 change in circumstances with respect to the number of
25 units on that parcel and what has changed from 2014

1 to 2018 that would be reasons for us to support
2 something that in 2014 at 200 there was no comfort
3 level for it.

4 MS. PEARSON: Okay. Let me start out by
5 saying, first of all, this is a very deliberative
6 body and any time you decide an application, you're
7 deciding it based on the facts that are specific to
8 that application that comes before you. For an
9 applicant, it's our responsibility to go through the
10 standards that you have in your zoning regulations to
11 decide what should be considered and whether those
12 standards have been met in order to validate a vote
13 to approve or not approve. You have very specific
14 standards with regard to that.

15 Zoning is not static. Things do change,
16 circumstances do change. In this instance, as we, I
17 think, underscored for you through the course of our
18 presentation this evening, we've been able to answer
19 all kinds of questions with regard to what the impact
20 of this particular development would be on the
21 community. And I think it's fair to say, there were
22 certainly extensive fears about traffic generation
23 originally, which have been answered. There were
24 concerns about who would actually choose to live in
25 this facility; I think you've gotten a very positive

1 indication as to who lives there, how they are young
2 professionals often, empty nesters also, all
3 individuals that are getting an opportunity to both
4 reside in this community and learn to appreciate and
5 enjoy this community, possibly also furthering their
6 ability to stay in the community or desire to stay in
7 the community, and also people who support other
8 businesses.

9 Every time an application comes before
10 you, it's a new application. There's something
11 different about this application than the one that
12 was presented last time, both the information that
13 we've garnered for you and this layout is different
14 from what was exactly looked at. And don't forget,
15 also, you never denied the 200-unit version, it's
16 just that it was clearly something that was of a
17 concern both to the community and many of the
18 neighbors and also to members of this commission,
19 such that it obviously made sense to go back and out
20 of an enormous amount of concern for the issues that
21 were raised, to scale it back down. There were
22 concerns, also, about buffering, landscaping, about
23 treatment of how the traffic for the School for Young
24 Children across the street would be handled, all
25 kinds of issues that have since been addressed by the

1 applicant. And we've proven to you now with
2 empirical information we didn't have then, all we had
3 or you had before you were our projections and our
4 claims that indeed these would be positive, that with
5 the development of this community, it would have a
6 positive impact on the community, and I think now you
7 have empirical evidence that shows indeed that is the
8 way it has all worked out.

9 So if I were to respond and summarize the
10 main points that I think you should be left with when
11 you look at this: One, zoning is not static; things
12 change. Applicants come before this commission and
13 request things that maybe 10 years ago the commission
14 would never -- the Council would not have approved.
15 The information in support of this application has
16 changed. We've been able to show you that the
17 impacts of visual impact, the traffic impacts, the
18 impacts on the community itself, the benefits to
19 other neighbors have all turned out to be positive.

20 We've shown you that this particular
21 application before you right now is for one building
22 that is to the rear of the development. In terms of
23 the issues you have to assess when you decide this --
24 and let me just remind you what those standards are.
25 In considering whether this one building, because

1 that's what's before you now, whether this one
2 building is appropriate, you need to look at that the
3 property shall not be less than the minimum required
4 lot size in any district unless for a subdivision,
5 which is not relevant.

6 In your findings, you have to look at
7 whether it would be in harmony with the overall
8 objective of the Comprehensive Plan, and we certainly
9 don't think there's anything about an additional
10 building in the area that will not be in harmony.

11 Superior to a plan possible under the
12 regular standards of this chapter. There are a lot
13 of reasons why that is the case, and I'll go through
14 the findings afterwards.

15 In harmony with the actual permitted
16 development of adjacent properties. It's certainly
17 in harmony with the institutional uses in the area,
18 and we do not feel that it's going to have any
19 negative impact on the single-family residential uses
20 in the area.

21 And, then, the total density and
22 development in terms of floor space, dwelling units
23 and land coverage will not exceed that permitted in
24 the district.

25 I know this was a question that came up

1 in 2014 also, and at that time, there was discussion
2 as to whether or not a deal, per se, had been made.
3 But zoning is not done by deals. You certainly have
4 a right to deny this application, but in doing that,
5 you'd have to look at what's being proposed here
6 against your standards for this particular
7 application. You're not voting on something that was
8 said or presented or presumed or argued for back in
9 2014. You're looking at whether this new building is
10 appropriate, and if you decide it's not and it
11 doesn't meet your standards and it's not good for the
12 community, it's going to be detrimental to the
13 neighborhood, it's not in harmony and it's not going
14 to do any other positive things that you look for
15 when you decide it's a Special Development District,
16 then certainly you are -- it's appropriate to deny
17 it. But, again, it should be looked at on its own
18 right now; that's the application that's before you.
19 And Mr. Sager would also like to add to that.

20 MR. SAGER: Thank you, Mr. Davidoff.

21 So earlier in my presentation, I
22 mentioned that I was surprised in the empty-nester
23 population; there was that nexus, there was that
24 connection to West Hartford. I didn't anticipate it
25 to be as strong as it was. So just doing some simple

1 math: 160 units, 25 percent, that's 40 families;
2 it's significant. Every one of those people has a
3 heartfelt story, and as I begin to know the people in
4 the community, I hear those stories, and I won't
5 repeat them for you, but in any event, these
6 people -- we present a long-term housing solution for
7 longtime residents in West Hartford and also for
8 their sons, for their daughters, for their parents,
9 for their in-laws, and it's very significant, and
10 we're turning people away. So I would submit to you,
11 the thing that is different is that I didn't see that
12 nexus being as strong as it turned out to be. I
13 honestly believed we were going to get people from
14 other places who sold big homes and wanted . . . But
15 that's not the way that it turned out.

16 I would say that in addition to that, the
17 economy is different in the following respect: We
18 have just created an innovation zone on your western
19 flank in Farmington, along Farmington Avenue. I
20 believe right now in my business, so not reading the
21 newspapers, in my business, we have, you know, a
22 residential portfolio, office buildings, et cetera,
23 we believe that this community right now is an
24 inflection point; that we are really coming back
25 strong. Aerospace, defense, life sciences,

1 insurance, they're coming back very, very strong. We
2 have employers here who can't hire people fast
3 enough, they can't find them, but part of that
4 recruitment process, what's driving that innovation
5 is the talent, and we hear the talent's only
6 interested in going to New York and Boston. Well,
7 guess what? That's not true. Part of the inducement
8 is communities like this. I didn't understand that
9 in 2014, and I understand that now. I evaluated all
10 that, and I fight for that with a passion in West
11 Hartford and in Farmington because it's important not
12 just to the town, I think it's important to the
13 region, and when you look at the people that we have
14 living here, aside from the empty nesters that are
15 longtime West Hartford residents, these are very
16 important people. This talent is driving the
17 innovation that is transforming these big companies.
18 If you look at any of these big company websites
19 right now, all they talk about is digital
20 transformation and that's all being driven. I don't
21 want them to go to Brooklyn to find that talent and
22 create their accelerators, and I don't want them to
23 go to Boston; I want them to come here. But when
24 they recruit that person, that person wants a great
25 place to live, and we've got that here. This is a

1 once in a lifetime location.

2 I didn't foresee the strength of this
3 community. It is a lot stronger than I ever
4 anticipated. I think that we're providing a housing
5 solution for multiple generations. I can't imagine a
6 place in town where we could add 30 units and have it
7 have less of an impact. I think it's critically
8 important, and I understand that it's different, but
9 it is different. It's four years later and it's
10 different, so . . .

11 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you, Mr. Sager.
12 That was powerful. Mr. Davidoff, you had a question?

13 COUNCILOR DAVIDOFF: My question,
14 Attorney Pearson and Mr. Sager, was not one of
15 criticism, I just thought it was a question that
16 really needed to be put on the record so that my
17 colleagues and the public could hear what a
18 successful venture looks like and why people choose
19 our community in West Hartford to live. And what
20 your project, at 100 percent occupancy, demonstrates
21 is that people want to be here in West Hartford, and
22 contrary to a lot of the dialogue we read about in
23 the region, this is a success story, and prior to
24 your testimony just now, I wasn't getting that from
25 the presentation, and I thought that was very

1 significant to understand why an additional building
2 on this parcel was so significant.

3 You pointed out in your presentation very
4 little impact with respect to the engineering
5 concerns; there are none, as demonstrated through
6 staff reports. The traffic, your expert testified,
7 was de minimis. With respect to the late
8 communications we got in our emails today with
9 respect to Fern and Steele, you pointed out for the
10 record that that was beyond the scope of what your
11 project looked at with respect to traffic impact, and
12 we didn't even look at that back in 2014, either. So
13 what I wanted to get on the record, which I thought
14 was really important, which you did get, was the fact
15 that these are the criteria that we need to decide
16 this current application by, and yes, there are
17 reasons why this parcel can accommodate an additional
18 building without having a negative impact upon those
19 who reside in the area. So that's that point.

20 The other point was in Mr. Coursey's
21 outreach, there are legitimate concerns expressed by
22 the residents of 243 Steele Road, which will need to
23 be addressed, with respect to construction timing,
24 where do they park, what kind of interruption do they
25 have in their life should this get approved, and I

1 think that's important because those people were not
2 present in 2014, because they didn't reside here, but
3 they are part of our community and they do have
4 legitimate concerns with expectations -- they are
5 paying significant rent to you, and they have
6 expectations that quiet enjoyment in the mornings and
7 on the weekends is going to end at a particular time,
8 where are they going to park, are their cars going to
9 be filled with dust and dirt, and how that plays out,
10 and that will need to be worked out, so that was the
11 other concern I had.

12 I think other than that, I think you
13 rightfully, Attorney Pearson, outlined the criteria,
14 and the only one that I think someone could possibly
15 object on would be the first, as to whether or not
16 they felt that it was harmony with our Comprehensive
17 Plan and Development, and that would be left up to
18 the individual concerned, how they felt this
19 development fit into that. With respect to the plan
20 superior or in harmony with the current plan and the
21 density, I think if you add it all up on balance,
22 it's all there.

23 That's what I wanted to get on the
24 record. I thought it was very important to get on
25 the record; that's why I asked that question.

1 MS. PEARSON: Thank you for giving us the
2 opportunity to do it.

3 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,
4 Mr. Davidoff. Mr. Barnes had a comment.

5 (Off-the-record discussion.)

6 COUNCILOR BARNES: Mr. Sager, if you
7 could come back up, I just want to follow up on your
8 remarks there. You're a businessman, a successful
9 businessman, and you originally proposed
10 approximately 200 units for this site, so I think
11 that you did anticipate that you would be able to
12 fill it and there would be some success, so I'm not
13 so sure about misreading the market, or where the
14 people would come from, or how successful it would
15 be. It has been very successful and, you know,
16 certainly profitable, and more so if you're permitted
17 to add a seventh building.

18 And with respect to Attorney Pearson's
19 comments about, you know, each application is new,
20 well, yeah, each application is new when it comes
21 before us, but not this one. This one actually has
22 history, right? So when Mr. Davidoff asked about it
23 and went through it, you know, we were at 200 units
24 and went down to 150, because on at least a couple of
25 nights back in 2014, we had a full room of residents

1 in that neighborhood that were opposing this project,
2 still opposing it at 150, and many of them came back
3 when it was increased to 160. So there is a history
4 here, and there's also going to be a question for us
5 that we get, that we have to think about, which is:
6 If it wasn't acceptable in 2014 - and I understand
7 that we didn't actually vote on it, I think it was
8 community pressure that adjusted the size of the
9 project downward - why is it acceptable today to
10 allow it to happen? Other than for the reasons that
11 you explained about that you misread the market, the
12 question is still there: Why is it different a
13 number of years later to essentially grant you
14 exactly what you wanted a couple of years before,
15 which was denied at the time?

16 MR. SAGER: Thank you, Councilor Barnes.
17 So, I don't think it's necessarily different for me,
18 other than I've described, but I fully understand
19 that when we were in front of you before and this was
20 a three-story convent and a lawn and we've got plans,
21 I mean, surely you don't -- I mean, as a
22 professional, and I do this all day, every day, I
23 can't tell you exactly what it's going to feel like,
24 who's going to populate it. We have feelings and we
25 tell you what we anticipate, but until it's built,

1 until it's constructed, it's very hard to understand
2 the scope, the impact, et cetera. And I would submit
3 to you although we knew at 200 units, it would be
4 acceptable, I think it's perfectly reasonable that
5 you couldn't necessarily get there from a set of
6 plans and understand it, but now it's in your
7 community. And I would also submit to you, for your
8 consideration, that many, many, many of -- we had
9 three nights of hearings, and the one person who
10 showed up was fine, and really all he wanted to do
11 was pick my brain on what fence I used because he
12 wanted to use a similar fence in his yard. In any
13 event, the people that were against it earlier, you
14 know, I don't think I'm out on limb when I say, they
15 just don't feel that way anymore. They look at the
16 community, I've got lots of friends in that
17 community, they're fine with it. But I don't think
18 that, again, it's reasonable for you back in 2014 to
19 look at the plans and be able to get there, but now
20 that we've built the community and you can see it and
21 you can talk to people that are in the neighborhood,
22 I think it's different. You can now look at this
23 incrementally, it's an add, and I think it's easy to
24 define. I think at inception, it's a lot tougher.

25 COUNCILOR BARNES: Thank you.

1 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you, Mr. Barnes.

2 So, I have two people that have signed
3 up. Mr. Gregory Donovan, I think you're here with
4 the troop, and I didn't know if you wanted to speak
5 to this public hearing.

6 GREGORY DONOVAN: I'm all set.

7 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Okay. And then I have
8 Kathleen Monnes, so if you can come up and speak.
9 You have three minutes to speak, and the mic goes on
10 automatically. State your name and address for the
11 record.

12 KATHLEEN MONNES: Good evening. Kathleen
13 Monnes, 84 Steele Road in West Hartford. I also have
14 an email comment from Miss Donna Waniak, also at
15 Steele Road. Given the three-minute limitation, I
16 won't attempt to read that, but I will send it to the
17 Council after today's meeting.

18 My concerns, as I sit here, are
19 absolutely no consideration given to the Steele Road
20 section between Asylum and Fern. And, quite frankly,
21 I spoke to Mr. Coursey in 2014, and I expressed a
22 concern in 2014 concerning traffic, and Mr. Coursey
23 assured me, No, the traffic will not be a problem at
24 your corner. Mr. Coursey, with all due respect, you
25 were absolutely wrong, and the traffic expert here,

1 you are absolutely wrong. The difference in traffic
2 on our corner of the street is tremendous. It's not
3 just from 7:30 to 8:30 in the morning; it lasts until
4 about 9:30. I take pictures out my window of the
5 backup, which is typically eight to ten cars at any
6 given point in time; that was never like that. Okay?
7 I recognized when we moved in, in 2001, that Steele
8 is not a quiet street, it has relative traffic, but
9 never like this. And the residents on our corner I
10 have spoken to throughout today, and each one that I
11 talked to, which I think was three of them, have
12 expressed similar concerns. So to have the
13 "de minimis," the "very small," the "insignificant"
14 comments that I've heard today about the effect on
15 the residents on our private street, I, quite
16 frankly, am offended by, because I think it's a real
17 concern. So I would ask this committee to please
18 consider the effect, the greater effect on the
19 residents, not the effect on the Steele Road section
20 from Albany to Asylum, where traffic calming measures
21 already have been implemented, but instead the
22 greater part of Steele Road, where in fact there is
23 no effort to either study, consider, or remedy the
24 traffic increase.

25 With regard to density, I sit here and

1 say, What has changed since 2014? I read the entire
2 transcript of the 2014 public hearing and the
3 concerns expressed by residents. The same density
4 considerations that were at issue in 2014 should be
5 there today. There's, you know, 200 down to 150, up
6 to 160, now it's up again to 190. What justifies the
7 change in circumstance to allow this applicant to
8 build what they originally requested and then
9 withdrew in recognition of the neighborhood, the
10 community, and the Town concerns? It's coming back
11 to the well again without any legitimate change in
12 circumstance other than they want to make a profit,
13 and a profit at the risk and the expense of the
14 neighbors.

15 Thank you.

16 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you, Ms. Monnes.
17 Is there anybody else in the audience that would like
18 to speak to this public hearing? Come up and state
19 your name.

20 SEAN HARRINGTON: Yes, good evening. My
21 name is Sean Harrington. I'm the Chief Financial
22 Officer of the University of Saint Joseph, and I
23 think, for the record, our institution submitted a
24 letter of support for this project from the
25 president. And I think in terms of this evening,

1 Mr. Sager's comments about the impact the development
2 has had on our institution, both the School for Young
3 Children and the university, has been very positive,
4 and we're very much in support of the proposal.

5 Thank you.

6 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you, very much.
7 Do you reside in West Hartford?

8 SEAN HARRINGTON: Unfortunately, I do
9 not. I'm a long-term resident of Rocky Hill. I've
10 been working at the university 40 years.

11 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Were we supposed to
12 sign a -- (inaudible.)

13 MR. ALAIR: He's representing the
14 university.

15 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Okay. Thank you so
16 much.

17 SEAN HARRINGTON: And the university has
18 been there a long time.

19 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Yes, it has. Thank
20 you.

21 Okay. Is there anybody else that would
22 like to speak? With that, Attorney Pearson, would
23 you like to close?

24 MS. PEARSON: Some very, very quick
25 housekeeping, because indeed some issues came up

1 about what is in the record, and I just want to make
2 sure that we are all on the same page with regard to
3 that. I do have a listing. You do have a
4 January 31, 2018 Statement of Sewer Adequacy that
5 came in from the West Hartford-Bloomfield Health
6 District, so I know that's here; I've seen it and it
7 should be in your files.

8 You do have Police and Fire emails, both
9 of which groups or departments said they had no
10 issues with the plans; they were dated January 2 and
11 February 2 respectively.

12 Planning department comments, you do have
13 a letter from the Planner indicating -- and that was
14 February 2, indicating as long as the Engineering
15 comments are fine that everything should be okay or
16 they had no additional comments.

17 Engineering, you have a February 2, 2018
18 memo from them saying all engineering comments have
19 been satisfactorily addressed.

20 The Conservation and Environment
21 Commission met on January 2 and said they had no
22 concerns with the application. You should have a
23 transmittal with regard to that; if not, there are
24 minutes on the website that say that.

25 The Design Review Advisory Committee

1 unanimously recommended, in their January 29, 2018
2 letter to you, that the application is consistent
3 with DRAC's performance criteria, and a quote from
4 that letter states, "The DRAC notes that the existing
5 buildings were built in a manner consistent with the
6 design plans and expects the seventh building to be
7 of equal quality. In addition, the applicant's
8 continued willingness to work with the University of
9 Saint Joseph and its other neighbors is commendable."

10 The Town's Plan and Zoning Commission
11 letter should be in your file. They made a unanimous
12 recommendation of approval, and it's to a
13 February 5th meeting. The letter is dated
14 February 7th, and in it they made a specific finding
15 that the request is consistent with the Plan of
16 Conservation and Development, which should go on the
17 record.

18 And, finally, you have a February 13
19 letter from the Inland Wetlands Agency; of course,
20 you can't vote until you have that in your
21 possession. It does say that the application was
22 approved. And I think it's important to note for you
23 that there is a condition that they required of the
24 applicant to be imposed on that application and that
25 is that a conservation easement would be applied to

1 the property over that area where the detention basin
2 is. So if you look at the plan, it's the only open
3 area left adjacent to Building 7. That will be
4 encumbered by a conservation easement which says,
5 basically, there's no future development that can
6 take place there, other than what's required with
7 regard to the management and maintenance of the
8 detention basin.

9 So with regard to the findings, I -- this
10 goes to why the application is appropriate for your
11 approval. It's basically a summary of the points
12 that we've made with this proposal regarding the
13 standards of review that you have, and I'm reading,
14 actually, from our letter of application; it says,
15 "The proposed changes as set forth in the application
16 are in harmony with the overall objectives of the
17 Comprehensive Plan," the first required item you have
18 to look at, "as they will support the continued use
19 of the property for the type of higher density,
20 multifamily uses specifically authorized within an
21 RM-MS district." You've got to remember that that is
22 the highest density district that can be allowed for
23 development in West Hartford. So, "The RM-MS
24 district without overburdening the site, and will
25 remain compatible with the other multifamily uses

1 within the Mercy Community. In keeping with the
2 goals of the Comprehensive Plan, the proposed new
3 building, site improvements and landscaping
4 constitute an ongoing reinvestment in the property,"
5 again, a requirement of the items that you are
6 supposed to consider in determining whether there's
7 been compliance with the Comprehensive Plan, "allow
8 for the orderly expansion of a successful residential
9 community, add approximately \$150,000 in tax revenue
10 to the Town's Grand List, provides additional housing
11 opportunities for persons who will ultimately support
12 area businesses, and places no additional burdens on
13 municipality. This proposal clearly results in the
14 continued orderly and beneficial development of the
15 property and benefits area properties." That's the
16 requirement inherent in that finding that you have to
17 make regarding compliance with the Comprehensive
18 Plan.

19 The other component of a Special
20 Development District is that the design of the
21 development is better than that which might be
22 required or could be required of an applicant without
23 being subject to a Special Development District, and
24 you heard the DRAC findings. What they basically
25 said in their recommendation to you is that there was

1 excellence in design with the application that was
2 already approved and this continues that with regard
3 to this particular proposal.

4 It's important also to note that the
5 requested change in the regular side yard standard
6 for Building 7 will not have a noticeable visual
7 design impact, given its proximity to the driveway
8 and open area of the adjacent McAuley facility and
9 the acquiescence of the McAuley, which is in the
10 record also.

11 "Proposed Building No. 7 will be in
12 harmony with current development within SDD 139. It
13 has been placed well behind the existing residential
14 structures, far from Steele Road and in the northwest
15 corner of the property furthest from the
16 single-family neighborhood to the south. The
17 applicant believes there will be no deleterious
18 change in the character of the area as a result of
19 the addition of Building No. 7 in this quiet, fully
20 occupied, residential complex. There is no reason to
21 believe that it will be detrimental to the status quo
22 or to the committed development of adjacent
23 residential properties either because of traffic
24 generated or the physical changes to the
25 northwesterly corner of the property."

1 Again, I know any additional traffic
2 might be unacceptable to people who have opposed this
3 application from the very beginning, but I think it's
4 important to remember what Mark Vertucci said, and
5 that is, with this increase, even if you use the
6 higher standards, as opposed to what actually has
7 been generated from the site, you're only going to
8 see or experience in the peak traffic time an
9 additional car every eight to twelve minutes, and
10 that's at the driveway. It would be a challenge to
11 be able to feel that at a location at the other end
12 of Steele Road. I understand the vehemence with
13 which people might have objected to the original
14 application and concerns for additional traffic now,
15 but rationally, this is not something that is going
16 to be able to be felt on the street as a result of
17 this proposed 30-unit building.

18 And, finally, "The total density of the
19 development in terms of floor area and land coverage
20 will not be greater than that permitted in the
21 underlying RM-MS district in which the property is
22 located."

23 For all those reasons, we feel we've met
24 the findings that you have to keep in mind and
25 consider when you decide the application. I hope

1 we've been able to convince you that this is a worthy
2 addition to this development. We feel so positive,
3 really, for both the neighborhood, in terms of the
4 off-site improvements that have been made, and
5 overall for the Town as a result of creating a sense
6 of place and a desirable residential community in
7 West Hartford for all the reasons Mr. Sager went
8 through when he talked to you about how it really
9 does a service to the community to be able to provide
10 a development like this. We hope you can approve the
11 application. Thank you. Obviously, we will answer
12 any questions.

13 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you, Attorney
14 Pearson. Any questions? I am just going to read in
15 what I am told to read into the record, as well;
16 Attorney Pearson reported it all. A letter dated
17 February 7, 2018, from TPZ, recommending approval; a
18 letter dated February 13, from Inland Wetlands,
19 recommending approval; and a letter dated January 29,
20 2018, from DRAC, also recommending approval.

21 With that, I'm going to close the public
22 hearing.

23
24 (Public hearing closed at 8:05 p.m.)
25

1 STATE OF CONNECTICUT)
 2 COUNTY OF HARTFORD) SS. AVON

3

4 I, Ann W. Friedman, License No. 91, a notary
 5 public for the State of Connecticut, do hereby certify
 6 that this public hearing was taken before me at the
 7 Legislative Chamber, Town Hall, 50 South Main Street,
 8 West Hartford, Connecticut, commencing at 6:31 p.m., on
 9 Tuesday, February 13, 2018.

10 I further certify that these proceedings were
 11 stenographically reported by me and subsequently
 12 transcribed as hereinbefore appears; that this is a true
 13 record of the proceedings to the best of my ability.

14 I further certify that I am not related to
 15 the parties hereto or their counsel, and that I am not
 16 in any way interested in the event of said cause.

17 Dated this 27th day of February, 2018.

18

19

20 

21 _____
 22 Ann W. Friedman, Notary Public
 My commission expires: 8-31-21.

23

24

25