



## **DRAFT MINUTES**

Special Meeting  
Canton Planning & Zoning Commission and Economic Development Agency  
Wednesday, August 17, 2016 at 6:30 pm  
Main Entrance of Ojakian Commons  
100 Casterbridge Crossing  
Simsbury, CT 06070

**CALL TO ORDER:** The Special Meeting of August 17, 2016 was called to order at 6:33 p.m.

### **PRESENT:**

PZC Members: Jonathan Thiesse, Phil Pane, John Huyghebaert, Lansford Perry and David Evens

EDA Members: Robert Bessel, Anne Hunter, Bill Volovski and Amy Parchen

Staff: Town Planner Neil Pade, Assistant Planner Emily Anyzeski and Recording Secretary Jennifer Scott

Potential Applicants: Stephen Morris, Executive Director, The Arc of Farmington Valley (FAVARH)  
Ken Regan, Vice President Regan Development Corporation  
Phil Doyle, Principal, LADA

## **SITE-WALK**

### **1. Tour of Ojakian Commons, an Independent Living Apartment Complex for People with Disabilities**

Mr. Thiesse opened the meeting.

Mr. Pade explained the purpose of the informational review proceeding CGS 7-159b which allows for open discussion and feedback between potential applicants and commission members in a non-binding proceeding. Mr. Regan gave a brief introduction to the facility and the concept of special needs housing. Mr. Morris provided a brief explanation on the mission of Favarh and services provided. Mr. Regan provided a tour of the facility presenting common/ community areas, working examples of programmed activities, and examples of community integration within the facility. Examples of specialized design and construction were noted throughout the tour including designs of entryways, elevators, stairs, and hallways. Two residential units were toured where the accessible design features for kitchen counters, cabinets, appliances, living quarters, rolling closets, lift options, and door design were noted. Accessible trash, recycling and community garden areas were noted.

The meeting returned to the community room, and a packet was handed out.

A presentation began by Mr. Doyle explaining the location and setting of the proposed site in the Canton Commerce Center, an industrial zoned piece of property. Mr. Doyle said that the current owner, Casle Corporation, has been unsuccessful in finding light industrial development opportunities at this property. As a result, the undeveloped lots have been laying fallow for 20 or more years. He explained that Regan Development Corporation and Favarh have approached Casle Corporation about purchasing a portion of the land for a residential development to fulfill needs at Favarh and within the community. The purchase would include Lots 8 and 9 totaling approximately 7.5-8 acres. Because of this offer and a presumption that the lots to the west will transition to residential, Mr. Doyle suggested that this may be a "threshold" moment for the EDA and PZC. They may want to consider moving the struggling park forward in a direction maybe not originally intended, but a direction that would help meet the needs of the community.

Mr. Doyle said they would request a zone change and site plan approval and develop a master plan for the park as defined under the Design District section of the current zoning regulations.

There was discussion if this application can be evaluated as a stand alone proposal or if more information would be needed about the intended future for the remaining lots in the industrial park. Mr. Morris explained how the design of the proposed development will meet future trends for how to best support people with intellectual disabilities both at the state and community levels. He went on to describe the many benefits of this type of special needs housing and said he believes it will become a model that people will want to copy around the state and around the country.

Mr. Regan discussed the favorable demand projections for the special needs and non-special needs units. Mr. Morris commented that many of the Favarrh employees fit the profile for the special needs units. Mr. Regan described the population that would qualify for the non-special needs, reduced income units. Mr. Regan said that if this project were approved, they would be requesting that the Board of Selectmen create a piece of legislation that would reassess the property taxes at this site at a reduced rate in order to support below market rental rents. Mr. Pade commented that while we may have economic interests related to this project, it would also help meet the town's goals to provide adequate affordable housing options. The group discussed future expansion possibilities for the park and how Favarrh could continue to be an important partner moving forward.

Mr. Doyle summarized what the next steps would be including designing a rough master plan for the park, having additional informal conversations with the PZC and the EDA ensuring community support for this project, having a conversation with the BOS about possible taxation legislation, and finally putting together a formal application. He added that part of the process would be to get the necessary approvals in place in order to secure bond financing for the project by June of next year.

**AJOURNMENT:**

**MOTION:** Mr. Huyghebaert moved to adjourn the Special Meeting of the Canton Planning & Zoning Commission and Economic Development Agency at 7:55 p.m. Mr. Thiesse seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.