



Office of the Executive Vice President for
Administration and Chief Financial Officer
Scott A. Jordan
Executive Vice President
for Administration
and Chief Financial Officer

Via E-Mail Only

March 1, 2019

Jo Ann Goodwin, Chair
Mansfield Planning & Zoning Commission
Town of Mansfield
Aubrey P. Beck Municipal Building
4 South Eagleville Road
Mansfield, CT 06268

RE: **P1357** – Petition of the J. E. Shepard Company to Amend Articles 4, 7, 8, and 10 of the
Mansfield Zoning Regulations

Dear Chair Goodwin and Commission Members:

I again write on behalf of the University of Connecticut (“UConn”) in continued opposition to the above-referenced proposed text amendment, as the same has been amended to reflect the Planning & Zoning Commission’s February 4, 2019 approval of its petition to amend the Mansfield Zoning Regulations (P907-46).

The Commission’s approval of the zoning text amendments in P907-46 should remain undisturbed by the proposal contained in P1357 because the Commission’s approval of P907-46 was well-considered and accurately reflects the Commission’s priorities.

UConn has been characterized during the proceedings as “anti-development.” UConn’s activities related to infrastructure demonstrate just the opposite. UConn understands and values its relationship with the Town of Mansfield (“Town”), especially when it comes to the commercial development of Four Corners. UConn invested \$3 Million in the extension of sewer and water systems to Four Corners. At UConn’s initiative, the water supply system to UConn and the Town was increased to accommodate future growth. UConn granted the Town a substantial amount of sewer capacity at its water treatment facility. These infrastructure improvements and commitments were made to assist the Town in implementing the visions for growth and development outlined in the Town’s Plan of Conservation and Development.

However, since these commitments and improvements occurred, the Commission has modified the Town’s zoning regulations to allow multifamily residential uses in the previously commercially-zoned Four Corners area. The further amendments proposed by P1357 would promote increased development of high-density student housing in close proximity to UConn. UConn has previously explained that high-density student housing will reduce the number of students housed on campus, thereby reducing UConn’s revenue and increasing its financial burden, especially as it may affect the level of services UConn can provide to the Town. At the same time, the fundamental issue of students living in residential neighborhoods in the Town would remain unchanged.

P1357 proposes that the Commission amend the already-favorable zoning regulations it passed only four weeks ago to make them even friendlier to the Petitioner. The reasons for the changes proposed in P1357

are primarily to make residential developments in the PB-3 zone more economically viable and more flexible. The Commission's present regulations were described as imposing a penalty on PB-3 landowners and residential developers, because it might not allow them to achieve the maximum possible density, but the addition of residential development to the PB-3 zone is already a major benefit to landowners and residential developers. Maximizing benefits to specific landowners is not the only purpose for zoning regulations.

The Petitioner intends to develop housing at Four Corners with its primary focus on students, as an examination of its February 14, 2019 letter reveals. The focus on number of bedrooms, with no limit on occupants per bedroom, demonstrates this intent. To allow the density increases proposed in P1357 – both as allowed and through bonuses – is inconsistent with the Commission's rejection of Group Dwellings as a use in the PB-3 zone. The Commission's deliberations prior to its adoption of its zoning amendments in P907-46 indicated that its vision for Four Corners included low-rise, lower-density, family-oriented housing units. P1357 proposes to undue the Commission's careful work.

As it did in the case of the density regulations, the Commission rationally limited the height of residential development to include only three floors when it approved P907-46. P1357 proposes an increase to four floors in "the portions of any buildings in the PB-3 zone district that are located at least 200 feet from all public streets." This very specific proposal appears to strategically allow the Petitioner a competitive advantage over most of the other properties in the PB-3 zone given the overall size and depth of an assembled land area shown on the survey accompanying the Petitioner's previously-approved Zoning Map Amendment application, i.e., P1356. Here, the Petitioner's proposal would presumably allow the highest density and tallest buildings on the land that was the subject of P1356, which before rezoning to PB-3 had been zoned RAR-90, a low-density zone.

For the reasons stated above, UConn maintains that the Commission should deny P1357 and allow its approval of P907-46 to stand as passed.

UConn appreciates the Commission's continued consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Scott A. Jordan
Executive Vice President for Administration and Chief Financial Officer

Encl.

CC: Susan Herbst, President, UConn
Derrick Kennedy, Town Manager, Town of Mansfield (via E-Mail)

From: [Linda M. Painter](mailto:Linda.M.Painter)
To: [Jillene B. Woodmansee](mailto:Jillene.B.Woodmansee)
Subject: Fwd: Letter to PZC
Date: Monday, March 04, 2019 8:43:32 AM

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Ben Shaiken <ShaikenB@mansfieldct.org>
Date: March 3, 2019 at 9:02:20 PM EST
To: "Linda M. Painter" <PainterLM@mansfieldct.org>
Cc: "Derrick M. Kennedy" <KennedyDM@mansfieldct.org>
Subject: Letter to PZC

Hi Linda,

It is likely that I will be unable attend tomorrow evening's public hearing, so I was hoping you would submit the following letter to them as part of the public hearing. I don't see an email address on the website to send it to them directly.

Thanks,

Ben

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March 4, 2019

Good Evening Chairwoman Goodwin & distinguished members of the Planning & Zoning Commission,

I am Ben Shaiken of 23 Olsen Drive, Mansfield Center and I am writing in support of the proposed amendments to residential density in the PB-3 zone, and other associated changes. I am a member of the Town Council and an ex-officio member of the Economic Development Commission. I am writing tonight as an individual and not on behalf of either of those bodies. I regret that I am likely unable to be at the meeting tonight due to professional obligations, but if they change I will try to deliver these remarks and expand upon them in person.

Four Corners, which is the PB-3 zone, is a perfect area in town for denser multi-family housing development. It is an area that as a community, we have identified for redevelopment. Redevelopment there and in a few other areas of town, will allow us to preserve our rural character, grow our tax base, and maintain and improve upon our already high-quality services without dramatically increasing taxes for our residents. More multi-family housing development there also will do wonders to increase rental housing supply, which will in turn ease the burden student rentals have placed on our single-family neighborhoods.

I support the density and height changes in this proposal for three distinct reasons:

1. Declining State assistance means we need to grow our grand list to maintain high-quality services. More than half of the Town's grand list is tax-exempt, the vast majority of which owned by the University of Connecticut. Roughly 40%, about \$20 million, of the Town's budget is derived from State assistance including PILOT, a percentage that is almost certain to decrease in the short- and long-term. We need economic development to close that gap if we wish to continue to have world-class schools and other services without dramatic increases in taxes.

2. We have identified Four Corners as the perfect place to redevelop and has made a substantial investment in it. We live in a wonderful rural community, and we have taken great pains over the decades to prevent sprawl and preserve open space. That means we have identified certain parts of town where development can happen with a minimal impact on the Town's rural character. Four Corners is already a developed area, and so in addition to spending millions to bring public sewers, a project which broke ground late last year, and supporting public water coming there, the Town applied for that census tract to be designed a federal Opportunity Zone, which brings significant federal tax benefits to investments in it. We have hired the Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC) to market it to potential developers. If after all this investment and planning, housing density is unnecessarily limited to a point that cannot support the development of other businesses, it may substantially lower our return on these investments.

3. There is no way to meaningfully increase affordable housing without density. Ask any expert in affordable housing development and they will tell you: Density equals affordability. The PZC has adopted new, strong affordable housing regulations which I enthusiastically support. Mansfield already offers incredible value for money compared with our peer towns with similar-quality schools and services. On a list of comparably high quality school districts, our median home price and tax burden are the most affordable by far. But our housing prices, especially our rental housing prices, are still out of reach for low- or moderate-income working families. You took a huge step forward adopting the new affordable housing requirements for multi-family development. But it won't make an impact for more than a few people if you do not also increase the density of multi-family housing in the parts of town that are right for that kind of housing.

I respect the separation of the Council and the PZC, so please understand that I do not take weighing in on this application lightly. I have a deep appreciation for the amount of work you all have done on our new regulations, work which is not yet completed. Thank you for your time and attention to these important issues.

Best,

Ben Shaiken
Town Councilor
Town of Mansfield
(860) 429-3399 ext. 3402

From: [Don Fontaine](#)
To: [PlanZoneDept](#)
Subject: Four Corners Development
Date: Monday, March 04, 2019 10:16:19 AM

I support the The J.E. Shepard Co. proposed amended position regarding development in the Four Corners area. They are proposing 1, 2, and 3 bedroom apartments. This development will help our tax base, as Mansfield residents are responsible for the water and sewers at the Four Corners, as well as a planned new school.

I am also disappointing that the Planing and Zoning has lowered the density of development which will effectively lead towards increased taxes.

Regards,

Don Fontaine
34 Beech Mountain Cir, Mansfield Center, CT 06250
869-428-3647

From: [Jo-Ann Wunschel](#)
To: [PlanZoneDept](#)
Cc: [Jo-Ann Wunschel](#)
Subject: Objection to Four Corners Zoning Change
Date: Monday, March 04, 2019 11:56:14 AM

March 3, 2019

Dear Chairperson Goodwin and Members of the Mansfield Zoning Commission,

As a Mansfield resident living in the vicinity of the Four Corners area of town, I am writing to express my hope that you will *not* amend the town's zoning regulations to support the development of new student housing. My strongest conviction rests in the fact that the University of Connecticut, responsible for the housing of their students, has vacant student housing on the campus and does not endorse the building of new student housing. With the addition of student housing, residents and apartment managers become responsible for monitoring our student neighbors.

Additionally, I do not believe that student housing will enhance the Four Corners, the gateway to UConn and our town.

On a personal note, I wish to offer the following:

<!--[if !supportLists]-->1. <!--[endif]--> When towns are seeking to elevate the image of their communities, I do not believe they entertain student housing as a desirable option.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->2. <!--[endif]-->When I attended the last hearing, those who spoke in favor of the new development reported their home addresses and it appeared that none of them live near Four Corners. While they wish to enjoy the tax benefits of this new construction, they will not have to contend with the consequences of student housing.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->3. <!--[endif]-->I believe the town needs to work cooperatively with the University. While I am an employee of UConn, I am first, and foremost a resident of Mansfield. It appears that some of Mansfield's citizens prefer that we make decisions to spite the University administration, rather than listening and having constructive dialogue about decisions that impact both entities.

I hope that you will vote against amending the regulations that will encourage more temporary housing at Four Corners.

Sincerely,

Jo-Ann Waide-Wunschel

726 Middle Turnpike

Storrs, CT 06268