

**PLAN COMMISSION**  
**City of Hartford**  
**January 14, 2019**

PRESENT: Chairperson Timothy C. Michalak, Vice-Chairperson Dennis Regan, Members Tom Stapleton, Tony Anderek, Ralph Kuepper; Scott Henke, Alderperson Liaison Barry Wintringer

ABSENT AND EXCUSED: None

ALSO PRESENT: City Planner Justin Drew

**Call to Order** - Chairperson Michalak called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. in the Common Council Chambers of Hartford City Hall, 109 N. Main Street.

**Minutes** - Motion by Regan second by Wintringer to approve minutes of December 10. Motion carried.

**Appearances** - Chairperson Michalak invited appearances. There were no appearances.

**Public Hearing: Conditional Use Permit - 209 W. Lincoln Avenue Crafting Retreat House**

**Executive Summary Review**

The applicant, Jean Harley, has submitted a request for a Conditional Use Permit to allow this property to be used as a Crafting Retreat House. In the fall of 2018, Ms. Harley approached the City to discuss her plans for purchasing 209 W. Lincoln Avenue and turning it into a Crafting Retreat House, a place that groups of up to 12 could rent for the weekend or overnight in order to work on craft projects in a group setting. In addition, the retreat house would host classes and open sewing nights during the week. The applicant submitted examples of similar crafting retreat houses in several other locations, most located in predominantly residential neighborhoods. The applicant has requested conditional approval for three other uses: 'conference room' availability for company meetings during the week; church related retreats; and space rental for baby/bridal showers, all of which are intended to be only occasional uses. The proposed project and location have gone through the required steps of a Smart Growth Plan Amendment and a Rezoning, and the final step is approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow the proposed uses being considered.

Section 13.0400 indicates that Conditional Use Permits can be issued, "Provided that such conditional uses and related structures are in accordance with the purpose and intent of this ordinance and are found to be not hazardous, harmful, offensive, or otherwise adverse to the environment or value of the neighborhood or the community." The proposed use is allowed as a conditional use in the B-3 General Business District. Staff believes that the proposed use would be appropriate in a residential area given the number of similar venues that operate around the State without problem, the small scale of the use, and the fact that the building will not be used for overnights all of the time. In addition, the applicant lives in a home very close by and is

obviously sensitive to ensuring that the peaceful nature of the neighborhood remain. As a result, Staff does not believe that the proposed use for a crafting retreat house would alter the nature of the residential neighborhood, or cause significant problems. However, given the residential nature of the surrounding neighborhood, Staff believes that the Plan Commission and Common Council should specifically include in any approval that the City is not approving a broader range of commercial uses. After review of the application and previous approvals, Staff does not believe that the proposed use would be harmful, hazardous, offensive, or otherwise adverse to the community and is in accord with the purpose and intent of the B-3 General Business District. However, in order to ensure that the proposed use does not expand to be a more intensive commercial use, Staff recommends approval with the condition that overnight use be limited to no more than four nights per week on average, and that uses be limited only to what is described in the business plan. The Planning Staff recommended approval of the Conditional Use Permit for 209 W. Lincoln Avenue, for use as a Crafting Retreat House in the B-3 General Business District, with overnights limited to no more than 4 per week on average, and uses be limited only to what is described in the business plan.

Public Hearing, Conditional Use Permit for 209 W. Lincoln Avenue

Chairperson Michalak declared the hearing open. Mr. Drew read the public notice, and reviewed the executive summary. Chairperson Michalak requested appearances in favor. There were no appearances in favor. Chairperson Michalak requested appearances in opposition. There were no appearances in opposition. Chairperson Michalak declared the hearing closed, and requested discussion by the Plan Commission. There was no discussion. Official action: Motion by Henke, second by Kuepper to approve the conditional use permit as presented for 209 W. Lincoln Avenue. Motion carried.

**Extraterritorial Review of the Certified Survey Map for N3460 Resthaven Road, Tax Key Number 038-1017-2341-000, Town of Rubicon**

Executive Summary Review:

Kenneth and Laura Held have submitted a certified survey map for N3460 Resthaven Road, tax key number 038-1017-2341-000, located in the Town of Rubicon. The proposed Certified Survey Map would result in a land split. The existing property is 40.52 acres. The certified survey map splits off an 8.152 acre lot, which includes .191 acre for dedicated public roadway purposes. The creation of a new parcel on this property is within the allowances of the Town of Rubicon Land Division ordinance. The ordinance uses acreage, time restrictions, and length in years of ownership to determine the number of new lots allowed on a property. The existing parcel is zoned A-2 General Agricultural District. The new lot is within the minimums for area and width for the A-2 District. No rezoning request has been received or requested. The City of Hartford and the Town of Rubicon have a Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO) in place that gives the City zoning jurisdiction for the 12 sections east of County Trunk Highway "P" in the Town of Rubicon. According to the CZO:

Land Divisions within the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the City of Hartford are subject to the Town of Rubicon Land Division Code, the City of Hartford Subdivision Ordinance and the Dodge County Land Use Code.

The City of Hartford and the Town of Rubicon also entered into an Intermunicipal Agreement that further manages how growth and land divisions in these twelve sections shall occur:

The City agrees to adopt and enforce Town zoning. Town land division rules, and Town land use plan in effect at the signing of this Agreement for all areas outside the City Growth Area but within the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction as amended by this Agreement.

The proposed land division conforms to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, the Intermunicipal Agreement, and the Town of Rubicon Land Division Code. Planning Staff recommended approval of the Certified Survey Map for N3460 Resthaven Road, Town of Rubicon.

Plan Commission Discussion, Extraterritorial Review of the Certified Survey Map for N3460 Resthaven Road, Town of Rubicon

Mr. Drew reviewed the Executive Summary. Chairperson Michalak requested comments. There were no comments. Motion by Kuepper, second by Wintringer to recommend approval of the extraterritorial certified survey map for N3460 Resthaven Road, Town of Rubicon. Motion carried.

**Concept Plan Review of a Uhaul Neighborhood Store at 1275 Bell Avenue**

Executive Summary Review

Uhaul has submitted a conceptual plan to redevelop the former K-Mart in the Hartford Plaza as a Uhaul Neighborhood Store. The store would have an approximately 4,000 square foot retail showroom (moving and packing supply sales and rentals), 66,000 square feet of climate controlled and access controlled self-storage, 15,500 square feet of warehousing, and truck and trailer rental (which would be placed in the parking lot in front of the former K-Mart building). They also propose 7,800 square feet of new structure near the northeast corner of the property for what they describe as "Sustainable Storage." This would essentially be mini storage warehouse structures. In addition, Uhaul would purchase the entire plaza and seek to lease out all of the remaining retail spaces. They would also replace the roof, repair the parking lot as needed, and make aesthetic changes to the façade. At this point, they are seeking Plan Commission input on the proposed use and general site layout. If approved, they would need to seek to have the Kmart portion of the property rezoned to M-1 Wholesale/Warehouse District, submit a Certified Survey Map to split the rezoned area off from the remaining land, and submit a final site plan with additional details regarding landscaping and building design. The property is surrounded by commercial uses to the north, wetland to the west, multi-family residential to the south, and office to the east. The only new structures on the property would be a 3,000 square foot mini storage warehouse structure setback 60 feet from Bell Avenue, and a 4,800 square foot mini storage warehouse structure setback 65 feet from Novak Street. The adopted Smart Growth Plan identifies this area for commercial development. The proposal would have a commercial component, but would primarily be a warehousing use. This type of use has been allowed in other areas identified for commercial development and is thus allowable by the Smart Growth Plan. There are only 3 large scale commercial areas within the City (The Hartford Plaza, the Wal-Mart site, and the Piggly Wiggly shopping center), and given the existing pattern of development within the City as well as the presence of wetlands and other environmental

corridors it is very difficult to create more. As a result, Staff was hesitant to endorse a use that was not primarily commercial in nature. However, the retail market is rapidly changing, and redevelopment of large scale retail sites is problematic. Given that the remainder of the Hartford Plaza would remain primarily retail and that this space would be more likely to be leased up and put into productive use if the Uhaul redevelopment moved forward, Staff was prepared to endorse the concept of converting the existing K-Mart building into a Uhaul neighborhood store. However, Staff has much larger concerns with the proposal to build new mini storage warehouse structures near Bell and Novak. The garage doors of these units would face the street, would be painted bright orange, and would be quite visible from Highway 60. The presence of these structures would detract from the commercial nature of the area and surrounding businesses, thus fundamentally changing the nature of this important business corridor. In addition, the presence of these structures would make it very difficult to argue to surrounding businesses that they should make improvements to their façade. Staff relayed these concerns to Uhaul and asked them to remove the mini storage warehouse structures from the plan. Uhaul insists that, given that the Hartford Plaza is located on a frontage road rather than directly on Highway 60, the mini storage warehouse structures are necessary in order for the public to understand that they offer storage services. Staff disagrees with this assessment, and believes that signage can deal with this concern. Through numerous rounds of negotiations, Uhaul has shrunk their proposed “Sustainable Storage” from 14,400 square feet to 7,800 square feet, but the visual impact of the storage structures would remain. As a result, Staff cannot support the concept plan as proposed. Staff would support the proposal without the outside storage structures. Staff also would not recommend against a plan that included only a storage structure oriented north-south along Novak Street. Planning Staff recommended denial of the Concept Plan for Uhaul Neighborhood Store at 1275 Bell Avenue.

Plan Commission Discussion, Concept Plan Review of a Uhaul Neighborhood Store at 1275 Bell Avenue

Mr. Drew reviewed the Executive Summary, providing a rendering of an improved storage unit building. Chairperson Michalak requested comments. Member Rusniak asked for clarification on the new rendering. Mr. Drew noted that the new rendering included brickwork on the sides and partially along the front, but not on the back (facing south). Member Regan commented that it should be understood that the Bell Avenue storage unit building faces north and the Novak Street storage unit building faces east, and expressed his agreement with Mr. Drew that these units would be a dramatic change from the current commercial use. Member Regan would consider the storage units placed along Novak, or one next to the building. Alderperson Liaison Wintringer noted that the Council feels that they would not be in favor of storage units close to Bell Avenue. Member Kuepper stated that he was ok with the Novak Street placement but thought the Bell Avenue placement should be closer to the building. Chairperson Michalak complimented the Uhaul staff members he had met with and reviewed their concerns and the Council’s concerns. Member Regan referenced the supporting documentation provided by Uhaul and asked if other locations had a setup similar to what is being requested. Mr. Drew noted that one of the locations in the supporting documentation had a similar arrangement. Member Regan observed that the documentation does not support what is being proposed. Member Kuepper asked about signage reviews. Mr. Drew noted that signage could possibly be placed in the

terrace area but has not been proposed at this point, further noting that signage is usually reviewed by staff as the review involves size etc. not content. Mr. Drew reviewed signage size maximums and other options for signage. Member Anderek asked about landscaping the storage unit area, to help it blend in. Mr. Drew stated that Uhaul's goal is to call attention to the site and the units and is not willing to install shielding landscaping. Member Anderek noted that there are ways to put up units that look nice with landscaping around them. Mr. Drew replied that discussions have not progressed to that level. Chairperson Michalak requested from Mr. Drew what staff is looking for. Mr. Drew explained that the Plan Commission has ultimate approval authority of a concept plan, and Council at this point is not involved. Chairperson Michalak asked generally to the commission members if moving the front units would change any votes. Member Henke asked if changing the color of the storage unit doors would change Staff's view, also noting that the units themselves could be considered signage due to the use of the company's signature orange color. Mr. Drew stated that the units would not officially be considered signage, but even changing the color of the storage units would not be enough to detract from the industrial warehouse look. Member Henke asked about the open storage of trucks. Mr. Drew replied that parked trucks would be considered short term storage because they are in and out constantly, but parking any trucks with the logos facing out for an extended period of time would be considered signage. Chairperson Michalak requested a motion to accept or deny, or attach conditions. Member Henke asked if the storage units would be screening for the trucks parked in the lot. Mr. Drew affirmed. Chairperson Michalak moved to approve the proposed concept plan with the condition that the north-facing (Bell Avenue) storage units be placed to the south of the units facing Novak Street. Alderperson Liaison Wintringer seconded. Motion passed with one 'nay' (Member Henke).

**Adjournment**

Motion by Wintringer, second by Anderek to adjourn meeting. Meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Justin Drew, City Planner

Compiled by Char Smelter, Planning Secretary