Testimony Concerning the Disposition of the University of Connecticut, West Hartford Campus
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Provided by:
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West Hartford is currently seeing significant development interest and activity throughout town and the disposition of the University of Connecticut- West Hartford Campus presents an opportunity to determine the appropriate future use of the property. Over the past year our Town Council has approved a wide variety projects representing a mix of uses, including multi-family residential, retail, office and even a hotel in West Hartford Center. We have also seen many applications for sub-divisions necessary to build new single family homes. Construction of these projects is now beginning and we are gearing up for a very busy year of construction in 2015.

Development projects in West Hartford have common challenges that I wish to share with the University as it initiates its disposition process. They are environmental considerations and traffic, which are not unique to West Hartford, or the development process in general, but need to be highlighted as they are important to the Town, its residents and its infrastructure.

At least 60% of the UConn Campus is in a “regulated area” as defined by the Town’s Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations, and includes many acres of wetlands, watercourses and floodplain (see attached Wetland and FEMA Flood maps). Based on a review of our files, we are unaware if any professionally prepared field delineation for wetlands, watercourses or water bodies was ever conducted for the property. Since the Town’s wetland mapping information is based on 1970’s Natural Resource Conservation Data and has not been updated, we urge the University to analyze the soils, watercourses and water bodies and appropriately map the entire campus. Doing so at an early stage will help identify the site’s development capacity, determine ecological significance and establish a fair market value. It will also determine the need for and extent of wetland permitting, and help guide us in establishing the appropriate future use for the property.

Storm water management is another important consideration. The campus is located in a densely populated, residential neighborhood that currently experiences street flooding following heavy or prolonged rain events. The vast parking lot on the east side of Trout Brook Drive as well as the impervious surfaces on the west side of campus are major contributors of storm water into Trout Brook which has also experienced upstream flooding. In the recent past, flooding has forced the temporary closure of Trout Brook Drive, an arterial street in our transportation system. As such, we recommend conducting a storm water analysis of the
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