

**OFFICE OF THE  
TOWN MANAGER**

August 12, 2014

Testimony Concerning the Disposition of the University of Connecticut, West Hartford Campus

Ronald F. Van Winkle, Town Manager

In 2013 the University of Connecticut, after consultation with the Town of West Hartford, announced that it planned to move its West Hartford Campus to a location in downtown Hartford.

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10a-109w sets out the parameters for the collaboration between the Town and the University of Connecticut as it pertains to the relocation. In particular, the statute requires that the University consult with the Town of West Hartford concerning alternate uses for the West Hartford campus, and obtain the Town of West Hartford's concurrence in the recommendations the university must make to the Office of Policy and Management for alternative uses of the facilities and land of the existing West Hartford campus.

**The Site**

The University of Connecticut's West Hartford campus consists of approximately fifty-eight acres of land, bifurcated by Trout Brook Drive, and containing substantial areas of regulated wetlands and floodplains. Trout Brook as it passes through the campus has during unusually heavy rains exceeded its banks and flooded Trout Brook Drive resulting in the closing of this arterial street. Thus both wetland and flooding issues are a serious concern for the development of the campus site.

The site is surrounded on three sides by single family homes and to the east by the University of St. Joseph. The property is presently zoned for single family residential use or special permit uses allowed in the R-10 zone and is presently used as an institution of higher education. There are five institutional/school buildings on the site containing approximately 184,000 square feet with substantial deferred maintenance costs. Three of the buildings were constructed in the 1960's and early 1970's and likely contain hazardous building materials that would need to be abated prior to significant renovation or demolition.

**The Town's Zoning Authority**

The Town of West Hartford has through its zoning authority the ultimate control of the site's use by any entity other than the State of Connecticut or the federal government. Nothing in this letter is intended to restrict the Town's ability, in any way, to enforce its local land use, floodplain and wetlands regulations. The site is presently zoned for single family residential use with an existing underlying zone of R-10. Any of the uses allowed in the R-10 zone would be permitted with certain restrictions. The single family use is a by-right use requiring subdivision approval from the Town Plan and Zoning Commission. A wetlands permit would also be required for virtually any use of the site due to the significant wetlands and floodplains.



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Other allowed uses in the R-10 zone such as a place of worship, a public or private school, or most of the other possible uses would require a Special Use Permit from the Town Plan and Zoning Commission, as well as a wetlands permit.

Any use not permitted in the R-10 zone would require a zone change and possible Special Development District, both of which are the purview of the Town Council. Any change to the zoning would be required to be found to be in conformance with the Town's adopted Plan of Development.

#### **Potential Use for the Site by the State of Connecticut**

The University of Connecticut does not appear to have a need for this site and is thus seeking its disposition. The Town has not received any indication that the State of Connecticut has an interest in the site although this process is part of that determination. Therefore it seems likely that the site may be sold to another public or private entity. Should the State seek to use the site for its own purposes, the Town of West Hartford reserves its right to review, comment and enforce what regulations may apply to those possible uses.

#### **Potential use for the Site by the Town of West Hartford**

While the Town does not have a need of any additional facilities at this time, a local use of the site by the Town of West Hartford could be an appropriate for this site. It should be noted that the Town does have the right of first refusal should this site be declared surplus by the State of Connecticut. At present the Town of West Hartford leases from the University several acres of land for playing fields including a Miracle Field on the east side of Trout Brook Drive. At a minimum, the Town will seek to preserve the right to continue using the Town playing fields located on the eastern half of the campus.

#### **Potential Private Use of the Site**

The Town of West Hartford is not prepared to make any recommendation concerning the private use of the site except to say that any private use would be regulated by our local ordinances and restricted by zoning, wetland and floodplain regulations.

Nothing in this letter should suggest that any decisions concerning the future use of the property have been made. There has been no public discussion of the future use of the property at this time. The Town of West Hartford looks forward to working closely with the University of Connecticut as it makes this transition.



Ronald F. Van Winkle

Town Manager