

First and foremost, I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the Cheshire residents who came forth and made their opinions known throughout this long and complicated application process. It is important to stand up and be heard, regardless of whether you are for or against this development. That being said, I also want to apologize to all the people who have expressed their frustration at their inability to be heard during the public hearing process. The commission tried hard to put in many hours to allow the public to speak, but due to the enormity of the material presented and the public showing up at the end of the hearings, there was just not near enough time for all to digest the information and make their voices heard. Both the applicant and the intervener had so much material still to present or submitting towards the end of the final public hearing that it never gave the public any time to digest the information and for that I apologize to those who felt thwarted in their efforts to make themselves heard.

I want to begin my stating that when this came to us I had no opinion either way and kept an open mind towards the application. Since then, I have gone back and forth and after reviewing the overwhelming piles of documentation and maps, I have come to the following conclusions:

1. I concur with recent studies compiled by the Council of Governments of the Central CT Valley which ranked state roads in Cheshire as among the busiest, and with the Economic Development Commission responding by requesting a study of the problem. Even without this proposed development, it seems premature to vote on this application in relation to the traffic considerations until further study is conducted. There have been countless documents on the traffic analyses relating to this application and countless letters submitted by town residents who deal with Rte 10 traffic every day. Having lived here for over 35 years and driving through Cheshire every day, a development of this scale or adding more zone text changes along the Rte 10 corridors will only add to and worsen the traffic conditions we currently have here in Cheshire. The potential impacts beyond the 691 entrances and exit along the rest of Route 10 going towards or away from Hamden, the added congestion that will surely occur on the side roads are almost impossible to be adequately measured by these traffic engineer reports. The Beta Group, in fact, stated that they “believe this is an evolving traffic report that will change during the process” and that there will be “changes in trip generation numbers”.

Additionally, as has been noted by the applicant and the various town fire and police agencies, we need to address the development of the *entire* north end of town, not only just this proposal, when considering traffic and impact on town services. This commission has recently approved large developments in the north end which when completed and sold, will have their own impact on traffic on this end of town. That, coupled with the additions of more traffic signals that this application will warrant along Route 10, will only add to the frustration we already deal with as residents of Cheshire.

As far as sale days and Holidays...the issues of high traffic during those times are a fact of life in towns that exist with large retail developments and it does not take a rocket scientist to realize the traffic issues Cheshire would be up against during those high capacity times.

Additionally, while reviewing the various reports from the applicant and the Beta Group, the issue of public transportation came up but was never fully answered (as far as I could tell) except for the bus service from Hartford to the Park and Ride. With no other bus routes available, there was “no comment”. Should or would we be adding bus services coming from Hamden, Waterbury or Meriden? If so, how will this impact traffic? For all these unanswered questions and traffic “estimates”, I feel we cannot get a definitive analysis on the traffic issues and thus have no confidence in voting on anything that will only add to Cheshire’s well known congestion.

2. I am confident in the comments and decisions that came from the Inlands Wetland Commission and the well-regarded land surveyors and engineers who testified throughout this application. The groundwater and environmental issues are something I appreciate the applicant working diligently on so they can best develop this property --keeping in mind all of these important issues, as well as , the other architectural and historical factors tied to this site. My concerns are with the proximity of this development to the aquifer zones and the overall unique and physical characteristics of this parcel in relation to the grand scope of this application. The protection of the aquifer is an important matter of public health and a topic in which we know far more about now than we did in the past. I hope, if in fact this application gets approved, that the Quinnipiac River Watershed Association comments and Cheshire Land Trust concerns are taken seriously and adhered to in consideration of the environmental impact.
3. I do not believe the residential units, as the applicant initially targeted as units that will “satisfy a demonstrated need within the local housing market”, will work within this development of two bedroom units. Anyone reading the paper or watching TV has seen the volatility of the market these days and there is absolutely no way to predict that, for instance, the 21-34 age group will be flocking back to Cheshire to live near the Lifestyle center shops and health club facilities. Plus, will they be able to buy the \$320,000 price tag assumed in the analysis? Will the market still be there? There are many conflicting items in this area of the application and with the real estate market so unpredictable and the target market comments not so clear, the residential component is not a viable option that I am comfortable with. Also, there have been so many changes on size, costs, rents versus lease, etc., (items not within jurisdiction by this Commission), that the whole residential project is unclear. I also have experienced apartment or condo owners who have come before this Commission complaining about the truck traffic and noise when they live next to a commercial development. With this being right in the site, this is a no win situation. Hopefully, there will be a time when I, as a member of this Commission, will entertain a proposal that really will fill the need to prospect to the singles, college grads and empty nesters in more realistic terms.
4. My other big concern is with the current business climate. If the applicant does not get the businesses they would like to be part of this Lifestyle Center, we have no recourse down the line if they end up wanting to go from the hoped-for high end stores to lower end or box stores. By approving this application, we have no jurisdiction to dictate what final economic decisions will

be determining factors on what the end result will be – perhaps nothing like we are seeing in the proposals. We saw what happened in nearby areas that put significant funds into downtown developments and when the leases were too high or other market considerations affected businesses to open, it ended up nothing like what was originally proposed. It has been stated many times during this application that once this goes to the site plan reviews, we can **expect** deviations from the proposed plan being sold to us. This situation was cited in other similar areas as shown by some of the public record testimony submitted in other towns. Once we move forward, it is naïve for anyone to expect that what we have been shown is what we will end up with. My experience on our own Board here has shown zone text changes that are approved have the applicant coming back with modification changes or property issues and I expect this will be no different. Once we get so far, it is very difficult to step back and I, for one and not willing to risk putting our Town, nor the developer, in that situation.

5. With a family business that had been in town for 30 years and a former local business owner myself, I have firsthand knowledge of what it takes to have a business in this town. I also recognize the need for the town to sustain itself through economic development of which I am a strong and vocal proponent of, and in fact served on the Cheshire Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors for years. This commission was aware we were under an obligation to promote interest in the industrial and commercial zones and the result was the change from the Interchange Zone to the Interchange Special Development District. While I did not and would not have voted in approval of this change due to my concerns on some of the doors I was certain this would open up, it is beyond that point as we are now voting on an application that will certainly change the character of our town --for better or worse. I can honestly say that my many years on this Commission, I have never seen nor heard an applicant who is willing to do all that WS Development is proposing and I cannot begin to express my appreciation at the lengths they are willing to go to help out the historical and environmental aspects of this property. That being said, this is only the FIRST application we have seen since the Zone change, a fact many don't consider. Have we, as a Town, gone out to see what other types of applications may be of interest for this area? Should the Town Council, due to the high emotion of developing such a large scale project gone to a referendum to the people in Cheshire instead of making this a Planning & Zoning matter to be decided by our small commission?

The Apple Valley Mall did not get past the initial stages due to economic climate and who knows if this will be the case for WS Development. So do we take a chance on this with the significant impact that this development will have? The reason why North Route 10 was set up for no retail was to ensure that we wouldn't become a Queen Street-type hub and now, we have a proposed development that, although will be nicer than a congested retail street, will still affect many of the businesses who have been long time supporters to the children and community organizations in our town. Local retail businesses will most likely not be targeted for lease occupancies in the Lifestyle center and they, in turn, can lose many of their own revenue. And please let me make clear, I am in no way referencing our neighboring towns who don't want this development being approved for their own economic benefit. Frankly, business is business. But

I am thinking about our local businesspeople who can be majorly affected if this is approved ...they are the business owners and community supporters who help light the town in luminaries or give food to the Cheshire High School Senior Graduation. Has anyone thought of these existing businesses? On the other hand, anyone following this application process can obviously determine the individuals and businesses that will benefit from this -- their names, their spouses and every child they have are listed on one or more of the surveys we were handed.

Finally, my major concern is that we have to vote on this application based on many "estimates". Going back through the mounds of paperwork, I see document after document with their analysis based on assumptions and estimates which is not enough to convince me that everything will go along as expected and the residents will end up paying for the negative results. Will shopping closer to town make the difference to the family living on Route 10 who can't get out of their driveway? Will the exciting hangouts for our teens compensate for the long term businesses who no longer have them as consumers?

Fundamentally, there are just too many uncertain items that by approving the Zone Map change and application for this project that it will not satisfy the standards I try and meet as part of the Town of Cheshire's Plan of Conservation and Development that will improve the quality of this town. I am going to end with an excerpt from a letter which was read into the public record from a man whom I have the utmost and deepest respect for due to his personal integrity, his proven record of public service to the Town of Cheshire and his lifelong residency and support to the People of Cheshire and the community as a whole. Frank Papandrea wrote "If this development passes, it will be the end of Cheshire as we see it today". As documented in the partial transcript submitted from the Board of Selectman meeting from Feb 5th, 2004, regarding the Shoppes at Farmington Valley, it briefly states that the Commission "had the best intentions planned and proposed for this site and the town" and that the "features that made this project appealing no longer exist and it continues to become further and further removed from the plan that was first approved". I cannot and will not take that risk since it gets harder, not easier, to deny modifications once we get to the site application stage and have no further recourse. I agree with Frank Papandrea's sentiment and for all the other reasons I just stated, I am going to vote to deny this application.

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