

TOWN OF BLOOMFIELD, CT
TOWN PLAN & ZONING COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
THURSDAY JULY 17, 2025 – 7:00PM
ZOOM MEETING PLATFORM AND
IN- PERSON MEETING – COUNCIL CHAMBERS
DRAFT

There was a meeting for the Town of Bloomfield’s Town Plan & Zoning Commission held on July 17, 2025 at 7:00pm in a hybrid meeting style. The in-person location was Bloomfield Town Hall – Council Chambers, 800 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield, CT and the virtual location was via Zoom.

1. Call to Order

Chair Lester called the meeting to order at 7:04pm.

2. Roll Call

Present were: *in-person*: Chair Byron Lester, Roger O’Brien, Stephen Millette, Kevin Gough, Jennifer Marshall-Nealy, and Eunice Medwinter. (6)

Absent were: Renae James, Leon Peters; Dwight Bolton and Ola Aina. (4)

A quorum was established with 4 regular members and 2 alternate members present. Chair Lester seated Commissioners Medwinter and O’Brien as voting members.

Also present were Mr. Jonathan Colman, Director of Building and Land Use; Ms. Lynda Laureano, Assistant Director of Building and Land Use; and Ms. Rebecca Jones, Recording Secretary.

3. Approval of Minutes

a. February 27, 2025

b. March 27, 2025

c. June 26, 2025

Motion to table the outstanding minutes made by Commissioner Gough; seconded by Commissioner Marshall-Nealy and approved unanimously.

4. Public Hearings

a. Continued from June 26, 2025:

- i 529 Cottage Grove Road** – Special Permit and Site Plan Application per Zoning Regulations Sections 4.3.C.3.g “Retail stores”, 4.3.C.4.i “Drive-in windows in accordance with 7.11” and 4.3.C.4. r “Restaurants and ice cream bars” to allow construction of a new one-story 15, 349 sq. ft. commercial building on a 4.4414-acre vacant lot in the I-1 zone. Applicant – Estero Holding Company LLC, Property Owner – University of Hartford

Motion to reopen the public hearing made by Commissioner Gough; seconded by Commissioner O’Brien and approved unanimously.

Mr. James Cassidy and Mr. Mark Greene were present for discussion on behalf of the applicant. The parcel is located at 529 Cottage Grove Road. It is bounded by vacant land owned by a variety of tenants. It is approximately 4.4 acres in the I-1 zone. It has 330 feet of frontage on Cottage Grove Road. Presently, the site is wooded aside from the right corner. There are wetlands on the rear portion of the property. That wetlands area is associated with the flood plain for Beaman Brook, which is flowing in a southerly direction off-site. The applicant received Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission (IWWC) approval in March for this project. There is an area beyond the wetlands that is within the 100-year flood

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plain and a flood management application has been filed with the Public Works Department as part of this application.

The proposed development will be a 15,349 sq ft retail establishment with five tenant spaces. There is a proposed bank tenant for the eastern space, and it is set up for a two-lane drive through to accommodate either a teller window or ATM or ITM (interactive teller machine) locations. This space could also be used for a drive-through restaurant. Driveway access and parking requirements were reviewed. Site access was detailed. The site can accommodate tractor trailer deliveries with a loading area along the back of the building. Four of the proposed 87 parking spaces will be handicapped. Mr. Cassidy reviewed zoning regulations related to vehicle queuing and site access. A site map showing proposed vehicle queuing and traffic flow was reviewed. Stormwater management system was detailed. The whole site slopes away from Cottage Grove Road. Site utilities will need a small extension of water main and sanitary sewer.

Mr. Cassidy reviewed site plan changes that have taken place since the last presentation made in May. Zoning Board of Appeals approved a 20-foot variance. There will be two-foot-high berm with a series of 24-inch shrubs. Pedestrian connections have improved as the walkways have been extended through the entrance drive. Handicapped accessibility was shown. Snow storage and capacity were detailed. As part of the stormwater management report, a formula was used to determine snow storage capacity, and it proved the site is capable of adequate snow storage. The Town engineer requested an easement in the 50 ft. right-of-way, which will allow for a turnaround for snowplows and emergency apparatuses. This will be part of the dedication of the extension of the roadway and will remain as an outstanding condition.

Brett Greene, Oxford Architecture, shared 3D renderings of the site. He highlighted changes that have been made to the exterior design. A line of site study was completed and renderings related to the same were reviewed. A sample of the siding was provided for the commissioners' review. Mr. Cassidy confirmed that all staff comments have been addressed thus far.

Mr. Colman shared that the applicant has addressed several staff concerns. Staff recommended that the application be approved as revised and presented this evening. At this time, the public hearing was opened for questions.

Melissa, Prospect Street, asked what the town will receive from this development. She expressed concerns about the traffic flow and truck traffic. *(no last name was provided)*

Anne Gustafson, 21 Prospect Street, asked how the tax structure will be set up with multiple tenants. She also asked if the applicant plans to put solar panels on the roof.

Chair Lester confirmed with the applicant that solar panels are not proposed.

Todd Cooper, 2 Maulucci Ridge, asked if there were any specific tenants that are lined up to occupy the spaces. He asked if the developer is using any green initiatives. He also asked about a timing system to limit light pollution.

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There are prospective tenants, but no leases have been signed so they cannot be announced yet. Mr. Cassidy detailed different green initiatives being used right now, which include LED fixtures and landscaping choices. Parking lot fixtures are dark-sky compliant and there was a photometric plan submitted with the application that demonstrates no light spillage. Most commercial plazas have light fixtures that turn on one hour before opening and turn off one hour after closing. Safety lighting would remain on consistently.

Mary Pelletier, 80 Elizabeth Street, Hartford, works on the Park River Regional Watershed but is here as a citizen. She asked if there is a shortage of commercial properties that would necessitate a new build such as this. She asked if a space will be established for people to sit and enjoy the nature of Beaman's Brook.

The sidewalk installation will allow for future connections to the Bloomfield Greenway. Mr. Cassidy shared further information about the preservation of natural resources throughout the site. He also noted that Beaman's Brook is not on the property.

Robert Dickinson, 400 Seabury Drive, asked about incorporating the multi-use path.

Commissioner Millette confirmed that a bollard will be placed in front of the parking spaces that face the stores. There will be a bumper overhang but there will also be significant space for pedestrians. Commissioner O'Brien asked clarifying questions regarding the turning maneuver plan. Mr. Cassidy detailed the anticipated travel plan for delivery trucks accessing the site. There will be minimal deliveries, which will likely take place two times per week. Commissioner O'Brien confirmed that the owner approved of the stone, and he asked about the other referenced color choices listed in the plans. Mr. Cassidy confirmed that there is one proposed retail tenant and there is a possibility of a restaurant and a bank. If the entire site was to become a restaurant, the applicant would need to come before the Commission for a modification to the special permit. Commissioner O'Brien asked further questions related to tree removal and light pollution.

Commissioner Gough requested to review sheet C19 for a more complete picture of the trees. He confirmed with Mr. Cassidy that approximately 60% of the site will be clear cut. There was discussion surrounding the ordinance related to tree replacement. Commissioner Gough asked for clarification as to what the special permit specifically applies to. Ms. Laureano stated that it applies to the development and the uses that are mentioned. He asked if a traffic study has been provided, which there was none provided. He opined that you cannot prepare traffic generation counts without confirmed tenants. Mr. Cassidy noted that CT DOT will have the final approval related to the traffic management plan. Commissioner Gough asked Mr. Cassidy to walk him through the route a delivery truck would take, traveling east to west. Mr. Cassidy confirmed that the site is set up to allow appropriate access for a tractor trailer traveling either east or west. Commissioner Gough asked if the applicant would be amenable to an 8-ft sidewalk. There was discussion related to multi-use path regulations. Commissioner Marshall-Nealy asked about proposed signage. She also asked about the possibility of outdoor dining. Delivery trucks will not be visible from the potential outdoor seating.

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Robert Dickinson, 400 Seabury Drive, stated that it is not safe to ride a bicycle on Cottage Grove Road. He understands that concrete sidewalks are standard but recommends 8-foot bituminous blacktop.

Mr. Cassidy confirmed that a letter of support sent in by resident Mark Cassler has been received and has been included in the commissioners' packets.

Commissioner Marshall-Nealy feels like Bloomfield is turning into something like the Berlin Turnpike. She does not want Bloomfield to lose its small-town charm. Commissioner Gough thanked Mr. Cassidy and the applicant for presenting a thorough application and being receptive to the changes requested. He expressed concern about the long-term viability of another automobile-dependent development. Commissioner Medwinter noted that approving the development without reviewing the traffic study is like putting the cart before the horse. Commissioner O'Brien spoke about the I-1 zoning regulations. Commissioner Millette noted that while there is no Design Review Board for the Cottage Grove Road area, he would love to see a tasteful design. The addition of the stone upgrading of the landscaping is helpful. He noted that there are a few paths and picnic tables that abut the area and the applicant should consider something similar. Chair Lester thanked the applicant for a well thought out plan. He looks forward to seeing the finished product.

Motion to close the public hearing made by Commissioner Marshall-Nealy; seconded by Commissioner O'Brien and approved unanimously.

Motion to approve 529 Cottage Grove Road – Special Permit and Site Plan Application with conditions made by Commissioner O'Brien; seconded by Commissioner Millette and approved unanimously.

Mr. Cassidy requested clarification from Ms. Laureano regarding the missing language in a specific condition.

- b.**
 - i.** Town of Bloomfield – Plan of Conservation and Development 2025-2035, Town Plan and Zoning Commission

Chair Lester requested that all commissioners' comments be saved until the next meeting. He would like this public hearing to be for the residents. Mr. Colman thanked the public for their consideration and comments. He summarized written comments into categories, which included natural resources, agriculture, housing, mobility, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, plan structure, format and priorities.

Claudia Gwardyak, 75 Duncaster Road, asked if this is an advisory document. She asked how all the sections would be implemented if funding is not always readily available.

Chair Lester explained that this is not a regulatory document. The name is dictated by state statute.

Bob Dickinson, 400 Seabury Drive, shared questions concerning the future land use map. He asked if areas have been designated for solar development?

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Jane Nadel-Klein, 82 Tariffville Road, asked if noise pollution and light pollution⁶ have been explicitly addressed within the plan.

Michelle Krackowski, 37 Cliffmount Drive, asked if the North Branch Park Watershed Management Plan will be consulted and incorporated into the next stages of development of this plan. She opined that there are gaps in information regarding the watershed within the POCD, and this should be an area of future study.

Mr. Colman noted that a municipality of this size likely would not take on such a study due to funding.

Ed Blackman, 99 School Street, does not know what it is meant by an ‘agricultural cluster’. He asked why areas on the map aren’t separated into sections by agriculture, residential and commercial areas.

Mr. Colman explained that the plan guides more specifically the zoning regulations. He noted that there has been a strong interest with the commission to retain agriculture. Mr. Blackman asked if there are other ways for citizens to participate in the process. Mr. Colman welcomed him to a meeting.

Mary Pelletier, 80 Elizabeth Street, Hartford, works on the Park River Regional Watershed but is here as a citizen. She highlighted the issues surrounding commercial development and conserving riparian corridors. Commercial hubs should be created in order to preserve agriculture. The Town of Bloomfield also needs to focus on the potential for future flooding.

Lois Hager, 8 Duncaster Road, asked why the regulations are changing to increase density if the population of Bloomfield continues to trend downward.

Paula Jones, 5 Bear Ridge Drive, thanked Mr. Colman for his comments. She wanted to emphasize how blessed the residents of Bloomfield are with such amazing natural resources. The Farmington River has a Wild and Scenic River designation and the Metacomet Trail is part of the New England National Scenic Trail. Ms. Jones opined that these things need to be stressed within the document. The Park River should be referenced more as 74% of Bloomfield lies within the watershed. She recommended adding a reference to the watershed plan in Section 5. She recommended focusing on preserving undeveloped land. She recognized many of the recommended actions from the last POCD have been achieved. She is pleased to see information related to inclusionary zoning and the housing trust. She recommended a debriefing after this public hearing and noted that a steering committee was created during the last POCD process.

Peter Russell, 60 Loeffler Road, noted that the draft plan recognizes how Bloomfield’s historic farming character has been set back due to several factors. Mr. Colman captured many of the public’s comments but there is no quantification of goals to preserve farmland, budgeting for acquiring farmland or for the promotion of farming businesses. There is no call for a process for a policy that would engage farmers and community members alike. He noted that the future land use map shows no strategy for implementation. He shared suggestions related to farming preservation and the Town center.

Robert Dickinson, 400 Seabury Drive, would like to see more goals within the plan, specifically for a net-zero community. This type of hearing should be combined with questions and comments.

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Anne Gustafson, 21 Prospect Street, would like to see developers incorporate as many energy efficiency measures as possible. She is hesitant about the potential data center and would like to see fuel cells used like Pepperidge Farms. She expressed concern related to the development of the Town center.

Laurie Julian, 43 Maple Avenue, is very saddened in the decrease of farmland between 1985 and 2015. She strongly suggested following the agricultural cluster plan. There is a small-town character in Bloomfield, and this will be lost due to urban sprawl and housing developments. She stressed improving existing plazas and redevelopment should be steered towards already existing commercial spaces. She would also like to see bike lane improvements.

Lois Hager, 8 Duncaster Road, stated that the residents need to define how much population growth Bloomfield wants in order to understand the other recommendations within the plan. The plan also needs to provide further clarification surrounding the definitions of low, medium and high-density residential housing. She believes that review and refinement of the regulations needs to be a high priority.

Luke Miles, 540 Simsbury Road, stated that he would like to see more plans regarding decarbonization, electrifying Town-owned buildings and requiring new housing of any type to include solar and/or wind on-site. He is also happy to see the library nearing completion.

Peter Russell, 60 Loeffler Road, suggested that landowners that have agricultural land can make it available for farmers to use. This is occurring already on LaSalette Park in the upper fields.

Mary Pelletier, 80 Elizabeth Street, Hartford, would like to see the preservation of riparian zones focused on in the POCD.

Mr. Colman shared his final comments. Town staff and consultants will collaborate on editing the document, which will likely begin during the first week of August. Chair Lester also thanked the public for their input.

Motion to close the public hearing made by Commissioner O'Brien; seconded by Commissioner Marshall-Nealy and approved unanimously.

5. New Business

- a. Application was withdrawn on July 10, 2025: 620 Cottage Grove Road (Route 218 - Zone Map Amendment** in accordance with Section 9.7 of the Zoning Regulations to allow a zone change from Professional Office District (POD) to Commercial District (C). Applicant - LaSalle Road Companies LLC, Property Owner – Darlene K. Musial
- b. 2nd Extension Requested to keep public hearing open to August 28, 2025: Text Amendment Application** to remove existing Sections 4.7.C.4.c and 4.7.D.4.b and amend existing language in Section 4.7.B(Notes: 1) of the Zoning Regulations. Applicant – LaSalle Road Companies LLC having a legal interest in land in Bloomfield.
- c. New Application submitted (No Action Required): Text Amendment Application** for proposed zoning text change to Section 5.6.E.3, as submitted by First Baptist Church

Commissioner Gough noted the zoning regulation should be Section 5.6.F.3.

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6. Other Business

None.

7. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Gough, seconded by Commissioner Medwinter and approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:51 p.m.

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