

**CITY OF TORRINGTON**  
**PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**  
**MINUTES**  
**September 20, 2023**

Present: Greg Mele, Chair  
Jim Bobinski, Member  
Donna Greco, Member  
Donovan Riley, Member  
Diane Carroll, Alternate  
Tom Telman, Alternate

Also Present: Jeremy Leifert, AICP; City Planner

Not Present: Greg Perosino, Vice Chair  
Starley Arias, Alternate

**1. Call to Order:**

Chair Greg Mele called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Attendance is by Zoom or in-person at City Hall Auditorium, Room 218, 140 Main Street, Torrington, CT.

**2. Attendance/Announcement:**

Chair Greg Mele announced present and serving on the Commission this evening in person are Commissioners Jim Bobinski, Donna Greco and Greg Mele. Commissioners serving via zoom are Donovan Riley, Diane Carroll and Tom Telman. Also present is City Planner Jeremy Leifert, AICP.

**3. Minutes for Approval:**

a. 8/16/23

MOTION by Ms. Carroll to approve the August 16, 2023 minutes, seconded by Mr. Riley, motion carried with Commissioners Donna Greco and Jim Bobinski abstaining from voting.

**4. Public Hearing beginning at 7:00 p.m., September 20, 2023 City Hall Auditorium, Room 218, 140 Main Street, Torrington, CT**

a. Special Exception 23-05  
Applicant: McCall Behavioral Health Network  
Location: 176 Migeon Avenue  
Proposal: Group Care Facility for Seven Residents; Section 3.1;  
Subsection 1.83

At 7:02 p.m. Chair Mele opened the public hearing and stated serving and seated on the Commission this evening will be Commissioners Jim Bobinski, Donna Greco, Donovan Riley, Diane Carroll and Greg Mele. Also present is Jeremy Leifert, City Planner.

Ms. Greco read the legal notice of public hearing which was published in the Republican American.

Martin J. Connor, AICP; Litchfield CT appeared representing the applicant, McCall Behavioral Health Network. Mr. Connor stated he is a certified planner with the American Institute of Certified Planners and has been a planner for over 35 years. A presentation was given by Mr. Connor, the Special Exception is to change an office use into a group care facility for 7 – 12 residents, specifically seven residents at this location. Maria Coutant-Skinner of McCall Behavioral Health Network will give further testimony.

Mr. Connor explained the McCall Foundation has received a substantial grant to improve this property to its previous grand condition. The previous owners have done no improvements or changes to the property since they purchased it from Mr. Connor.

Maria Coutant-Skinner, President and CEO of McCall Behavioral Health Network was present and gave history and further information about McCall. The McCall foundation has been serving the community since 1975 and has served approximately 3,000 people, many of them residents of Torrington. Their programs improve the lives of those people and those who care about them. They are responsible and responsive neighbors.

The Hansen House program at 17 Prospect Place will move to this site, 176 Migeon Avenue. Staff numbers will be increased due to new State increased staffing requirements. Ms. Skinner read a letter in support from Paul McLaughlin, 56 Rosen Avenue, Torrington; VP of McCall and also Northwest Community Bank.

Susan Savanowski, Board member of McCall Behavioral Health Network appeared and voiced her recommendation of McCall's programs.

Joy Pandella, licensed therapist and Chief Clinical Officer of McCalls also appeared with notes from current Hansen House residents. The resident women are residents primarily because of trauma. To have a nurturing beautiful facility makes them feel worthy and healthy. She read letters from Hansen House residents in support of this proposal.

Tracie Ebert spoke stating she was a resident of Hansen House, and she was able to heal due to this program.

Tommie Joe Stevensen appeared and spoke on behalf of McCall, she is a resident, homeowner and taxpayer of Torrington. She is the VP of Clinical Services at Highwater Center in Kent, and a licensed clinical worker. She is a previous heroin user and had the opportunity to receive help from McCall and became part of the community.

Mr. Mele inquired about the number of staff on site. Ms. Skinner responded a minimum of two will be on staff 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Mr. Connor reviewed the parking requirements, and the current parking on site exceeds those requirements, and there is also a six bay garage. The house exterior will be painted and will retain the appearance of a single family house. They agree to Jeremy Leifert's recommended conditions of approval.

Mr. Leifert read his memo dated September 20, 2023 to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Mr. Mele opened the public hearing for public comments in favor of the proposal.

Travis Lapinski, 237 Migeon Avenue appeared in favor. A few years ago he purchased 237 Migeon Avenue as an investment property to use as a residence and air b and b. Friends advised him against buying in the area, and he did research on McCall and he is proud to say he is a resident of Migeon Avenue. McCall takes exquisite care of their properties, and residents are the quietest around and if there are problems, McCall takes care of the matter. He is a real estate agent and this proposed house was too big for most potential buyers. McCall will restore the previous grandeur of this house.

Mr. Mele opened the public hearing for public comments in opposition to the proposal.

Gil Bresson, 166 Migeon Avenue appeared. His property is divided at this site. The public hearing sign was barely visible, unlike the for sale sign. This neighborhood is inappropriate for recovery, with the traffic in the area. There is a bus stop right in front, the area is being monopolized, and there is actually a very low recovery rate, 2% of addicts. Few churches are open at all hours to help, there is high traffic, and there are drug busts in the area near a male recovery house, and a package store nearby.

Judy Rebillard Zeller of 50 Gleeson Street appeared. She is a maternal mental health advocate, community health worker, and was a co-chair of a preventive council at McCall. She is for the recovery community. Two years ago, the Mayor signed a proclamation for Torrington to be a trauma informed community, and McCall has not followed those steps, which is to bring awareness to what they are doing. The Zoning Regulation change proposed in July was unknown to her. The certified letter she received about this hearing states the people they are serving are a protected class. Looking at the office files, this is a business looking to increase their business. There were no surveys or other information for the neighbors.

These clients are sometimes restricted from seeing their own children, yet they will have access to neighborhood children and there are two schools in the area. There were no analysis or scan or even informal survey of the neighborhood. This proposal may not be protective of the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Torrington. Ms. Zeller noted past history of McCall's Torrington's unsupported and insufficiently staffed houses. She would like more information.

Mr. Connor noted the driveway entrance to the subject property is off Gleeson Street, so no blockage should occur to the neighbor on Migeon Avenue.

Ms. Skinner responded to neighbor's concerns, and complaints and concerns are always handled. She always welcomes those conversations, they seek to be good neighbors. Ms. Skinner stated she is troubled by the thought that the women in the house would be a danger or risk to children in the neighborhood. She will always meet or take calls from neighbors to express their concerns. Renovations will be done which will take time before the house opens, and they are happy to speak with neighbors.

Mr. Mele inquired if there is a curfew imposed. Ms. Skinner responded it is not necessary, as the residents are always in the program, as they can leave with staff for yoga lessons, etc. These women area always supervised by staff.

At 7:52 p.m. Mr. Mele declared the public hearing closed.

MOTION by Ms. Greco to APPROVE Special Exception 23-05

Applicant: McCall Behavioral Health Network

Location: 176 Migeon Avenue

Proposal: Group Care Facility for 7 – 12 Residents,  
Section 3.1; Subsection 1.83

With the following conditions and recommendations:

1. The applicants shall remain in compliance with the site plan layout as approved in previous site plan #804.
2. The applicant shall install or modify lighting on the property to address comments of Nate Nardi-Cyrus, Assistant Planner outlined in his email of August 28, 2023 to the City Planner
3. The applicant shall follow the recommendations of Fire Marshal Edward Bascetta in his August 25, 2023 letter to the City Planner regarding lock boxes and fire code requirements.
4. The applicant shall follow building permit requirements outlined by Building Official Kevin Gillette in his August 22, 2023 email to the City Planner
5. The Planning and Zoning Commission finds that the proposed use change is compatible with the neighborhood and surrounding uses and is protective of the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the City of Torrington for the granting of a special exception approval.
6. The applicant shall file the “Certificate of Special Exception” for this approval with the City Clerk

MOTION seconded by Mr. Riley, unanimously carried with Commissioners Mele, Bobinski, Greco, Riley, and Carroll voting in favor of the motion.

5. **Old Business:** none

6. **New Business:**

a. Site Plan 1467

Applicant: GG Torrington LLC & SL Torrington LLC

Location: 1858 East Main Street

Proposal: Reconfiguration of approved 3,500 sq. ft. retail building site with 3,300 sq. ft. bank and drive-up ATM

Attorney Charles Ebersol, Jr. appeared on behalf of the applicants. Mr. Ebersol provided some history of the property and site. This site was approved in 2020 for retail, and now changes are being made to accommodate a bank. The site map was presented, modifications, driveways and lanes were reviewed. Parking has been reduced as a bank use requires less parking than retail use (portions inaudible).

Michael Boe, AIA, Torrington, appeared representing the property owners. Drawings were presented and details explained by Mr. Boe (portions inaudible). Commissioners reviewed plans, driveway, parking layout and modifications to the exit lane.

Mr. Boe stated they are waiting for the redesign drawings of the building, landscaping and photometrics

Mr. Leifert noted a few staff comments are pending.

Tabled to the next Commission meeting on October 18, 2023.

b. Modification to Site Plan 1415

Applicant: Prospect Investment Group LLC

Location: 110 Scoville Street

Proposal: New building to accommodate auto spray booth

Ruth Lutz, owner, Doreen Gibbons of Gianni's Auto Body and Ken of Gianni's Auto Body appeared before the Commission.

Ms. Lutz gave a presentation on their plans to modify their previous approval to include a metal prefab building that is 35' x 26' in size. They need more than the ten percent expansion, so they plan to take down some of the old building, and the old office is being renovated. Engineer Bill Colby had prepared the plans that were presented.

Mr. Leifert stated Bill Colby needs to show on the plans what portions of the building will be removed. The new spray booth building needs to be located at least ten feet away from the main building.

According to Ms. Lutz, the small detached office building in front of the property will remain.

Updated plans are pending. This item was tabled until the next Commission meeting on October 18, 2023.

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MOTION by Ms. Carroll to add an item to the agenda by 2/3rds vote:

Regulation Amendment, Child day care and group day care facilities

Section 3.1, Subsections 2.3 and 2.40

Set public hearing date

MOTION seconded by Mr. Bobinski, unanimously carried.

MOTION to set a public hearing date of November 29, 2023, seconded by Mr. Telman, unanimously carried.

**7. Correspondence:**

a. Zoning and Blight Violation update

Mr. Leifert reviewed the status of 1080 East Main Street, coffee truck, which is still being worked on for site plan compliance.

There are issues with the site plan on 37 Migeon Avenue, as there are two tenants who are in disagreement with various issues at the site.

**8. Adjournment:**

MOTION by Ms. Carroll to adjourn at 8:27 p.m., seconded by Ms. Greco, unanimously carried.