

CITY OF TORRINGTON



Land Use Office
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To: Planning & Zoning Commission
From: Jeremy Leifert, AICP, City Planner *JL*
Date: March 15, 2023 (Rev 1)
RE: Special Exception #23-01 and Site Plan #1442, 95 Grove Street and 104 Grove Street; construction of new 8000 square foot building and renovations of existing buildings and property for educational and office use

In reviewing the application, plans and documents submitted, I have the following comments:

A. Secondino and Son, Inc has filed an application on behalf of EdAdvance for two properties; 95 Grove Street - Tax Assessor's Map 118 Block 016 Lot 009 and 104 Grove Street, Tax Assessor's Map 118 Block 017 Lot 015 to request the following approvals:

1. To allow construction of a new 8000 square foot educational/classroom building at 95 Grove Street
2. To renovate the existing former church, rectory, and convent buildings for additional classroom and office space for EdAdvance
3. Site improvements to modify parking, stormwater control, landscaping and signage

The properties are owned by Sacred Heart Church, are 1 acre (43,560 sf) and 0.96 acres (41,817 sf) respectively in area and are both located in the R6 residential zone. The property has been owned and operated by Sacred Heart Church since prior to adoption of zoning in Torrington in 1957. The proposed educational and office use is a conforming use in the R6 zone by special exception and site plan approval under zoning regulations section 3.1, Table of Permitted Uses, subsection 2.00 – Educational Uses and subsection 5.80 – Other Offices. A public hearing for the special exceptions and a new site plan approval for both properties are required for this proposed project. The review of this application is guided by the site plan requirements of section 8.4 and general special exception review standards in section 8.2.

A set of plans has been submitted titled "Proposed Headstart Building, 95-104 Grove Street, Torrington, Connecticut" by BL Companies, Meriden, CT. Dated February 7, 2023. 1 Sheet. Also included is an existing conditions survey by Hrica Associates, LLC, dated February 7, 2023 and a three-sheet set of building elevation and exterior renderings by BL Companies. Staff has not held formal pre-application meetings with the applicant or engineers, despite requests to do so. However, planning staff has been in contact with the applicant to discuss the project and requirements.

Other Items of note:

1. The positioning of the proposed classroom addition building is currently in violation of the rear zoning setbacks for the site. The building must be repositioned on the site to meet the 30-foot required rear yard setback. This setback may be reduced to 24 feet with a request for a special exception reduction of 20% of the required setback under section 4.1.9 of the regulations. It appears that the building is currently proposed to be 10 feet back from the front yard setback line, and may be adjusted closer to the front yard setback.
2. Proposed two-foot contours are missing from the plans
3. The 75-foot inland-wetlands regulated area from off-site wetlands to the west of the project area should be added to the plans
4. It appears that there may be greater than ½ acre of disturbance to one or both of the sites. In accordance with section 8.4.3.C of the regulations, a Stormwater Management Plan is required for any site with over ½ acre of disturbance. The applicants' engineer should evaluate.
5. Basic information on proposed property lighting should be provided by the applicant. The applicant should submit a written request to waive the submission of a photometric plan if there are no proposals for large lighting fixtures.
6. As there are no valid zoning hardships on the property, it is likely that a request for variances will be denied by the Torrington Zoning Board of Appeals. I have the following comments related to items marked "Yes" for variances needed on the provided zoning and parking tables on the plan:
 - a. The 5.1 foot setback for the existing building at 95 Grove Street is a pre-existing condition; no variance is necessary for the change of use
 - b. As stated above, the rear yard setback for the proposed building, with a reduction to 24 feet, is required to be met with a building location and size adjustment
 - c. The proposed impervious cover on 95 and 104 Grove Street should be evaluated an adjusted to meet the 50% threshold. Low Impact Development techniques, such as pervious pavers or other acceptable methods may be used to offset additional impervious area proposed.
 - d. A parking reduction below the minimum does not require a variance. The commission may grant a waiver of the minimum parking by special exception upon a written request of the applicant after evaluating and discussing the parking needs for the project.
 - e. The front and rear setbacks for the existing buildings at 104 Grove Street do not need variances as these buildings are pre-existing non-conforming
 - f. There is no specific width requirement for buffers in a residential zone, so no variances are needed. However, due to the proposed intensity of the use of the property, we have requested a 25-foot buffer for new parking areas to all side property lines consistent with the parking use proposed on the property. I recommend a reduction in the parking buffer to the front and rear property lines.
7. The commission may allow the inclusion of on-street parking within the City street ROW. However, the presence and use of these parking spaces must be reviewed and approved by the Police Traffic Department and City Engineer.
8. The parking information used in the calculations for "Lot 2" uses the Church, Rectory, and School Office as the uses on the site. This should be corrected to calculate parking based on the *proposed* uses of the site (school and/or office use).
9. Based on 21 on-site parking spaces on the 95 Grove Street property, only 1 handicap accessible space is required. Based on 35 on-site parking spaces on the 104 Grove Street property, only 2 handicap accessible spaces are required.

10. One “loading” parking space is required on the 95 Grove Street property per section 5.13.5 of the regulations
11. Existing and proposed utilities are required to be located on the plans (sewer, water, electric, gas, etc)
12. The trash dumpster and screening is preferred to be located to the rear of the property rather than adjacent to the front property sidewalk and street
13. Plans for landscaping should be submitted with the required plans to show the layout for proposed grassed areas, trees and shrubs on the site. No details are present on the current plans.
14. Provide details on any proposed advertising signage on the plans in terms of location and size. No free standing sign shall exceed five feet in height or 20 square feet total.
15. In my opinion, the proposed use and location is compatible with the neighborhood and surrounding uses, but the site design is currently not suitable for approval.

Other Staff Comments:

Economic Development: Rista Malanca, City of Torrington Economic Development Director: Rista Malanca, AICP, Torrington Economic Development Director verbally indicated her support for the project.

Assistant City Planner: Nate Nardi-Cyrus, Assistant City Planner in an email to the City Planner dated March 2, 2023 offered the following comments:

General – Commercial storage, such as the Amazon trailer currently parked on site, is not permitted.

Wetlands – The applicant shall show on the plan the upland review area surrounding alluvial soils on adjacent city-owned. Any regulated activities within this area will require an inland wetlands permit.

Landscaping – There is no landscaping plan included in this application. The applicant shall provide a plan, using native species, that is consistent with section 5.11 of the City zoning code.

- Show tree line for 95 Grove Street on plan
- Trees and shrubs are required along Brook and Grove Street frontage
- Driveway encroachment shall be restored to grass, trees, and shrubs as screening for 57 Grove Street. Small fruit trees adjacent to 57 Grove Street (not shown on the plan) should be retained.
- Trees and shrubs shall be installed in traffic islands and at the ends of parking areas.
- 24” maple (labeled as ash) and 24” maple (labeled as deciduous) on 104 Grove Street should be retained.
- Where practical, the healthiest trees in the northwest corner of 95 Grove street should be retained.
- Trees should be planted in the rear of the playground to provide screening for the adjacent lot and shade for playing children.

Lighting – Basic information on existing and proposed property lighting should be provided by the applicant. The applicant should submit a written request to waive the submission of a photometric plan if there are no proposals for large lighting fixtures. All existing lighting must be updated to be compliant with Section 5.17 of the zoning regulations, which includes the use of

full cut-off fixtures. We encourage the use of products approved by the International Dark-Sky Association: <https://www.darksky.org/our-work/lighting/lighting-for-industry/fsa/fsa-products/>.

Signage – Show existing advertising signs on the site plan. A sign permit shall be required before installing any new signage in accordance with Section 5.15 of the zoning regulations. No wall signage is permitted and any free-standing signs shall not exceed five feet in height or 20 square feet total.

Conservation – This application will not be referred to the Conservation Commission for comment.

Architectural Review Committee: An ARC meeting has been scheduled for March 16, 2023 to review the project.

Torrington Area Health District: TAHD offered no comments on the plans.

Engineering: Paul Kundzins, City Engineer in a memorandum to the City Planner dated March 2, 2023, submitted a list of comments on the submitted plans for correction by the applicants' engineer. See attached.

Police Traffic: Police Traffic Sergeant Dustin Baldis, in an email to me dated March 1, 2023, offered the following comments on the plans:

There is a lot to discuss from a traffic standpoint. The amount of crosswalk markings on this project seems more than most I have reviewed. Too much paint becomes white noise and gets less compliance than specific locations with proper signage. We don't normally put crosswalks across general driveways and midblock crosswalks must meet the right criteria to be considered on the city street.

The parallel parking on Grove Street in the area is too close, creating a sight line issue for pulling out of some of the driveways and overall walking across the street that then makes a crosswalk more dangerous than good.

The parking for school seems lacking and does not appear to have enough information. How many employees do they plan to have at any given time and is there a portion for visitors or guests to be able to accommodate this. ADA compliance is a concern and tactile pads are not needed on the sidewalks crossing driveways as it creates a misunderstanding as to the reason for them.

The pull in for school drop off etc appears to be small and what is the expectation of this pull off. This will only allow for about 4 cars and any other cars will queue into Grove Street creating a backup on the street in which there is no parking on that side.

These are some of my concerns to these plans. Thank you.

Fire: Fire Marshal Edward Bascetta, in letter to the City Planner dated March 2, 2023, offered comments regarding Fire Department access lockboxes, fire protection system requirements and other life safety code requirements. See attached.

WPCA: WPCA has not offered comments on this application to date.

Building: Building Official Kevin Gillette, in an email to the City Planner dated March 2, 2023, offered the following comments:

The architect already called with questions. He is aware of what they will need for permits and associated construction documents. Thanks.

Conclusion: Per City Staff review responses above, I recommend continuing the public hearing to the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting to allow time for plan revisions and additional staff review. See specific comments from the City Planner, Assistant City Planner, Police Traffic Department and City Engineer.

END OF MEMO

Cc: A, Secondino and Sons, Inc
Rich Carmelich, EdAdvance

City of Torrington

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
(860) 489-2234



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Torrington, CT 06790-5245
Fax: (860) 489-2550

Memorandum

To: Jeremy Leifert, City Planner

From: Paul Kundzins, P.E. - Deputy Director of Public Works - City Engineer

Date: March 2, 2023

RE: Engineering Review – Proposed change of use to educational facility and office use (former church use) at 95 Grove Street and 104 Grove Street

Applicant: A. Secondino & Son Inc

I have reviewed the above application, supporting plans and documentation, and provide the following comments:

Submitted supporting document:

- a. Special exemption application
- b. EXISTING CONDITIONS MAP prepared by Hrica Associates LLC dated 2/7/23.
- c. SP-1 Site Plan titled Proposed Headstart Building 95-104 Grove Street, Torrington, CT, Dated 02/07/2023 prepared by BL Companies
- d. Concept building elevations and layout floor plans.

The Engineering Department has the following comments:

1. This application submission is incomplete due to the following missing design information:
 - a. Layout plan is missing annotation to accurately depict the work required.
 - b. Grading plan
 - c. Storm water design plan and report
 - d. Typical details
 - e. Landscape plan
 - f. Lighting plan if applicable
 - g. Vehicle turning paths for all entrances and exists for typical design vehicles.
 - h. Utility design plan – including profiles to show crossing utilities
 - i. Traffic signing plan for ROW
2. Driveway entrances/exits do not require painted crosswalks or detectable warning pads
3. Provide justification for on street parallel parking showing remaining available width.

4. To reduce turning conflicts
 - a. Driveway entrances and exits should be combined to reduce multiple assess points
 - b. Driveways should be designed to match those on the opposite side of the street.
5. All driveways require sight stopping distance confirmation.
6. Multiple mid-block street cross walks in close proximity are not permitted.
7. Parallel drop off/pickup lanes should have adequate width landscaping buffer and separation from street sidewalks to protect private lanes from street sidewalks and travel lanes.
8. On Lot 1 - There is no apparent accessible route shown from parking area to building.

Based on the above-mentioned missing information and comments, the Engineering Department is **withholding approval** of this application at this time.



Paul Kundzins
2023.03.02 16:
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Paul Kundzins, P.E.
Deputy Director of Public Works - City Engineer

**Torrington Fire Department
City of Torrington**

Peter A. Towey

David A



March 2, 2023

Jeremy Leifert, City Planner
Planning and Zoning
City of Torrington

Dear Mr. Leifert,

I have received and reviewed the application for the construction of Educational Facility and Office located at 95 and 104 Grove St. The Fire Department would provide the following general recommendations:

The building should be equipped with a complete and compliant fire protection system compatible with the new construction codes. The fact it will be vacant during non-business hours make it a prime candidate for the delayed discovery of a fire inside.

Torrington makes use of 'lock boxes' to allow quick access by fire fighters in time of an alarm without causing damage. If not already in existence, a lock box should be installed on the exterior of the building near the main door. The fire department will use its secure master key to open the box and allow the building owner to leave appropriate building access keys inside. This eliminates any delay in entering the building or waiting for a key-holder to arrive in the middle of the night.

The building and area must comply with all required building and electrical codes and will be inspected by the Fire Marshal for compliance with the Life Safety Code prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy, and annually thereafter.

We appreciate the opportunity to review these plans. Please feel free to contact me if there are any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Edward Bascetta

Edward Bascetta

Fire Marshal

City of Torrington

860-489-2534

Edward_bascetta@torringtonct.org