

**HISTORIC DISTRICT &
HISTORIC PROPERTY
COMMISSION**

Allison Sanders, Chair
Lisa Pojano, Vice-Chair
Gilbert Weatherly, Clerk
Jeffrey Bendremer
Lori Fusco

Alternates
Pam Brown
Peter Gaboriault
Alice Schroeder



**TOWN HALL
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, Connecticut 06897**

**Historic District Commission Special Meeting Minutes
Thursday, October 6, 2022 Electronic Meeting: 7:30 pm**

Minutes: 7:30 pm

I. Call to order:

- a. **Attendance:** Commissioners Sanders, Weatherly and Bendremer present.
Alternate Brown seated.
- b. **Minutes:** Clerk opens for questions and comments. There is no discussion.
Bendremer moves to approve, Sanders seconds. Bendremer, Sanders, Weatherly
vote to approve and Brown abstains.

II. 19 Cannon Road: Allison Sanders presents draft statement in opposition to the proposed sewer extension. Bendremer asks if a historically significant person may have occupied 19 Cannon Rd. Chair will investigate and include occupant personage in the statement if appropriate. Draft is discussed with general approval.

III. Certified Local Government: General discussion about ideas for grant applications. Weatherly suggests an outreach program to the owners of homes on the historic survey to encourage the creation of additional historic districts and properties. Weatherly also suggests funding for signage at current historic districts. Sanders suggests a study for the master plan for the Cannondale National Historic District

IV “Yellow House” at Ambler Farm: Allison Sanders reports Town intends to fund repairs and renovations. Commissioners will tour the house on October 21 at 10:30 am.

V. Public Comment: None

VI. Adjournment: 8:11 pm

Submitted by Gil Weatherly, Clerk
Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 1 at 7:30 p.m.

Historic District Commission statement and citizens' comments included as part of these minutes

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TO: Water Pollution Control Authority Planning & Zoning Commission

FROM: Allison Sanders, Chair

DATE: October 6, 2022

RE: 8-24 Referral: Wilton Water Pollution Control Authority – to P&Z: Extension of Sanitary Sewer from 19 Cannon Road to Danbury Road for a proposed development at 19 Cannon Road

Cannondale is small but complex area both geographically and historically. Packed into a handful of acres in a scenic valley are a river, a bridge, a railroad track and station, a mill pond, dam, old trees, stone walls, and diverse historic buildings. It has retained its authentic New England-style small village character. It is an irreplaceable piece of Wilton's history.

Regarding Hinckley Allen letter of September 1, 2022 re: 19 Cannon Road: Page 2, Item A “The parcel . . . is not located in a historic district.”

The Historic District and Historic Property Commission takes issue with the above statement. Recognized in the national program to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources, Cannondale has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1992. Cannondale National Register District documentation codifies the inventory of important buildings and features as well as providing a professional appraisal of the extent of the existing historic neighborhood.

19 Cannon Road is located in the Cannondale National Register District

In addition to the area being designated as the Cannondale National Register District, the structure at 19 Cannon Road, which is to be demolished to make way for the proposed project, is listed on Wilton's Historic Resource Inventory (HRI) of structures that are important to the town for their historical and/or architectural attributes. The Colonial Revival-style “Ambler House” c 1905 “contributes to the original residential character of Cannondale” and is further described as “picturesque . . . set on generous, park-like grounds” as described by architectural historian Mary McCahon in the 1989 historic house survey.

Catherine and Lewis Ambler House c 1905

Master Planning

Following the directive of the POCD, the town is engaged with master planning for Wilton Center. **The POCD also calls for the town to implement a master planning process for the area, and for “the Cannondale Node.”** A planning process would carefully and thoughtfully strive to create a plan that embraces and enhances the topography and existing historic architectural features of this undervalued resource.

Any sizeable project, such as the proposal for 19 Cannon Road, should not be pursued until Master Planning is complete.

POCD Goal 4 “Preserve Wilton’s Rural Character, Historic Resources and Cultural Landscapes” Even without a master plan, there is no question that the size, density, and use of the proposed project would be antithetical to what is appropriate for Cannondale Village as envisioned by the POCD. The POCD’s Goal 4 “Preserve Wilton’s Rural Character, Historic Resources and Cultural Landscapes” states: “Wilton has significant historic assets from its rural origins, which fundamentally complement its natural environment and contribute to its character, sense of place and quality of life. Notable historical and scenic assets include [among others]: Cannondale National Register District.” This is a place to “establish zoning incentives for preserving historic structures” which is in the POCD as well. A variety of incentives are already being discussed in the current master planning of Wilton Center, using the HDC-provided “Historic Preservation Tools for Commercial Buildings” report.

The design proposed for 19 Cannon Road would dominate the surrounding structures. **Overall, it would be non-compliant with POCD Goal 3 which is to “Strengthen the economic vitality of the Cannondale area while protecting its unique design and historical character.”**

When it comes to the future of Cannondale Village – an area with an unmistakable New England-style sense of place – it is impossible to justify proceeding with a sewer extension before master planning.

Barbara L. Geddis, FAIA 296 Cannon Road Wilton. CT 0687

October 6, 2022

Historic District Commission Town Hall 238 Danbury Road Wilton, CT 0697

Attention: Allison Sanders, Chair and Commissioners Pojano, Weatherly, Bendremer and Fusco

Re: 8-24 Referral: Wilton Water Pollution Control Authority-to P& Z: Extension of Sanitary Sewer from 19 Cannon Road to Danbury Road for a proposed development at 19 Cannon Road

Commissioners and Chairperson Sanders,

As I wrote in a letter to you and testified at our March 2022 meeting, our family continues to recommend that this referral be denied. The rationale for the denial remains powerful and grounded in the guiding principles of the 2019 POCD.

As I wrote before, five (5) of those principles directly refer to history or strongly infer an historic context:

- **4.0 Preserve Wilton’s Rural Character, Historic Resources and Cultural Landscapes.**
- **6.2 Strengthen the economic viability of the Cannondale area while protecting its unique design and historical character.**
- **3.1 Conduct a master planning process for Cannondale.**

- **Acknowledge the Cannondale Node:** “Densities should be lower than the Greater

Wilton Center area and should align with the gradual decrease in density north of Cannon Road.”

- **7.1. Water and Sewer Goals that reflect Land use goals.** “Extensions of sewer and water should be limited to those that address risks to environmental and/or public health or as requested by the property owners of a certain area in accordance with the recommendations of this Plan and the Town Water and Sewer Plan.”

Some things have not changed since March and other things have changed.

- What has not changed is that a thirty-six units per acres in a multi-story building (73 units and over 90 cars) on a single family, two-acre parcel lodged across from the train parking adjacent to an Aquarion water property will shatter this particularly fragile context. This height and density and intensity of cars and loss of tree canopy at the gateway to Cannondale on the Norwalk River defiantly violates the POCD. It seems to be a rather strident test case of our land use, safety, health and environmental policies.

- Yet what has changed is the evident lack of care on this property and that now another property in the village behind the Historic Grange is for sale. The real estate and developer market must be watching closely to see what happens.
- What is also emerging subtly and incrementally in other recent developments is a new “brand” of Wilton and Cannondale. What can be seen is eclectic combinations of adaptive reuse of historic vernacular buildings alongside contemporary settings which can be economically and aesthetically attractive.

Since we moved here in 2017 with Cannondale Village as one major factor in our move, we have been puzzled at the lack of definition of the boundaries of Cannondale Village. The National Register designation offers many contributing buildings and supportive history about this working village’s unique qualities as riverfront, bridge, train, workplace, and place to live.

Setting aside this case, which we hope can again be turned down, it does seem that HDC could have an especially key role in the P and Z re-mapping of Cannondale district and align it more closely to the Register. I would hope that at the very least an overlay of the station-centric village could provide some guidance for future changes of property and development.

As I wrote in March, “it is patently obvious that Cannondale Village will not survive this kind of development’s density and fundamental misfit of ‘scale.’” But, as I have previously stated in several public meetings, there are many promising and innovative ideas for Cannondale Village. We remain in favor of new uses being permitted and incentivized here in retaining some of the contributing historic and other structures. P and Z is on that kind of trajectory with support from

HDC. Current property owners within Cannondale Village should be optimistic about future mixed-use potential including residential.

As it was in March, and remains even more important today in October, you of the HDC once again should have a powerful voice in this test case of fundamental criteria produced by vigorous public dialogue in 2019 which now needs practical realization in policy.

Thanks as always for your thoughtful consideration of this important case. Best,
Barbara Barbara L. Geddis, FAIA

Harry Clark 130 Old Highway Wilton, CT 06897

10/6/22

Members of the Historic District Commission,

You have once again received an application referral for a development at 19 Cannon Road. I ask that you turn down this application.

The scale, density, and form of the proposed development to be served by this extension is not in compliance with the 2019 Plan Of Conservation And Development, and as such, should not be a candidate for sewer line extension. In addition, the **scale** of the project, including site coverage, FAR, and building mass, would severely compromise the “historic” nature of the Cannondale, listed on the National Register Of Historic Places. This high-visibility property is directly along the “gateway” to Cannondale, and would forever impair the historic status of the neighborhood.

Here are the specific goals, called out by the 2019 PCOD, that this proposal is in direct conflict with.

Page 39-40 Goal 4: *Preserve Wilton's Rural Character, Historic Resources and Cultural Landscapes.* Mentioned specifically is the Cannondale National Historic District. The scale, design, and form of the project does not adhere to this goal. *A single, monolithic building of this size violates all three of the goals. Certainly, it's out of scale in a historic district.*

Page 49 Goal 1.1: *Increase the Availability of Multi-Family Housing and Smaller Housing Units.* This section sets very specific guidelines and goals that limit large scale building like the one proposed to Town Center and Danbury Road, south of Cannon Road. “Abutting transition areas” such as 19 Cannon Road, which clearly transitions from busy commercial Danbury Road to the single family neighborhood in Cannondale, are specifically called out as areas of opportunity for “smaller, mixed use” buildings, and “smaller single family homes”. *Again, from a historical perspective, smaller homes would be the form traditionally built near rural stations, not a single large building.*

Page 68-70: (Cannon Road as a transition point) Cannon Road straddles two zones as outlined in the Plan; neither one specifies large, multi-story buildings (more appropriate on Danbury Road and in Wilton Center, as outlined in the Plan) Instead, the two zones outline “commercial, residential, and mixed-use development that emphasizes transit-oriented development, community, and village design character and connections to Wilton Center.” “Evaluate form-based zoning approaches” for the zone south of Cannon Road, and “Maintain existing low-density, rural development patterns, except in approaches to and within the Georgetown node... enhance the utility and clarity of Adaptive Use regulations that are often used in this area... enable commercial and

residential development at limited densities that can be supported by on-site infrastructure” for the zone north of Cannon Road. *Requesting a sewer extension is NOT using on-site infrastructure, nor is this proposal mixed-use.*

Page 70 Goal 3: *Strengthen the economic viability of the Cannondale area while protecting its unique design and historical character.* The proposal clearly does neither of these things. The “economic viability” of Cannondale is an ill-defined goal, and certainly the style and scale of the building is neither unique nor historical. *Additionally, the builder has not proposed any commercial component, offering no economic enhancement.*

Page 91 Goal 7.1: *Ensure water and sewer policies reflect land-use goals.* The sizing of the sewer extension is out of scale with the lower densities laid out in the Plan, and will serve to encourage more large-scale developments on adjacent lots, in direct contradiction to the Plan. *This property will be the first of many overscale proposals we will see for this neighborhood.*

Page 95: *The Cannondale Node-* “The Town should conduct a Master Planning process to properly define the extent of the Cannondale Node. Once this is done, the Town should align its land-use policies to encourage mixed-use, residential, and commercial development of an appropriate scale and design that is transit-oriented in nature, given access to Cannondale Train Station... densities should be lower than the Greater Wilton Center area and should align with the gradual decrease in density north of Cannon Road.” This survey, and resultant recommendations, have not yet been completed, so no large development should be approved until the Plan is updated. *Approval of this project will forever change Cannondale, before the commission and other town agencies have even outlined the borders and assessed the current and future pattern of development.*

First and foremost, you must consider if this project aligns with the 2019 Plan Of Conservation And Development. I contend it most certainly does not. This project is egregiously out of scale with the rest of the Cannondale neighborhood, does not reflect the scale and form of the historic buildings, and ignores many, if not all, of the recommendations of future development in Cannondale set forth in the Plan Of Conservation And Development.

Sincerely,

Harry Clark