I. Call to Order

Chairman Gannuscio called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm.

II. Roll Call

Commission roll call was taken.

III. Approval of Minutes from the August 12, 2019 and September 9, 2019 Regular Meetings

Mr. Szepanski pointed out that there was an error in the August 12, 2019 minutes in the continued Public Hearing section. In the motion to approve the amendment to the MFSD zoning regulations, the motion was passed 4 to 1, not 5 to 1. (This is in Section IV.A, Continued Public Hearings, in the next to last paragraph before Section IV.B, Public Hearings, starts.)

It was MOVED (Szepanski) and SECONDED (Cooper) and PASSED (Unanimous, 5-0; Zimnoch Abstaining) that the Planning and Zoning Commission approves the August 12, 2019 minutes, as corrected.

It was MOVED (Sayers) and SECONDED (Cooper) and PASSED (Unanimous, 4-0; Gannuscio Abstaining) that the Planning and Zoning Commission approves the September 9, 2019 minutes.

IV. Public Hearings

Mr. Szepanski read the rules for conducting a public hearing.

The Recording Secretary read the legal notice that was published in the Journal Inquirer on October 2, 2019 and October 9, 2019.
A. Special Use Permit with Site Plan Review for 229 Ella Grasso Turnpike to construct a 116-room Tru by Hilton brand hotel (property owner 225 Turnpike Associates, LLC)

Marek Kement, Civil Engineer and Land Surveyor for Anchor Engineering Services in Glastonbury, and Hernan Pagan, Architect from Russell and Dawson in East Hartford, addressed the commission. Mr. Kement is the agent for the applicant, Archgrove Hospitality, as well as the property owner, 225 Turnpike Associates. Mr. Kement distributed to the commission a mini-version of what was on the board behind him. He explained that the application is for a Special Use Permit and Site Plan Review for construction of a 116-room Tru by Hilton brand hotel located at 229 Ella Grasso Turnpike. It is located south of the Valero gas station and Spring Street, and directly north of the Springhill Suites by Marriott. This property is a little over six acres, in a Business-1 zone, with previous commercial use. The southern portion of the property, which abuts Springhill Suites, is open and flat, while the northern section is wooded with steep grades and includes a wetlands corridor. This corridor begins in the northwestern corner and follows in the easterly direction along the northern borderline. This property is serviced by public water, city sewer, and gas. The activities associated with this project include installation of parking areas and circulation drives, pedestrian accessibility, stormwater management which includes the low impact development techniques (LID’s), limited clearing of wooded areas, placement of material, installation of a retaining wall and gating, and erosion and sediment control using Best Management Practices (BMPs).

The key elements of this project are as follows: 116 rooms with a footprint of roughly 13,000 square feet located about 95 feet off of the street line. The Fire Marshall wanted a separate fire lane for this site, so the building had to be shifted in the northerly direction, and by doing this, got closer to the wetlands and the steeper slopes, so there is a retaining wall being placed with guide rails along this section. The dumpsters are located out of view and accessed through the fire lane. The loading zone does not use any parking or handicapped spaces and is screened behind the building, not visible from the streetscape. There is a five-foot sidewalk surrounding the hotel which also accesses the rear parking area as well as managing access to the front sidewalk located along Route 75. Currently on this property there are two means of egress and ingress. There are two curb cuts existing. They are going to be using the northern curb cut and going to close off the southern curb cut. This access is going to be a single entrance into the facility, and leaving the site they will have two separate turning lanes, one for the left and one for the right. They have a total of 123 parking spaces, broken up into two separate parking sections. The front section has 34 (including 5 handicapped spaces), and the rear section has 89. The utilities connections (water, sewer, gas, electricity) will be from the front of the building to the street. They have incorporated a water pump house that will be located directly behind the dumpster. This pump house is just for fire suppression, and to get more pressure for the building and for the sprinkler system. One of the comments from town staff was to incorporate a 1,000 gallon grease trap which is incorporated in the latest revision.
There is currently a drainage pipe which crosses this property at this location. This drainage pipe is the drainage from the Springhill Suites. There are two drainage systems involved with this project—in the northwesterly section and the southeasterly section. This entire project has a zero increase in runoff as a result of this project. A drainage report dated August 29, 2019 with a revised date of October 7, 2019 was submitted and reviewed by the Town Engineer. Mr. Kement went on to discuss in more detail the drainage system.

Mr. Kement discussed the memorandums that were received: from the WPCA dated September 24, 2019, from the Town Engineer dated October 14, 2019, and from the Town Planner dated October 14, 2019. All concerns have been or will be addressed. Mr. Kement clarified that there will be no more than seven employees on this property at any one given time, and the table will be updated prior to filing. To clarify the square footage of the sign: the detail is a slanting wedge detail, and the sign is 6 by 6, which comes out to 36 square feet overall, but because of the slant design the dimensions are really 32 square feet. The property address will be located on the sign.

At this point, Chairman Gannuscio seated Doug Wilson for Alexa Brengi.

Mr. Pagan addressed the commission. The building itself is about 55,000 square feet with 116 rooms. The top three stories contain 35 rooms and on the first floor are 11 guest rooms. The first floor has a 400 square foot indoor heated pool, a fitness room, a lounge with a gaming room, and a small breakfast area where they offer a continental breakfast. There are two offices and one break room for the employees. There are two patios on the south side, one an extension of the lounge and one that serves the pool.

Commission members had some questions for Mr. Kement. At this point there is no bar, and a liquor permit is not being applied for at this time. Mr. Kement believes that the hotel will offer some sort of shuttle service to the airport for their guests. There are no plans for a Park ’N Fly or valet service at this time. Ms. Rodriguez commented that this valet service could be something that is offered in the future. If the hotel owner wanted to do that, he would designate a specific area for valet parking and submit a site plan modification. However, she didn’t see that as part of the narrative right now. Mr. Pagan’s company is working on three Tru hotels in the Northeast, with this being the first in Connecticut. Mr. Szepanski asked if this particular configuration building has been built before by Tru. Mr. Pagan replied yes, there are many that have been built that are similar to this one, with some minor modifications. Mr. Kement commented that it is a flexible design.

Jennifer Rodriguez, Town Planner, discussed her report dated October 14, 2019. There were many emails back and forth with the Fire Marshall, and the applicant has accommodated his concerns. The Police Chief’s email of October 15, 2019 indicated no concerns. The concerns of the WPCA, as the applicant discussed, have been addressed with the 1,000 gallon grease trap. The following are her suggested
conditions of approval:  (1) The IWWC approval letter and all conditions shall be added to the final plan set prior to submission to staff for signature and filing, and (2) The applicant shall revise the monument sign design on the final plan set to include the required address prior to submission to staff for signature and filing.

Ms. Rodriguez read for the record the two recommended conditions of approval listed in the Town Engineer’s report dated October 14, 2019:  (1) Revise the Stormwater Operation and Maintenance Plan on sheet 4 to include sweeping of the paved surfaces, minimization of sand for deicing, no snow storage in the water quality swales and scarifying of clogged soils in the water quality swales as needed. (2) Provide LS stamp on site improvement sheets 3-5 in accordance with section 1102.A.

Mr. Wilson asked if there were any conditions in the Wetlands approval. Ms. Rodriguez responded that there were but nothing that changes anything on the plan.

At this time Chairman Gannuscio opened up the public hearing for comments from the public in support of this application. There were none. The floor was then opened up for comments in opposition. There were none.

It was MOVED (Gannuscio) and SECONDED (Szepanski) and PASSED (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission closes the public hearing on the special use permit and site plan review for 229 Ella Grasso Turnpike to construct a 116-room Tru by Hilton brand hotel (property owner 225 Turnpike Associates, LLC).

Chairman Gannuscio stated that the location and size fits within the Plan of Development and conforms to what exists in this area between Spring and Elm and west of Route 75. The building fits well within the lot and offers something new and something more vibrant, so it is appropriate for this area. The location and height of the structures and the landscaping do not discourage development in adjacent properties. They have taken care with this site to try to minimize problems when it comes to entrances and exits by eliminating one existing curb cut and going forth with the Fire Marshall’s request to keep that access and safety in mind and in conformance. When it comes to the special use, it comports with what’s there and presents a development that is in context with what already exists and with what is being maintained as similar prime hotel properties in the area. Mr. Szepanski commented that it was a well put together plan, and staff did a great job pulling it together. Chairman Gannuscio agreed and added that the effort was made to tie into the sidewalks in a manner that makes sense and presents a safe walking area. He noted that it sounds like this was a cooperative project for town staff and the applicants.
Ms. Sayers said to keep in mind that before Valero was built that site was originally approved for a gas station and some kind of fast food with a drive-thru, so going forward for that empty lot we should keep in mind that something more in keeping with what we already have there now would be better than a drive-thru restaurant. This is the space between this hotel and Valero, where the trucking school used to be.

It was MOVED (Szepanski) and SECONDED (Cooper) and PASSED (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission approves the special use permit for 229 Ella Grasso Turnpike to construct a 116-room Tru by Hilton brand hotel (property owner 225 Turnpike Associates, LLC).

It was MOVED (Szepanski) and SECONDED (Wilson) and PASSED (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission approves the site plan application for 229 Ella Grasso Turnpike to construct a 116-room Tru by Hilton brand hotel (property owner 225 Turnpike Associates, LLC) with four conditions: two conditions of approval from the Town Planner’s report dated October 14, 2019, and two conditions of approval from the Town Engineer’s report dated October 14, 2019.

V. Reviews (none)

VI. Action on Closed Public Hearing Items (none)

VII. Old Business

A. Discussion with Commission and Staff

i. MFSD Amendment to Zoning Regulations

Ms. Rodriguez stated that at the last meeting they reviewed some suggested changes and options for the text amendment. There weren’t a lot of comments, so she will take the direction of the commission if it wants to discuss them again or put it forward for a public hearing. Chairman Gannuscio commented that it looked like it was a very thorough discussion. Mr. Szepanski pointed out that Ms. Rodriguez sent a memorandum after the meeting summarizing those discussions and the recommendations. He has read through this and does not have any issues. The color coding was very helpful.

B. Action Items (none)

VIII. New Business

A. Public Input (none)
B. Receive New Applications

i. 6 Industrial Road, A New Wellness Center, Applicant--Amanda Stenhouse (Property Owner, Kevin Armata)

Ms. Rodriguez explained that this application is for a special use permit and site plan review for a wellness center, so it would be reusing an existing industrial building. Mr. Szepanski asked if this is the same location where the reptile museum was in. Ms. Rodriguez confirmed that the approval was for the reptile museum and pointed out that it will be important to discuss the mix of uses that are there now. She added that special use permits run with the property, although the site plan review and any associated building permits would expire. Ms. Sayers mentioned the drainage problem at this site due to the reduced size of the culvert. Mr. Szepanski wondered if maintaining this is the responsibility of the property owner or the town. Ms. Rodriguez replied that she will talk to the Town Engineer and the Town Attorney regarding what extent the town has jurisdiction over this existing issue.

It was MOVED (Gannuscio) and SECONDED (Zimnoch) and PASSED (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission schedules a public hearing for November 12, 2019 for a special use permit and site plan review for 6 Industrial Road, A New Wellness Center, Applicant--Amanda Stenhouse (Property Owner, Kevin Armata).

C. Informal Discussions

Mr. Szepanski suggested that we add Election of Officers to the agenda for next month. Chairman Gannuscio agreed that was a good idea.

Ms. Rodriguez asked if the commission wanted to schedule a date for a public hearing for the MFSD regulation. Chairman Gannuscio suggested that Ms. Rodriguez put together a formal amendment based on the discussion that took place at the October meeting, and then the commission would discuss it in November and then schedule it for a future date.

D. Action Items (none)

IX. Communications and Bills (none)
X.  **Adjournment**

   It was **MOVED** (Gannuscio) and **SECONDED** (Szepanski) and **PASSED** (Unanimous, 5-0) that the Planning and Zoning Commission adjourns the October 15, 2019 meeting at 8:13 pm.

   Respectfully submitted,

   *Debbie Seymour*
   *Recording Secretary*