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TOWN OF DARIEN
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

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October 22, 2010

David Campbell
First Selectman
Town of Darien
2 Renshaw Road
Darien, CT 06820

RE: *Mandatory Referral under Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-24
MR #3-2010, Board of Selectmen, 35 Leroy Avenue*

Dear Mr. Campbell:

At its meeting on October 20, 2010, the Darien Planning and Zoning Commission issued its Mandatory Referral report regarding the proposal to convert the former Darien Library building at 35 Leroy Avenue to the Board of Education offices and other possible uses including office space for municipal functions and/or program space for the Darien Arts Center.

The Commission's report, approved by a vote of 4-2, is enclosed. Two Commission members did not believe that the request was consistent with the 2006 Town Plan of Conservation & Development as the Plan is written. They believe that the preferred course of action would be to amend the Town Plan.

If you have any questions about the report, please give me a call.

Sincerely,

Jeremy B. Ginsberg
Planning and Zoning Director

Enclosure

Cc: Karl Kilduff, Town Administrator

**DARIEN PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
C.G.S. SECTION 8-24 MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN, 35 LEROY AVENUE
OCTOBER 20, 2010**

Mandatory Referral #3-2010. Board of Selectmen, 35 Leroy Avenue.

Proposal to convert the former Darien Library building at 35 Leroy Avenue to the Board of Education offices and other possible uses including office space for municipal functions and/or program space for the Darien Arts Center.

As noted within a September 27, 2010 memo from First Selectman David Campbell, the Board of Education offices, which are now located at 2 Renshaw Road, are proposed to move into the former Darien Library building at 35 Leroy Avenue. Other uses now in Town Hall such as the Probate Court, Youth Options, the Darien Housing Authority, and other office space for municipal functions, and/or program space for the Darien Arts Center could also be part of such a relocation from 2 Renshaw Road to 35 Leroy Avenue.

The “shuffle” would be a multi-step process. Once all local approvals are obtained, permits would be needed to renovate the former Darien Library building at 35 Leroy Avenue into new space for the Board of Education offices and such other uses currently housed at Town Hall as the Probate Court, office space for other municipal functions, and/or program space for the Darien Arts Center. Once this is complete, the next step would be to renovate the space vacated by the Board of Education into a new Senior/Community Center at Town Hall. When the Senior/Community Center at Town Hall is complete, the existing Senior Activities Center on Edgerton Street would be razed.

Also included in this process is the possibility of constructing a new community pool addition to the Town Hall building. A related referral report has been issued separately on that part of the “shuffle”.

Re-use of the Darien Library building is specifically mentioned in the 2006 Town Plan of Conservation & Development. In Chapter 7 on page 7-2, it notes that space needs for community services need to be met. One method mentioned is by upgrading or renovating buildings. Also pertinent is Page 7-3 Recommendations, portions of which are presented here in italics:

As noted in Appendix A7, a number of other facilities are in need of replacement, renovation and/or expansion over the next ten years, including the Police Station, Darien Library, one or more of the Fire Stations, the Town Garage, and Town Hall. With this in mind, the following are recommended:

Encourage a comprehensive analysis of the space needs at Town Hall. Grants should continue to be pursued to offset the costs of improving this facility.

Consider the purchase or lease of the present Darien Library property as it plans its move to a new site.

On page 9-3 and page A7-9, the Town Plan specifically acknowledges potential re-use of the Darien Library building at 35 Leroy Avenue. Page 9-3 notes that “...efforts should be made to rezone this property to allow condominiums.” Page A7-9 notes that “The reuse of this building could be used for providing for the expansion and needs of other current public facilities and services outlined within this Chapter, or other needs, as noted elsewhere within this document.” Elsewhere in the

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Town Plan document it states the need to establish a permanent alternative site for the Senior Activities Center. It also states the need to explore possible locations for a community center/community pool facility. Relocation of the Board of Education offices would facilitate these.

COMMISSION'S FINDING:

The Commission finds that although the subject proposal does not involve rezoning the 35 Leroy Avenue property for condominiums which was one option, the subject proposal is consistent with the 2006 Town Plan of Conservation & Development because it does provide for expansion and needs of other public facilities and services. Future details of the move to 35 Leroy Avenue will be reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission as part of a subsequent formal required Special Permit application process. This review will cover many issues, including, but not limited to: hours of operation, schedule and programs, and related issues such as traffic and parking.

The Commission finds that the 2006 Town Plan of Conservation & Development indicates that 35 Leroy Avenue could be used for condominiums or housing. It also indicates on page A7-9 of the Town Plan that 35 Leroy Avenue could be used for providing for the expansion and needs of other current public facilities if the Town purchases it, which it did. Any application will require a full needs and use assessment of the spaces being occupied.

Mand. Ref/ 2 Renshaw Rd-Convert BOE