

**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning and Zoning Commission

FROM: Mark Wujtewicz, Planning Director

DATE: March 10, 2026

TITLE: Staff Report: Crystal Mall Adaptive Reuse
Electric Boat Corporation
Professional Office/Research & Development
850 Hartford Turnpike
Site Plan / Special Permit
Application PL-26-4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project as proposed is to repurpose the existing Crystal Mall property from a retail shopping center to a business/professional office with a private educational use in addition to private ancillary uses such as medical, food and financial services. The property is owned by the Electric Boat Corporation and is located at 850 Hartford Turnpike (Rte 85). It consists of 83.2 acres which includes approximately 54.6 developed acres. The Crystal Mall building contains approximately 935,361 square feet (sf) on two levels. The property is located within the Regional Commercial (C-R) and General Commercial (C-G) Zone Districts. The existing Crystal Mall Building and associated parking are located within the Regional Commercial (C-R) Zone District while the existing Longhorn Restaurant is located within the General Commercial (C-G) Zone District. There are no changes proposed to the Olive Garden and Longhorn Restaurants on the property. All the proposed uses are permitted within the Regional Commercial (C-R) Zone District.

This application is a request for a modified site plan and a new special permit approval which were originally granted by the Planning and Zoning Commission (the Commission) on November 26, 1979. The proposed changes to the site which include parking, landscaping and modification to the stormwater drainage system require a modified site plan review and approval by the Commission. The change in uses that are proposed, while permitted in the Regional Commercial (C-R) Zone District, require that a new special permit be granted for the change in use of the original special permit granted in 1979.

There are no improvements or development proposed outside of the existing developed area of the property.

BACKGROUND

Pertinent Regulations

CGS 8-3(g)

Section 9 – Regional Commercial District (C-R)

Section 9.1.3 – Business Offices and Professional Buildings

Section 9.1.13 – Laboratories, research and development and educational facilities

Section 22 – Site Plans

Section 22b – Design Review of Site and Building Requirements

Section 23 – Special Permits with Design Review

This application was received by the Commission on January 27, 2026.

The Public Hearing was advertised in The Day on February 24 and March 3, 2026.

The Public Hearing was opened on March 10, 2026.

DISCUSSION

The Crystal Mall use as a regional shopping center was approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission on November 26, 1979 as a Subdivision (# 79-08), Site Plan (#79-13) and Special Permit (#79-02). Subsequent approvals granted by the Planning and Zoning Commission include a Special Permit/Site Plan (#PZ2003-062) on July 23, 2003 for the Olive Garden Restaurant, a modified Site Plan approval (#PZ2007-015) for the repurpose of the Filene's Store to Bed Bath Beyond and Christmas Tree Shop on July 23, 2007, and a Special Permit/Site Plan approval (#PZ-2008-015) for the construction of the Longhorn Restaurant on September 8, 2008.

In order for the Commission to approve a site plan and special permit it must find that the uses as proposed in the application are consistent with the findings listed in Section 23.5 of the Zoning Regulations. As required, the applicant has submitted into the record a "Statement Regarding Compliance with Section 23.5 of the Zoning Regulations" (Exhibit 6) which describes the proposed project's consistency with the findings contained in Section 23.5 of the Zoning Regulations. The Commission may require additional conditions or stipulations to the Special Permit which must be supported by the record. It must also find that the site plan is compliant with the Zoning Regulations or it may approve a plan with modifications that are required to be implemented on the plan prior to filing on the land records.

In addition to the business and professional office use proposed, the applicant is also proposing classroom/training/workforce development as private education uses including 50 classrooms. The workforce development includes "hands-on" training in the various construction trades for the Electric Boat workforce. The materials, equipment, byproducts used to support the training must be stored in such a way as not to be visible from public view in accordance with Section 22.5(b) of the Zoning Regulations. These areas should be identified on the site plan.

The applicant has submitted a Stormwater Management Report into the record (Exhibit 2). The report provides an analysis of the existing stormwater system and analyzes the proposed

improvements to the existing system as well as incorporating new measures into the design in order to mitigate any adverse impacts from the development of the project as proposed. The amount of impervious area currently existing on the site including buildings and paved surface is approximately 54.6 acres. The redesign of the paved parking areas which includes the addition of landscape islands at the end of parking aisles and the elimination of additional paved surfaces contributes to an overall decrease of approximately 1.2 acres of impervious surface. While the existing stormwater infrastructure will remain in place, various elements in the existing system will be replaced and upgraded. Additional stormwater infrastructure will be installed that will supplement the existing system. Upgrading the drainage structures within the existing stormwater system, installing hydrodynamic separators, reducing the amount of impervious surface and increasing the amount of vegetation on the site, all contribute to reducing the impacts of stormwater run-off volume and quality in accordance with Section 25.6 of the Zoning Regulations.

The applicant submitted a Traffic Impact Study (the Study) into the record (Exhibit 7). The Study evaluated traffic impacts from scenarios considering full occupancy of the mall as a retail center and the repurpose of the property into professional offices with an anticipated workforce of approximately 4,500 to 5,000 employees. The Study evaluated the existing road network in proximity to the site and established a study area with key intersections that would be impacted by the project. The Study concluded that while there will be an overall increase in traffic volumes and delays at intersections, the implementation of onsite and offsite traffic improvements and other mitigation measures are expected to adequately mitigate the impacts to the traffic operations within the study area. The proposed offsite improvements to Rte. 85 and the northbound on-ramps and off-ramps to and from I-95 will require review and approval by the Connecticut Office of the State Traffic Authority since the State of Connecticut has jurisdiction over those roadways. The Town of Waterford's Chief of Police and its Traffic Officer submitted comments into the record (Exhibit 8) which will be included during the State's permit review process.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Based on the information provided, staff recommends the Planning and Zoning Commission find that:

Findings:

1. The property is located within the Regional Commercial (C-R) and General Commercial (C-G) Zone Districts.
2. The property is subject to an existing Special Permit #79-02 that was granted by the Commission on November 26, 1979.
3. The change in use of the property and buildings require a new special permit in accordance with Section 23.9.1 of the Zoning Regulations.
4. The uses that are proposed by the applicant are permitted in accordance with Sections 9.1.3 and 9.1.13 of the Zoning Regulations.

5. The “Statement Regarding Compliance with Section 23.5 of the Zoning Regulations” (Exhibit 6) provided by the applicant in accordance with Section 23.5 of the Zoning Regulations identify that the findings and the proposed uses are consistent with sections 23.5.1 through 23.5.9.
6. The property is subject to the original Site Plan #79-13 and a subsequent modification approval #PZ-2008-015 granted by the Commission on September 8, 2008
7. The application meets the criteria for a modified site plan approval, pursuant to Section 22 of the Waterford Zoning Regulations, subject to condition 1.
8. This application has been reviewed by the Town of Waterford Design Review Board in accordance with Section 22b of the Waterford Zoning Regulations and which Board submits a positive report to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

and that the Commission approve the proposal (with the following conditions):

1. An annual Maintenance and Inspection Report for the Stormwater management system shall be provided to the Town of Waterford Planning and Development Department. This report shall be required to be submitted in order to verify that the stormwater management system is maintained and continues to operate as originally designed.
2. All outside storage of materials used in conjunction with the workforce training programs shall be shielded from public view through the use of screening. These areas shall be identified on the plan prior to filing on the site plan on the land records.

Proposed Motion

To approve with conditions the Site Plan and Special Permit for the Crystal Mall Adaptive Reuse by Electric Boat Corporation application #PL-26-4 located at 850 Hartford Turnpike with conditions 1 and 2 and to adopt the findings 1 through 8 of the staff report dated March 10, 2026.