

Marine technology company pursues school building

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agreement with ThayerMahan, when the pandemic hit and delayed the process. But the company wants to proceed with the plan, Bronk said.

Richard J. Hine, co-founder and chief operating officer of the company at 120 Leonard Drive in Groton, told the council that the company started in 2016 with two employees — himself and co-founder Mike Connor, the company’s president and chief executive officer — and has grown to 70 employees over the last five years.

He said the company intends to turn the Groton Heights building and annex into its corporate headquarters and research and development center.

ThayerMahan’s primary markets include defense, autonomous systems, robotics systems and sensors, electronics sonar and thermal imaging, he said. The company’s primary customers are the Navy, Coast Guard and government entities, along with offshore wind businesses, including Ørsted.

For the offshore wind indus-



MAP: SCOTT RITTER/THE DAY | DATA: OPENSTREETMAP CONTRIBUTORS; ESRI

ThayerMahan, the fast-growing marine technology company, is interested in expanding and converting the former Groton Heights School at 244 Monument St. into its future headquarters. The approximately 2-acre property — by the Bill Memorial Library and Fort Griswold in the City of Groton — has been vacant since 2007.

try, ThayerMahan conducts precision seabed survey work, cable inspections, undersea infrastructure inspections, and acoustic monitoring and mitigation, including monitor-

from construction activity.

But the company hit a lull during the pandemic.

“After four years of pretty remarkable growth, we took a bit of a step back starting in March of last year when COVID hit,” Hine said, though the company managed to not lay off any employees and took advantage of relief from two Paycheck Protection Program loans.

While the company didn’t lose any work, a lot of it was delayed because customers weren’t working during the shutdown. Additionally, no one could travel, he said, putting “a significant damper” on the company’s ability to go out to sea.

“We appreciate the town’s patience in letting us ride out the storm, so to speak,” he said.

While its 2021 sales were flat from 2019, the company spent the last year and a half investing in internal research and development, Hine said. The company now has 14 patents and has acquired two companies: an acoustic services and science company in Lexington, Mass., and a small artificial intelligence company based in Groton.

He said ThayerMahan has been invited to join the World Economic Forum and was named Innovator of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut.

The company intends to hire more employees, projecting to reach 180 by the end of the next year, and its facilities needs continue to grow, Hine said.

“We’re on the upswing, and things are back on track, so we’ve re-initiated contract discussions with the town,” he said. He added that there are four land or building issues that the company is working through and will require compromise from both the company and Groton, but he sees no reason that the plan won’t move forward.

Bronk said the next step is to finalize the sales agreement that will set the stage for the future closing of the property. He expects that agreement to come before the council over the next couple of months.

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Biden dismisses critics who argued for continued presence in Afghanistan

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with likely violence, no matter when it was planned and conducted.

“To those asking for a third decade of war in Afghanistan, I ask, ‘What is the vital national interest?’” Biden said. He added, “I simply do not believe that the safety and security of America is enhanced by continuing to deploy thousands of American troops and spending billions of dollars in Afghanistan.”

Asked after the speech about Biden sounding angry at some criticism, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said that the president had simply offered his “forceful assessment.”

Biden scoffed at Republicans — and some Democrats — who contend the U.S. would have been better served maintaining a small military footprint in Afghanistan. Before Thursday’s attack, the U.S. military had not suffered a combat casualty since February 2020 — around the time the Trump administration brokered its deal with the Taliban to end the war by May of this year.

Biden said breaking the Trump deal would have restarted a shooting war. He said those who favor remaining at war also fail to recognize the weight of deployment has come with a scourge of PTSD,



EVAN VUCCI/AP PHOTO

President Joe Biden speaks about the end of the war in Afghanistan from the White House on Tuesday.

financial struggles, divorce and other problems for U.S. troops

“When I hear that we could’ve, should’ve continued the so-called low-grade effort in Afghanistan at low risk to our service members, at low cost, I don’t think enough people understand how much we’ve asked of the 1% of this country to put that uniform on,” Biden said.

In addition to all the questions at home, Biden is also adjusting to a new relationship with the Taliban, the Islamist militant group the U.S. toppled after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in America, and that is now once

again in power in Afghanistan.

Biden has tasked Secretary of State Antony Blinken to coordinate with international partners to hold the Taliban to their promise of safe passage for Americans and others who want to leave in the days ahead.

“We don’t take them by their word alone, but by their actions,” Biden said. “We have leverage to make sure those commitments are met.”

Biden also sought to push back against criticism that he fell short of his pledge to get all Americans out of the country ahead of the U.S. military withdrawal. He said that many of the Americans left behind are dual citizens, some with deep family roots that are complicating their ability to leave Afghanistan at the moment.

“The bottom line: 90% of Americans in Afghanistan who wanted to leave were able to leave,” Biden said. “For those remaining Americans. There is no deadline. We remain committed to get them out, if they want to come out.”

Biden repeated his argument that ending the Afghanistan war was a crucial step for recalibrating American foreign policy toward growing challenges posed by China and Russia — and counterterrorism concerns that pose a more potent threat to the U.S.

“There’s nothing China or Russia would rather have, want more in this competition, than the United States to be bogged down another decade in Afghanistan,” he said

In Biden’s view the war could have ended 10 years ago with the U.S. killing of Osama bin Laden, whose al-Qaida extremist network planned and executed the 9/11 plot from an Afghanistan sanctuary. Al-Qaida has been vastly diminished, preventing it thus far from again attacking the United States. The president lamented an estimated \$2 trillion of taxpayer money that was spent fighting the war.

“What have we lost as a consequence in terms of opportunities?” Biden asked.

Congressional committees, whose interest in the war waned over the years, are expected to hold public hearings on what went wrong in the final

months of the U.S. withdrawal.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., on Tuesday described the Biden administration’s handling of the evacuation as “probably the biggest failure in American government on a military stage in my lifetime” and promised that Republicans would press the White House for answers.

Meanwhile, the Senate met briefly on Tuesday with Vice President Kamala Harris presiding over the chamber, to pass by unanimous consent a bill that increases spending for temporary assistance to U.S. citizens and their dependents returning from another country because of illness, war or other crisis. Biden quickly signed the legislation, which raises funding for the program from \$1 million to \$10 million.

Sports betting, online gaming regs passed as NFL season approaches

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their entertainment, retail and restaurant business here in Connecticut,” state Sen. Cathy Osten, a Sprague Democrat, said in a statement following the committee’s vote.

Osten, chief architect of the gaming-expansion legislation and a staunch advocate of the casino-owning tribes, whose reservations are located in her district, is a member of the review committee. She said she was hopeful the BIA would approve the gaming amendments before Sept. 9.

State, tribal and lottery officials have said they hope to introduce sports wagering — online and at Foxwoods Resort Casino, at Mohegan Sun and at nearly a dozen lottery locations in northern and western parts of the state — during the upcoming NFL season.

Discussion among committee members Tuesday focused on the “emergency” nature of the regulations and a provision that will allow patrons to fund their online gaming accounts with credit cards that can be jointly held.

Sen. John Kissel, an Enfield Republican, raised objections on both counts, saying it was wrong for the state to be rushing “to meet the start of the football season” while considering regulations that afford people “another opportunity to gamble away money.” Kissel said allowing people to gamble with credit cards while imposing insufficient limits on losses was dangerous.

“At some point, I don’t want to turn Connecticut into Potteryville,” he said.

Kissel said allowing the use of jointly held credit cards to fund online gaming accounts could put relationships at risk, such as in the case of a couple where one party has a gambling addiction. When he proposed striking the use of joint accounts from the regulations, he learned there was no such provision. While the original version of the regulations contained language expressly prohibiting the use of joint accounts, the language had been removed from the final “substitute” version forwarded to the committee.

Michelle Seagull, the DCP commissioner, said the language banning the use of joint credit cards had been removed because such a provision would have been difficult to police and because “those with significant (gambling) problems are going to find ways around it.” She said such a provision would be a burden to the casual bettor.

Kissel conceded the rules for approving emergency regulations prevented him from moving to have the language restored.

Three other Republicans — Sen. Craig Miner of Litchfield and Reps. Ben McGorty of Shelton and Dave Rutigliano of Trumbull — joined Kissel in voting to disapprove the regulations.

Osten urged that DCP, in amending the regulations in

the future, allow patrons to use online payment services like PayPal, Venmo and Apple Pay.

Both tribes issued statements expressing appreciation for the review committee’s approval of the regulations.

“As we continue to work with the Governor’s office and Department of Consumer Protection in the coming months, we will collectively gain experience and comfort in this market,” said Rodney Butler, the Mashantucket chairman. “We anticipate there will be further clarification of the regulations before a vote on final regulations early next year that will align with best practices we see in competitive markets throughout the country.”

Butler said his tribe expects BIA approval of its gaming amendment “within the next two weeks” and is “working to launch online gaming and sports betting as soon as we are legally allowed to do so.”

“We deeply appreciate the hard work that has gone into making today’s vote possible,” said James Gessner Jr., the Mohegan chairman. “The commitment of government employees from the state and tribes to work together through weekends and holidays was truly impressive. We look forward to continuing to share ideas on how to make this new opportunity fun but most importantly safe.”

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