

**CITY OF NORWALK  
ZONING COMMITTEE  
February 11, 2016**

**PRESENT:** Emily Wilson, Chair; Linda Kruk; Jill Jacobson; Adam Blank; Mike O'Reilly; Rod Johnson; Douglas Stern

**STAFF:** Mike Greene; Dori Wilson; Frank Strauch; Adam Carsen

**OTHERS:** Atty Bill Hennessey; Doug Adams; John Plant; Robert Barry; John Mallin; Atty Jackie Kaufman;

Emily Wilson called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

**I. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE BUILDING ZONE MAP/ZONING AMENDMENT/SITE PLAN/CAM**

**a) #3-15M/#11-15R/#7-15SPR/#8-15SPR/#20-15CAM - Highpointe Holding, LLC – 8 North Av/37 - 48 High St Proposed zone change from Neighborhood Business to CBDD Subarea A (7 lots); proposed amendments to CBDD Subarea A regulations to increase FAR from 2.0 to 2.25, increase residential density from 1 unit per 800 sf to 1 unit per 500 sf of lot area and add wider sidewalks as new amenity throughout CBDD and site plans for 2 new 6 story mixed use developments: Highpointe West 74-88 Main St; 6-8 North Av; 37-45 High St: 212 units & 12,730 sf retail and Highpointe East 42-48 High St: 66 units & 4,320 sf retail – Final review prior to hearing**

Dori Wilson discussed the outstanding items. There was a discussion of the through block arcade. Craig Flaherty also explained how it helped the pedestrian walk to the parking garage. It would be on the Zoning Commission agenda for the following week. The applicant did grant an extension to the Zoning Commission for action on the application.

**b) #4-15M/#18-15R/#21-15SP/#26-15CAM/#22-15SP/#27-15CAM – Norwalk Land Development, LLC (The SoNo Collection) – 1 Putnam Av/63 West Av – Proposed map change from RPDD Subarea A & B to entirely Subarea A; proposed amendments to change sf of retail permitted in RPDD Subarea A and related amendments and special permit/coastal site plan for 8 story, 1,004,693 sf development with 661,798 sf retail, 39,434 sf restaurant, 26,561 sf health club, 13 story, 170 room hotel and 2,968 space parking garage (2 parcels) – Preliminary review**

Dori Wilson began the presentation by orienting the commissioners as to the location of the property on an aerial map as well as the site plans. She also handed out amendments to the commissioners which she said she had not yet reviewed. The change from the plans that they have not seen before is that the traffic will now be on the same level and not go into a tunnel. There was a discussion of the special meeting dates for this application, which were March 3, April 7 and May 4 for the public hearing. There was also a discussion about a peer review for the traffic study. The Department of Public Works would work with the Zoning Department staff to find a consultant to do the study. The applicant would pay for the cost of the peer review. She asked the commissioners to think of any questions they would like to have studied in the review.

Atty Hennessey continued the presentation by introducing the design team and explaining that the applicant would be changing the zone map. He explained what the zone currently allowed and what the applicant would like to change. Mr. Blank then discussed what he would like the applicant to consider for the next meeting. He was concerned about the back of the garage and the walk bridge construction. He was also concerned that there is no bus stop at the mall.

Doug Adams, the developer for GGP, introduced the design team.

John Plant, the engineer for the project, continued the presentation by explaining the goal which was not to impact local traffic patterns. He said that most of the traffic would have easy access from I-95.

Robert Barry continued the presentation by discussing the design of the plans. He explained that they tried to activate West Ave. by having plaza spaces and retail. They wanted it to have a connection to South Norwalk. He discussed the roof plan which did not include rooftop mechanicals but did include a rooftop terrace. He described vehicle and pedestrian entrances into the building. He showed the commissioners many different site plans for the parking garage, the mall plan as well as a sculpture garden. There was a discussion of which will be the most heavily used pedestrian and vehicular entrances. Safety is a concern and there will be crosswalks. There was a discussion of the loading docks as well as escalators and elevators. Delivery times for the stores will be discussed, as part of the overall management plan, at a future date. There was then a detailed discussion of the various parking levels. There was a discussion of the sculpture garden which could be used, not just for those that are at the mall, but as a destination for the community. There was also a detailed discussion of the rooftop terrace which could have outdoor concerts during the summer, etc. Mr. Blank suggested that a sporting goods store could use it as a place where customers could try out their equipment, as a marketing tool. Mr. Barry then discussed the history of Norwalk and how it could affect the project and be integrated into the project.

Dori Wilson discussed the OSTA application and its deadline.

## **II. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE BUILDING ZONE REGULATIONS/SPECIAL PERMITS**

### **a) #14-15R/#19-15SP - A. J. Penna & Son - 2 Muller Av - Proposed amendment to permit contractors storage yards on parcels of 2 acres or more that abut a limited access hwy and contractor yard in Bus #2 zone - Review of public hrg**

Dori Wilson began the presentation by explaining that the APA has acted on the application so that the Zoning Commission could now vote on it. The Planning Commission suggested language for the resolution which limited contractor storage yards from being near multi-family units. They would also reference the APA's conditions in their Zoning Commission resolutions.

At this point in the meeting, John Mallin, the attorney for Home Depot appeared to make a presentation. Since the Plan Review meeting was over, Mr. Blank suggested that he speak with the Zoning Department staff to find out the next steps.

### **b) #15-15R –Zoning Commission – Proposed amendments to Section 118-1050 Workforce Housing regulation to revise priority designations for workforce units - Review of public hrg**

Dori Wilson explained to that Corporation Counsel had rendered an opinion on the proposed amendment so that the Zoning Commission could proceed with voting on this matter.

### **c) #17-15R – Zoning Commission – Proposed amendments to exempt seasonal outdoor dining from parking requirements in designated sections of East Norwalk – Further review**

Dori Wilson said that the proposed amendment had been referred to the Planning Commission and would be acted upon in March. It was scheduled to be on the March 16 Zoning Commission agenda.

**d) #1-16R/#8-14SPR – CP IV Waypointe BP I, LLC – Proposed amendments to Article 121 regarding Design District Development Park signs in Central Business Design District and modification of approved plans for South Block to add signage – Preliminary review; for distribution ONLY**

Dori Wilson explained that this application would be on the agenda for the next month with the other applications. She gave a brief explanation of the proposed amendment. Mr. Greene explained the history of the sign regulations during the planning stages many years before.

Atty Kaufman suggested that there should be a manual, which the applicant has drafted, which would set forth the details of the design elements for the signs.

Mr. Blank wanted to confirm that there was no changeable copy on the sign. It would not be in the proposed amendment. There was a discussion as to how the proposed signs would be reviewed. Mr. Flaherty said that larger stores would probably get larger signs and the other stores would get the required height letters.

**e) Setbacks and buffers from jurisdiction line for coastal properties – Further discussion**

Dori Wilson handed out aerial maps to the commissioners to begin the discussion. She explained the lines on the maps. Some of the properties would be non-conforming if the setbacks and buffers were changed. There was a discussion as to how the property owner could expand their homes if they were in this area. Some owners could not expand where they wanted to. Emily Wilson suggested that they make an exemption. The D.E.E.P. has requested that Norwalk consider revising their regulations. Mr. Strauch discussed the coastal jurisdiction line. There was a discussion as to the regulations of other towns. Property owners could get a variance if there was a hardship.

**f) FAR for residential properties – Further discussion**

Mr. Blank asked that this item be tabled.

**g) Notification of neighbors – Further discussion**

There was a discussion as to why there should be an earlier notification from the property owner that an application has been filed. Some neighbors end up knowing a few days before so this would change the process. It would be added to the Zoning Commission agenda for hearing.

**h) Parking in front setback – Further discussion**

They are waiting to hear from the CNNA. This item would be tabled until April. This has been a problem for a very long time. Mr. Greene noted that people on both sides of the issue are quite passionate about it.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Diana Palmentiero