

CITY OF NORWALK
JOINT SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
June 7, 2016

DRAFT: NOT APPROVED BY THE COMMISSIONS

PRESENT: Torgny Astrom, Chair of the Planning Commission; Fran DiMeglio (arrived after the roll call); Steve Ferguson; Walter McLaughlin; Joel Zaremby William Dunne; David Davidson;
Adam Blank, Chair of the Zoning Commission; Nate Sumpter; Douglas Stern;
Rod Johnson; Michael O'Reilly; Michael Witherspoon (arrived after the roll call)

STAFF: Michael Wrinn; Dori Wilson

OTHERS: Tim Sheehan; Emily Innes;

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Astrom called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Wrinn called the roll.

III. PRESENTATION OF SOUTH NORWALK TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) REDEVELOPMENT PLAN AND PROPOSED ZONING CHANGES: South Norwalk Transit Oriented Development (TOD) District as recommended and described in a certain document entitled "City of Norwalk South Norwalk TOD Redevelopment Plan Revised Draft January 2016" and in another document entitled "City of Norwalk South Norwalk TOD Redevelopment Plan Proposed Zoning Changes March 2016"

Tim Sheehan, director of the Redevelopment Agency, began the presentation by thanking the commissioners for their time. He explained why they had come before the commissions. The Transit Oriented Development ("TOD") Redevelopment Plan ("Plan") is required to be presented to the Planning Commission for comment and then approved by the Common Council. There would be some recommendations from the Zoning Commission as well. He explained what the TOD Redevelopment Plan was. He also explained what the Plan was not.

Emily Innes, with The Cecil Group, who continued the presentation, explained where the TOD neighborhood was, which was the South Norwalk train station area. She then explained the previous TOD strategy as well as how the information was obtained. She explained how it was incorporated into the Redevelopment Plan. There was a discussion of various neighborhoods that were part of the Plan. There was also a discussion of the marine commercial district which has a different purpose.

Tim Sheehan continued the presentation with a discussion of urban renewal and equitable development. The plan looked at ways to do this and implementing them. At this point, he went through the PowerPoint presentation with the commisisoners. There was a discussion of workforce housing regulations and displacement issues. There was also a

discussion about how the process would work with making sure neighborhoods would know about the Plan as well as new developments coming to them. Mr. Sheehan also discussed community meetings and newspapers as to how the Redevelopment Agency reached out to the neighborhoods.

Mr. Sumpter suggested that churches could be a way to reach out to neighbors. He explained many strategies of the Plan. Mr. Sheehan explained two properties that they will be focusing on for development, one is the Washington Village development and the other is the Webster Street parking lot as well as several other lots for the next 5-8 years. There was a discussion of infill development. There was a discussion of eminent domain and creating a value for the property that would be redeveloped. There was a discussion of blight. Mr. Sheehan said that no one wanted their neighborhood to be considered “blighted.”

There was then a discussion about allowing the private market to determine what the market wanted. Mr. Sheehan said that it would be better to be a part of the process, rather than not having any input into it. There was a discussion of Sono Gardens. There was a discussion about the infrastructure that had to be in place before the private sector would become involved in these projects. Mr. McLaughlin was concerned that projects would be started and then left uncompleted for many years.

Ms. Innes continued the presentation with more discussion of blight. She then made references to the presentation as well as the fact that the definition of “blight” is from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”). Mr. Sheehan also discussed blight further. He then noted that the urban renewal and redevelopment does not occur quickly. Ms. Innes then discussed incompatible uses as well as environmental problems that would have to be dealt with on state and federal levels. Flooding is also a problem in these areas which causes many problems such as mold, and other storm damages. She then discussed the zoning districts which may make it difficult for private developers to commit to development. There are several urban renewal plans that have expired in this area. She discussed keeping the existing inventory of workforce housing as well as added more units to it. There was then a discussion of remediation of some sites.

There was a discussion of the Neighborhood Choice areas and funding. Ms. Innes discussed the Design Guidelines which only apply for applicants who are filing an application with the Redevelopment Agency. There are different types of Design Guidelines which she explained and included lighting, and renovations of historic buildings. She explained the changes they were proposing to the zoning regulations and their impacts on TOD. There were meetings with some developers who have had a chance to comment on these proposed changes. There was then a discussion of the inventory of the historic structures in the city. Ms. Innes discussed two test sites as well as the parking on the sites. Mr. Sheehan suggested that one place to park would be the train station because it is empty at night. There was a discussion about the fact that there are no gas stations in this area. Ms. Innes said that they would be happy to add any businesses to the proposal that they deemed beneficial to the neighborhood. There was a discussion about the proposed density. There was also a discussion of the proposed zoning changes which included districts that would be gone, and parking requirements.

Mr. Blank then had some changes that he recommended to the proposed Plan. Mr. Sheehan discussed some problems with parking facilities that sit empty at night. There was then a discussion about past development plans and their success.

There was a discussion on how the process would work to have the Plan approved and the necessary zoning changes approved.

Mr. Sheehan discussed the housing demands which he said that there were not enough 2 bedrooms or more.

IV. COMMENTS OF ACTING DIRECTOR

There were no comments from the acting director.

V. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

There were no comments from the commissioners.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Blank made a Motion to Adjourn.

Ms. Wilson seconded.

Adam Blank; Emily Wilson; Doug Stern, Jill Jacobson and Michael Witherspoon voted in favor.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:13 p.m

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero