

**CITY OF NORWALK
ZONING COMMITTEE
November 9, 2016**

PRESENT: Rod Johnson, acting as Chair; Joe Passero; Mike Witherspoon; Adam Blank; Richard Rowena; Nate Sumpter; Douglas Stern; Mike O'Reilly; Louis Schulman

STAFF: Steve Kleppin; Dori Wilson

OTHERS: Atty Liz Suchy; Doug Adams; Pete Romano; Vincent Penna; Atty. Glickson

The meeting began at 8:39 p.m.

I. DPW REFERRAL: 8-24 Review – Public Works Committee of Common Council – Street Abandonment/Discontinuance under Sect95-35 of City Code of a 92+/- sf portion of Hanford Place Right-Of-Way (known as Parcel X-1)

Ms. Wilson began the presentation by describing the street abandonment. She said that the city did not want to own the property but that the developer did. It was scheduled for the Zoning Commission agenda later in the month.

II. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE BUILDING ZONE MAP

a) #1-16M – F. DiMeglio - 56 County St/Strawberry Hill Ave - Proposed Change to the Building Zone Map from A Residence in part & B Residence in part to entirely B Residence – Preliminary review

Ms. Wilson began the presentation by describing the building lot as split zoned. She indicated that the applicant would like to subdivide the zone in the future.

Atty. Suchy introduced the applicant, Fran DiMeglio, who is a Planning Commissioner. She then oriented the commissioners as to the location of the property on the site plan. She also showed them photos of the property as it currently looks. The applicant would like to move the zone line so that the entire property would be in the B residential zone. She also noted that the applicant would like to subdivide the property. She requested a waiver of the traffic reports. There was then a discussion of the notices to be sent to the abutting neighbors.

III. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE BUILDING ZONE REGULATIONS/SP PERMITS/SITE PLANS

a) #21-15SP/#26-15CAM/#22-15SP/#27-15CAM – Norwalk Land Development, LLC (The SoNo Collection) – 1 Putnam Av/63 West Av/N. Water St – North Parcel: 8 story, 762,000 sf mixed use retail shopping center w/506,705 sf retail, 31,350 sf restaurant/cafe w/2,484 pkg sp & South Parcel: 8 story, 302,000 sf mixed use retail shopping ctr w/154,817 sf retail, 13,017 sf restaurant/cafe & public improvements & 13 story, 152 rm hotel (105,427 sf) w/539 pkg sp – Request to modify plans w/architectural/façade changes/add retail space/Waiting for Redevelopment comments

Ms. Wilson began the presentation and introduced Doug Adams, a principal of GGP.

Mr. Adams continued the presentation by noting to the commissioners that although the applicant had requested changes to the approval granted in June, after many discussions, they had returned to the original plans that were approved for the façade materials. The original large

staircase in front was modified and made smaller. Ms. Wilson also noted the changes in the memo received from the applicant. A zoning permit has been issued but will be modified if the changes are approved. There was a discussion about when the applicant would be ready to break ground which the applicant hoped would be in 2 months. The request to modify the approved plans will be scheduled for the Zoning Commission agenda in the following week.

b) #6-16R/#6-16SPR/#7-16SPR/#20-16CAM/#21-16CAM - Norwalk Land Development LLC - 1 Putnam Av (North parcel) & 63 West Ave (South parcel) – Proposed amendments to Article 121 regarding Electronic Video Screen Signs and Exterior sign manual for Mixed use retail shopping centers in Reed Putnam Design District Subarea A and site plan review of The SoNo Collection Comprehensive Exterior Signage Manual dated Oct 4, 2016 and graphic examples dated rev Oct 7, 2016 for The SoNo Collection properties – Review of public hearing (act by Nov 16)

Ms. Wilson then began a review of the public hearing so that the commissioners could begin a discussion of the proposed amendments and sign manuals. They discussed the concerns of the Planning Commission with regards to the tenant expression signs. There was a discussion as to whether they should be controlled by the landlord/developer. There were concerns about how the EVS signs would look facing I-95. Some commissioners thought that EVS signs facing North Water St. were not necessary. A lengthy discussion ensued about the number of EVS signs on I-95 and whether the same copy or different copy should be shown on it. The discussion also included the timing of the copy as well as the brightness. Action will be scheduled for the Zoning Commission agenda in the following week

c) #8-16R/#12-16SP – V. Penna Sr. – 284 New Canaan Ave – Proposed amendments to Section 118-100 to revise the definition for Public utility supply or storage facility and to Article 30 to amend special permit criteria for such uses when located in AAA Residence zones and special permit to reuse former Armory Building for a public utility storage facility owned by an independent entity – Preliminary review

Ms. Wilson began the presentation with a brief overview of the application.

Mr. Peter Romano of LandTech oriented the commissioners as to the location of the property on the site plan map. He discussed the changes the application was requesting in the zone regulations. He explained how the applicant's company worked with the city and utility companies in the area. The property would mostly stay the same. He described how the site would be used in regular hours and emergencies. Due to the nature of the business, workers may be out late at night to fix downed wires, etc.

The application was also before the Conservation Commission because there are wetlands on the parcel. The building would be screened from the road. There was a discussion on the types of vehicles that would be allowed on the Merritt Parkway, as well as when the trucks would leave and return to the property. They would not all come back at the same time because their jobs would end at different times. There was a description of the proposed buffers. The applicant does not anticipate loud activities.

The applicant, Vinny Penna, continued the presentation by explaining about backing up noises from the trucks.

There was a discussion of the amendments as well as the fact that the application was referred to the Planning Commission and adjacent towns including the Town of New Canaan. They were waiting for an approval from the Conservation Commission. Mr. Romano said that they would try to hold a meeting with the neighbors. Mr. Blank encouraged it.

d) Review of draft amendments and map changes associated with South Norwalk Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Redevelopment Plan – Informal discussion

Ms. Wilson introduced Atty. Andrew Glickson who was representing the Redevelopment Agency on drafting the proposed TOD amendments and map changes.

Atty. Glickson continued the presentation to go over the packets that were distributed in October. He described the existing Redevelopment areas. He described why the current plans were adopted, the different districts. He went over the changes that the Redevelopment Agency was suggesting. They were proposing a new Springwood Whistleville Village district similar to the East Avenue Village District. There was a discussion of architectural review. There was a discussion of replacing affordable housing. Mr. Schulman was concerned about people who lived here who would then not be able to afford the new housing. He made some suggestions for developers. There was a discussion of the village district review versus the Redevelopment Agency's design review. The Commission requested more information such as a full build out and the effects of using a parking management plan instead of a long term parking lease. Atty. Glickson indicated that the Redevelopment Agency would review the requests and provide a new draft of the zoning regulations.

e) Overview of medical marijuana regulations in adjoining municipalities

Ms. Wilson began the presentation by stating that the Chief of Police would be weighing in on this matter. She also noted that they were still doing research about what other towns are doing. Mr. Schulman asked if they could find out what Norwalk Hospital thought about having a facility in Norwalk.

f) Discussion of setbacks from tidal wetlands

Mr. Blank began the presentation by discussing the background of complaints from residents about the size of houses, etc. The D.E.E.P. suggested that the city develop regulations for setbacks. There was a discussion of other towns that do have regulations.

Mr. Blank also discussed the fact that he would be leaving the Zoning Commission.

A member of the public apologized for speaking out of turn but noted that he was impressed by the way the meeting ran.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Diana Palmentiero