

**CITY OF NORWALK
THE PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
JUNE 12, 2017**

ATTENDANCE: John Kydes, Chair; Doug Hempstead; Thomas Livingston;
John Igneri; Shannon O'Toole-Giandurco

STAFF: Timothy Sheehan, Executive Director, Redevelopment
Agency; Steve Kleppin, Director, Planning & Zoning;
Elizabeth Stocker, Director, Economic Development

OTHERS: Bruce Kimmel; Richard Bonenfant, Common Council
Members

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Kydes called the meeting to order at 6:05PM.

ROLL CALL

Chairman Kydes called the roll and everyone listed on the attendance was present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Deborah Goldstein stated that she was heartbroken when the COG was joined so late in the process and that the last round of TOD grant application award process was missed. She said she is now pleased that Norwalk is so engaged with the COG and that we are not only able to be aware of the TOD grant opportunity, but Mr. Kleppin has found a way to apply for TOD grant planning money that would help benefit more than just East Norwalk. She said that she thinks that letters of support will be forthcoming from stakeholders prior to it going to the Common Council for approval and that she is very excited to see that there may be some formal planning going on in the East Norwalk transit area, and she is hoping that the Commission gives its support to pass it on to the Common Council for approval.

Ms. Diane Cece stated that she thinks that the dollar amount for the POCD is woefully inadequate when compared with the funding for something that has to do with the parking studies and other studies, and thinks that it is a very limited amount of money considering the POCD takes on the future of the city for the entire city.

Ms. Cece spoke about the TOD request for allotment for the special grants for East Norwalk and stated that one of the things that people would want to guard against is having other people's visions thrust upon the neighborhood, and it needs to be something that starts with a question of what people envision for the neighborhood and build on it from there. She said that she is also excited about it because there is an opportunity when looking at TOD in the East Norwalk area to revisit some projects that are already on the books that are very questionable.

Ms. Cece said in the correspondences that were received from Ms. Stocker in terms of what the incentives may be regarding the enterprise zone, it concerned her that the word "stalled" was included which probably means that it is already approved, and that some portion of the permits are ready to go. She said she is also concerned because the correspondences said that there are guidelines that are being offered for discussion and approval and suggested that better contracts are written in the City, so that when a developer thinks that the conditions have changed for them and it is no longer profitable that it is not Norwalk's problem. She said that she understands that the proposals on the enterprise zones are on a case by case basis but she wants to make sure that it is for that project, and that it is with the project and developer and that it does not transfer with the land.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) May 4, 2017 Regular Meeting

**** MR.IGNERI MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH FOUR (4) IN FAVOR AND ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MR. HEMPSTEAD).**

B) May 9, 2017 Special Meeting/Public Hearing

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH FOUR (4) IN FAVOR AND ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MR. HEMPSTEAD).**

C) May 15, 2017 Special Meeting/Public Hearing

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH FOUR (4) IN FAVOR AND ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MR. HEMPSTEAD).**

II. BUSINESS

A. PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT.

1. Advance to the Common Council the contract for the Plan of Conservation and Development to Stantec in the amount of \$195,000.

Mr. Kleppin gave an overview of the plan. Mr. Livingston asked if the Library will be incorporated into the POCD Plan and if so how will it be incorporated into the plan. Mr. Kleppin said they will need to wait and see what will come out of the next steps for the library. Mr. Livingston said if the library project proposal is approved, that one of the ideas was that the city would be looking at the whole area, and asked if that will be part of the POCD or a separate planning exercise. Mr. Kleppin said that would be a separate planning exercise, but that there would be connectivity between the two plans. Mr. Livingston asked if the \$195,000 is enough funds for the POCD plan. Mr. Kleppin discussed the scope of work Stantec has put together and the multiple planning processes that are underway, and said that the concern among city staff is that after a while people get burned out on meetings, and that they have talked about coordination between all the studies, in terms of outreach and he thinks it will save money for the city, and will lead to a better product, and that he thinks that it's better planning cohesive for everybody. Mr. Hempstead asked what the Oversight Committee is. Mr. Kleppin said that he will get him the list but that it is a group that was put together prior to him being hired through the Mayor's office, and since then there has been numerous individuals that have been added but that statutorily the Planning Commission has oversight of the POCD itself, so the Planning Commission has merged with the Oversight Committee that was already established in order to get a broader collision of people. Mr. Hempstead said that the Common Council also has to approve the plan and asked if any members of the Common Council are on the Oversight Committee. Mr. Kleppin said "yes". Mr. Igneri said that there are representatives from each of the districts. Mr. Kleppin said that he will e-mail a list of the Oversight Committee to all the members of the Planning Commission. Mr. Hempstead asked Mr. Kleppin if he will be meeting with all the boards or agencies in the beginning of the process to try and extract what their vision for Norwalk is. Mr. Kleppin said that the consultant will be meeting with representatives from each of the boards and or commission, as well as department heads in interview sessions and that there will also be a kickoff meeting in the fall where everyone will be invited to participate. Mr. Kydes asked when the deadline is. Mr. Kleppin said technically it is July, 2018, but they will not make that deadline and that the State is aware of that and that he has been in contact with them and as long as the process has begun it is not a problem. Mr. Kydes stated that he would like to see specifics in the plan a specific projects and incorporate capital dollars behind that which in the past has never been the case, and he plans to keep himself and the Planning Committee updated moving forward. Mr. Livingston asked what the expected completion date is. Mr. Kleppin said by the fall of 2018. Mr. Kydes asked if the Planning Committee will have the ability to amend the document. Mr. Kleppin said that once the Planning Committee accepts the

draft he will refer it to the Common Council for their approval, and if they have any issues it will go come back to the Planning Committee to look at those issues, but said that hopefully the plan is inclusive enough in terms of individuals participating and the outreach that is conducted that there will be no changes. Ms. O'Toole Giandurco asked Mr. Kleppin with his background if he has done a POCD before. Mr. Kleppin said "yes" for the Town of New Canaan. Mr. Kimmel asked if the plan will show where Norwalk will be in the future and if there is a vision for particular areas. Mr. Kleppin said "yes" and one of the first steps of the plan will be to develop a theme and vision and the plan will build from there.

**** MR. IGNERI MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

B. TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

1. Advance to the Common Council a resolution authorizing the submission of a Smart Growth/TOD grant application to the State Office of Policy and Management requesting the amount of \$225,000.

Mr. Kleppin gave an overview and stated that this is the second offering of this specific grant proposal from the State, and there may not be an offering of a third opportunity so he thinks this is a good opportunity to try and get some funding while the funding is there. He said that he is proposing to submit a planning grant application for East Avenue and the Wall Street area, and specifically the idea of have a train station in that area. He said that he has received his first letter of partnering support from the East Norwalk Business Association and that he thinks there will be others forthcoming in both the East Norwalk and Wall Street areas. Mr. Kyles requested that Chris Perone be invited to participate. Mr. Kleppin said that the grant is due by June 23, 2017. Mr. Hempstead asked if the grant is granted what is the estimated time frame on getting this completed. Mr. Kleppin said based on his past experience the announcement will come out sometime in the fall, so the process should begin in the late winter or spring of 2018.

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

C. NORWALK ENTERPRISE ZONE

1. Follow up on incentives

Ms. Stocker said that she is back before the ommittee as a result of the last discussion and that originally she had submitted a recommendation that the enterprise zone get extended to the West Avenue and Wall Street area under the

State Statue, and she heard back from the committee requesting additional information on all of the incentives which she had provided, and if this can be done on a case by case basis rather than a geographic area. She said that she reviewed the statue again and 12-65B does permit the city to consider incentives on a case by case basis. She said that she has provided guidelines for the committee's consideration and discussed the parameters. She said it provides flexibility when you have the guidelines to consider and should be adopted so that there is a formal program. Mr. Kydes asked if there is a way to be specific if the area where to be blanketed on whom would benefit from the tax incentives, and at what stage of development could they be at to be able to apply for the tax incentive. Ms. Stocker said that per the guidelines the incentive can be offered to any project. Mr. Livingston asked what the need of the enterprise zone is. Mr. Sheehan so that there is some level of substance associated with a project so that the return is adequate to what the market is looking for, and that there are specific findings that the areas have to meet to become an enterprise zone. There was discussion of the approval process and Mr. Sheehan said that if a program is adopted that at least there is an understanding that there is the ability to pursue an incentive package for a particular development, and that becomes allotted to a development at the discretion of the Common Council. Mr. Kydes asked if that leaves the city open to liability. Mr. Sheehan said that would be a question for the Corporation Counsel's office. Mr. Hempstead asked why this is being done prior to the TOD study. Ms. O'Toole Giandurco asked if negotiating each project individually opens the City up to liability, and if the Common Council should be deciding public benefit on specific projects and giving huge tax incentives. There was further discussion and it was decided that there needs to be further discussion at a later date.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd
Telesco Secretarial Services