

**CITY OF NORWALK
LAND USE COMMITTEE
MARCH 31, 2009**

PRESENT: Torgny Astrom, Chair; Walter McLaughlin; Walter Briggs; Joel Zaremby; Don Nelson; Frances DiMeglio; Steven Ferguson; Victor Cavallo (7:45)

STAFF: Mike Greene

Ms. DiMeglio opened the meeting at 7:37 pm.

Referrals

- a. Mayor's Office—Addition of new project to FY 2009-10 Capital Budget—New fire truck for the Sixth Taxing District in the amount \$300,000**

Mr. Greene described the details of the funding, explaining that it involved “piggy-backing” on the City’s Triple A bond rating. He added that the proposal would have no impact on the City’s debt position and would be extended as a courtesy.

Ms. DiMeglio asked why the item was not presented at the Capital Budget meeting. Mr. Tom Hamilton, of the Finance Department, said that it only recently came up, partly due to the effect of the Ambler project on the budget.

- b. DEP/USACE Referral—45 Rowayton Avenue—Modification to an existing dock**

Mr. Greene explained that the proposal involved changing the configuration of the dock to make the dock longer and the raft smaller. Mr. Briggs asked if it were a city float. Mr. Greene said that it was a private dock.

Ms. DiMeglio asked about DEP’s involvement. Mr. Greene said that DEP had conducted a preliminary review.

- c. Zoning Commission referral--#2-09R—TR Sono Partners, LLC—Proposed amendments to Washington Street Design District to increase height and stories for hotels and related parking amendments**

Mr. Greene described the location of the building, explaining that it was now a one-story building, which would be increased from a height of 50 feet to 89 feet. He also described the proposed valet parking at the site, clarifying that it was hotel parking only, not public parking.

Mr. Nelson asked what the street number of the building was. Mr. Greene said that it was #43 and #47.

Mr. Zaremby asked if a particular hotel chain had committed to the project yet. Mr. Greene said no.

Mr. Briggs asked the number of rooms in the hotel. Mr. Greene said there would be 121 rooms. He added that there was a similar existing hotel in Stamford. He described the site and its well-designed parking garage.

Mr. McLaughlin noted that the hotel was very close to the river. Mr. Greene discussed the details of its design, pointing out that it was not out-of-scale with other buildings in the area.

Mr. Ferguson asked how the character of the building fit in with other area buildings. Mr. Greene said that it presented a good transition between the historical buildings and other buildings. Mr. Ferguson also asked about the high-traffic area near the site. Mr. Greene stated that the hotel would not change the traffic significantly, explaining that there was a designated loading area and that on-street parking would be removed in one area.

Mr. Greene also said that the Redevelopment Agency had reviewed the proposal and that it complied with design guidelines.

d. Zoning Commission referral--#1-09R—Zoning Commission—Proposed amendments to Articles 10, 30, 50, and 140 to add new definitions for medical office, portable storage and restaurant and related technical amendments

Mr. Astrom explained that the proposal involved the definitions of certain zoning terms. Mr. Greene gave background concerning the distinction between restaurants and taverns and their allowed uses.

Mr. Astrom asked if the proposal involved only the Washington Street district. Mr. Greene said yes, explaining that it is unnecessary to make the distinction in most zones. There was a discussion of the “active floor area” in the establishments.

e. Zoning Commission referral--#3-09—Zoning Commission—Proposed amendments to Articles 111 and 140 regarding fees for unauthorized modifications to approved plans

Mr. Greene discussed the trend of applicants obtaining permits to build one thing and then building something different and later obtaining the correct permit. He said that there would now be a fee for such modifications.

Mr. Ferguson asked if applicants could be charged different levels of fines, based on a percentage of the building cost. Mr. Greene said that it would be a flat fee for now. He explained that the fees were justified by staff time, rather than being an actual penalty fee.

Mr. Ferguson asked if this could be a Building Department fee. Mr. Greene said that it was being kept in the Zoning department.

Mr. Briggs asked about the penalty for non-payment of the fee. Mr. Greene said the applicant would not be issued a certificate of occupancy.

Mr. Cavallo asked how the amount of the fee was decided upon. Mr. Greene said it was an estimate of staff time.

Mr. McLaughlin asked what fee Stamford and Bridgeport charged. Mr. Greene said he did not believe those cities charged a fee, but stated that Norwalk had far more violations and that cleaning up the violations was a priority.

The meeting was adjourned at 8 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Charlene Smith

