

CITY OF NORWALK
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
March 19, 2019

PRESENT: Frances DiMeglio, Chair; (after the roll call); David Davidson; Mary Peniston; Brian Baxendale; Tammy Langalis; Michael Mushak; Nora King (arrived at 6:18 p.m.) Steve Ferguson (arrived at 7 p.m.)

STAFF: Steve Kleppin; Mike Wrinn

OTHERS: David Westmoreland; Susan Sweitzer; Mr. _____;

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Langalis called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Kleppin called the roll.

III. DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION

c) Special Appropriation – Historical Commission – Water lines at Lockwood Mathews Mansion – Report and recommendation

Mr. Wrinn asked if this item could be taken first since members of the Historical Commission were in attendance but would have to leave early. The commissioners agreed. Mr. Wrinn began the presentation by explaining why the Historical Commission was requesting a special appropriation. He said that there was a problem with the water lines and it was a safety issue. He noted that the project had been out to bid already. There was a discussion about water lines to Stepping Stones Museum which Mr. Westmoreland said that they already had. He also explained that there would be one water meter instead of four.

**** MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED: BE IT RESOLVED** by the Planning Commission that the special capital appropriation request from the Historical Commission for \$67,500 to install new water service line to serve buildings in Mathews Park be approved; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the reason for this action is:

1) To implement the Plan of Conservation and Development goal that Norwalk's infrastructure and public facilities are resource efficient, well maintained, cost effective, sustainable and resilient.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that notice of this action be forwarded to the Common Council.

Mr. Davidson seconded.

Frances DiMeglio; David Davidson; Mary Peniston; Brian Baxendale; Tammy Langalis; Michael Mushak.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

a) Subdivision #3637 – 35 Meeker Court, LLC – 35 Meeker Court – 4 Lots – Status report of sedimentation and erosion controls

Mr. Wrinn began the presentation by noting that the Planning Commission had closed a public hearing on this matter. He reported that the applicant had been continuing the erosion control plans and that they had been adequate. Staff had done inspections after rain. The neighbors had sent in photos which seemed to be from last fall. The staff had not seen problems and they had inspected the day prior as well as that day. The neighbors had concerns about rock crushing at the site but the noise was expected. He explained that Conservation had concerns about oil from the site but that there was no drainage or catch basins in the area so it had nowhere to go. Ms. DiMeglio asked Mr. Wrinn to report again the following month.

b) Special Appropriation – Recreation & Parks – Playground equipment at Day & Raymond St - Report and recommendation

Ms. DiMeglio noted that the Interim Chair of the Department, Ken Hughes, could not be in attendance. Ms. Langalis asked why there was a delay in asking for the appropriation. Ms. Sweitzer (?) explained that there were two phases of the Ryan Park project. The department had always intended to purchase the equipment directly because they had specific safety and warranty standards. She also explained that in the first phase of the remediation the scope of the work was expanded due to the elevation. A walkway was also added to the project. She noted that it is actually not a special appropriation because the money was already bonded. Mr. Davidson noted that this was the proper way to request a special appropriation.

**** MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED: BE IT RESOLVED** by the Planning Commission that a special capital appropriation request from the Recreation and Park Department in the amount of \$188,413 for purchase and installation of playground equipment at Ryan Park, corner of Day and Raymond Streets be approved; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the reason for this action is:

1) To implement the Plan of Conservation and Development goal that “Norwalk aims to have the best city park and recreation system in Connecticut”

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that notice of this action be forwarded to the Common Council.

Mr. Davidson seconded.

Frances DiMeglio; David Davidson; Mary Peniston; Brian Baxendale; Tammy Langalis; Michael Mushak.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

d) 8-24 Referral – Recreation & Parks – Pastime Athletic & Social Club – Seaview Avenue –Continued use of City property - Report and recommendation

Mr. Wrinn began the presentation by explaining that this was a lease for land which the City had given to the applicant in 1994. It provides waterfront access for the club. There was a discussion about the cost of the lease which was \$10 per year. Mr. _____ said that the club had been there for at least 80 years and was family friendly. They sponsor kids' sports teams. He also said that he thought the lease was low. It was noted that this is not an easement but rather, an actual lease on the property. It gave them access. There was a discussion as to whether it could be an easement rather than a lease. It was noted that since it is a lease the applicant assumes liability, not the city. An easement is usually more permanent. Mr. Mushak noted that soon the land would revert to the state because of the rising sea levels.

**** MR. MUSHAK MOVED: BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning Commission that the request for a lease extension submitted by the Recreation and Parks Department for a 5 year extension of the lease with the Pastimes Social and Athletic Club, 59 Seaview Avenue for a lease on a small tidal parcel associated with Veterans Park be approved; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the reason for this action is:

1) To implement the Plan of Conservation and Development goals that "Water Dependent uses continue to operate and expand in the Norwalk Harbor and on the coast" AND that "The Public has access to the harbor and coast"

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that notice of this action be forwarded to the Common Council.

Mr. Baxendale seconded.

Frances DiMeglio; David Davidson; Mary Peniston; Brian Baxendale; Tammy Langalis; Michael Mushak; Nora King.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

Ms. King apologized for being late and then asked for a recap of the presentation for 35 Meeker Court. She then said that she would check out the area later in the week when it rained.

Before they began a discussion of the POCD, Mr. Kleppin mentioned the signs around the city for a kick-off meeting on Saturday, at 9 a.m. for the East Avenue TOD study. He also discussed other methods of how they were reaching Norwalk citizens including email blasts through the Board of Education, Facebook promotions, etc. The commissioners decided to approve the minutes before beginning the review of the POCD.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Feb 6 Cap Budget, Feb 19, Feb 21 Special Mtg., February 25 Joint Special Mtg. and March 6 Special Mtg.

**** MS. LANGALIS MOVED to approve the February 6, 2019 Capital Budget minutes.**

Mr. Davidson seconded.

Frances DiMeglio; David Davidson; Mary Peniston; Tammy Langalis; Michael Mushak; Nora King voted in favor.

No one opposed.

Brian Baxendale abstained.

There was a discussion of changes to the February 19, 2019 minutes of the Special Meeting of the Planning Commission. Mr. Davidson indicated he would be abstaining from voting because after reviewing the Capital Budget attached to the Chair's letter forwarding the Planning Commission's review and minutes, he had found discrepancies between his recollection on the 5 year projections and the final schedule. Mr. Baxendale said he also had disparities in his recollection. There was also a discussion about Mr. Ferguson's comments on page 6.

**** MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED to approve the February 19, 2019 minutes of the Special Meeting of the Planning Commission, as amended.**

Mr. Baxendale seconded.

Frances DiMeglio; Mary Peniston; Brian Baxendale; Tammy Langalis; Michael Mushak; Nora King voted in favor.

No one opposed.

David Davidson abstained.

**** MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED to approve the February 21, 2019 minutes of the Special Meeting of the Planning Commission, as amended.**

Ms. Langalis seconded.

Frances DiMeglio; Mary Peniston; Brian Baxendale; Tammy Langalis; Michael Mushak; David Davidson; Nora King voted in favor.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

Ms. King asked about whether they had received deliverables about the micro-units from Ms. Strauss. Mr. Kleppin said that he did receive some of it but has to put it together for them. There was a discussion about opportunity zones in lender applications. The commissioners thought it would be a good idea to have someone come in to discuss opportunity zones and West Avenue.

There was a discussion before the February 25 Joint Special Mtg. minutes were approved. Ms. DiMeglio made them aware that Mr. Neaderland was allowed to speak for 20 minutes. She noted that she had allowed most people to speak at least 6 minutes.

**** MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED to approve the minutes of February 25 Joint Special Mtg., as amended.**

Ms. Langalis seconded.

Frances DiMeglio; Tammy Langalis; Michael Mushak; David Davidson; Nora King voted in favor.

No one opposed.

Mary Peniston and Brian Baxendale abstained.

At this point, there was a discussion about the fact that the next Planning Commission meeting was the same week as Spring Break for Norwalk Public Schools.

**** MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED to approve the minutes of March 6 Special Mtg.**

Mr. Baxendale seconded.

Frances DiMeglio; David Davidson; Nora King; Mary Peniston and Brian Baxendale voted in favor.

No one opposed.

Tammy Langalis and Michael Mushak abstained.

There was a discussion about when the Mayor had to complete the review of the Capital Budget. Mr. Wrinn said he would find out. He had thought that the Mayor had already had a public hearing. At 6:53 p.m., the commissioners decided to take a short break.

V. DISCUSSION OF PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT (POCD)

a) Review/action on 2019 - 2029 POCD – Mr. Kleppin began with a discussion of the Executive Summary which he noted that the commissioners thought needed some re-wording in 3 sections. He noted the changes but said he would have the consultants re-format the document once the wording had been agreed upon. The commissioners wanted one of the green boxes to not be as large as it was. Mr. Baxendale noted that the fact that Norwalk was a waterfront city seemed to be downplayed and should be added. There was a discussion about the amount of business applications by the coast. Mr. Wrinn said it seemed to be stable. There was a discussion about Greenwich zoning on the water, which was restricted to marine uses. However, there did not seem to be any vacancies in the zone. There was concern that Norwalk's coastal area had lost marinas to condos. There was a discussion about the second section and whether it should state that Norwalk needs a "culture of planning." Some commissioners thought it was negative and some thought it was positive. There was a discussion about how to change the language.

There was then a discussion about adding West Avenue and Wall St. as walkable neighborhoods, but not including them as TOD areas, since they were not. There was a further discussion of TOD areas around the city. There was a discussion about Norwalk becoming an 18 hr. city and whether Norwalk was a town or a city, according to population.

The next item to be discussed was the section entitled "Everybody Wants Better Connectivity." They revised the title as well as parts of this section. There was also a discussion about the bike lanes, especially on Strawberry Hill Avenue. Mr. Kleppin suggested a new title but there was a further discussion about using the word, "wants." There was also a further discussion about connectivity and whether there would be more or less cars on the roads, and whether those cars would be electric, driverless cars.

There was then a discussion under "Risks of the Future." Most of the commissioners had no changes to this. The commissioners then discussed the "Norwalk Historic and Environmental Assets are Key to Competitive Livability, Sustainability and Economic Success." They decided to add beaches, coastline and oyster beds to this section since they are something that is very attractive to others. There was a discussion about changing the language, which some thought made it sound as if the city was aspiring to be something better. They decided to use the words, "Norwalk aspires." There was also a request to insert language to reflect that the public would have input as well and that it was not only the government working on the plan. There was also a discussion about how diversity was a strength and a weakness. The commissioners made some changes to this language as well.

There was a discussion about whether there should be a separate paragraph about the need for economic growth or to provide the necessary funding in order to fund the city's aspirations. They then added another bullet point to accommodate this idea and crafted language for it.

There was a discussion about how the language describing how City Hall runs, one example being the sign permit process. The commission re-drafted the language about City Hall's customer service. There was also a discussion about how the various departments could be more responsive. They decided to add another bullet point. There was also a discussion about a strategic operating plan. The Board of Education has been asking for the city to have one. Some other cities, like Baltimore, have one. The commissioners discussed how to analyze and implement the POCD. Different departments would be held accountable for moving the POCD forward. Mr. Kleppin noted that there was an implementation section in the POCD. There was a discussion about having a management consulting firm review the city government which had recently been done to help it re-organize. There was also a discussion about whether the strategic operating plan should come from the Mayor. There was a further discussion about whether it should be in the POCD that there had to be a strategic operating plan. Some believed that the Mayor's goals were in it so they did not need to tell the Mayor to have a plan. There was a discussion about the final process of the POCD. It would be sent to the Common Council for approval but if they vote against it, the Planning Commission can override the vote since the plan comes from the Planning Commission. The Mayor will sign the POCD after it has been approved. There was also a discussion about whether the POCD was an advisory plan. There was additional discussion about whether a strategic operating plan should be included into the POCD and how it could be done. There also discussions about the Board of Education's strategic operating plan. Mr. Kleppin suggested some language that the commissioners agreed to which would be included in the Executive Summary. Mr. Mushak noted that there are some members of the public that are demanding the Planning Commission/Norwalk come up with an exact number of rental units vs. home ownership, and exact demographic that the city wants. However, the commissioners did not want to have an exact number because they are not in a position to do that. Growth was necessary to fund the POCD.

The next discussion was about Economic Development staff, which is currently only one person. There was also a lengthy discussion about staffing this department, including the head of the department. It was noted that this section was written before the Economic Development Director had been hired and the office has been established. Strategies have not been developed yet.

At this point, there was a discussion about transportation, connectivity and Chapter 10 They added language to include all residents being able to get around the city. They discussed a few other points, including the Board of Education, parks and recreation system, etc. which they agreed that the language was fine. The POCD called for a revised Parks and Recreation Master Plan which had been last updated in 1991. The next section they discussed was "Housing Policy and Affordable Housing Solutions." There was a discussion about the use of the word "healthy" in this section which some commissioners had a problem with. There was a discussion about food "deserts" in the city, in the context of the use of the word "healthy." The commissioners decided to keep the language the way it was. There was also a discussion about the C-Town across from the South Norwalk library. There was a further discussion about "health impacts and designing neighborhoods improvements" and what it meant. They also discussed having a health impact study. At this point, Mr. Davidson made a motion to vote on this section and move on. No one seconded the motion. Ms. DiMeglio did not think it

was necessary and the commissioners moved on. They continued through the Executive Summary with no other comments.

The commissioners then discussed the public comments for the POCD. There was a discussion about holding twice yearly meetings, one in March and the other in October, to get updates on how the POCD was being moved forward. Some of the comments were directed to the Executive Summary. Some were added to the POCD without approval and it was difficult on some comments to know what the person was referring to in the document. There was a discussion about growth and whether the infrastructure could support it. Ms. Peniston asked about adding language about potable water. Mr. Kleppin said that water consumption has gone down in the last 5 years because of many of the new developments which included low flow toilets, and energy efficient infrastructure. There was also a discussion on the approval process for subdivisions and CEAC approvals. There was a further discussion about an annual review of key infrastructure systems because many citizens were concerned about that.

There was a discussion about growth and not building, just to build. There was a discussion about what type of growth goals they should be incorporating into the POCD. Some commissioners thought that, rather than specifics, there should be financial reviews of project to see if they can be supported, as well as the revenue generating from them which would then fund the other goals of the POCD. There was a discussion of what types of financial data to require from developers as to their project's impact on the city's infrastructure. They decided that this was a separate conversation to be completed at a later time.

The commissioners then discussed tax reductions and its effects on the Grand List. They continued their review of the public's comments with some comments being incorporated and some not, based on staff and Stantec recommendations. There was a discussion about brown fields and putting together a list for this. There was also a discussion about connecting open space and private property in to one stewardship plan. There was a discussion about a listing of open space sites by the Conservation Commission. There was also a discussion about building a YMCA. They thought the POCD should encourage the development of a community center. The YMCA did not pay taxes because they were a non-profit.

The Harbor Commission's comments were sent to the commissioners in a separate document. They also discussed the wording for the recommendation of setting up a separate utility for storm water management. There was then a discussion about the wetlands as well as adding a glossary of some terms that people might be unfamiliar with. There was some discussion about projects and the noise from some of them. They also discussed exploring the idea of combining the Planning and Zoning Commissions and decided to add it to the POCD. There was a discussion about the Norwalk River Valley Plan. There was then a discussion of the Harbor Commission's comments as well as the process for incorporating their comments to the POCD. Mr. Kleppin would make the edits and they would review them. There was also a discussion about when the commissioners would receive the revised POCD.

b) Update on East Avenue TOD study

There were no comments.

VI. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

There were no comments from the commissioners.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Peniston made a Motion to Adjourn.

Mr. Baxendale seconded.

Frances DiMeglio; David Davidson; Mary Peniston; Brian Baxendale; Tammy Langalis;

Michael Mushak; Steve Ferguson voted in favor.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero