

**CITY OF NORWALK  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
July 16, 2019**

**PRESENT:** Frances DiMeglio, Chair; Michael Mushak; Mary Peniston; Brian Baxendale; John Lesko

**STAFF:** Steve Kleppin

**OTHERS:** Atty. Adam Blank; Mike Galante; Nick Roberts

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. DiMeglio called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Mr. Kleppin called the roll. Ms. DiMeglio welcomed Mr. Lesko to the Planning Commission.

**III. DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION**

**a) Zoning Commission referral - #5-19R - 587 CTA LLC d/b/a EDG Properties – Proposed amendments to Section 118-522 Business #2 zone to permit storage facilities by special permit on parcels a minimum of 7 acres in size and located within 250 feet of the centerline of Westport Avenue, Connecticut Avenue, Main Avenue or Main Street - Report and recommended action**

Ms. DiMeglio opened the presentation. Atty. Blank began the presentation on behalf of the applicant, 587 CTA LLC d/b/a EDG Properties, and introduced the owners and the project team. He then gave the commissioners hand-outs which were already in the file. He explained the referral from the Zoning Commission. He also explained the background of the application and then explained the project. He noted that the applicant has also been involved in other developments around the city.

Atty. Blank then oriented the commissioners as to the location of the property on an aerial map. He explained how the property was currently being used. He then showed them a picture of what was currently there but explained that it was not part of the application. He also showed them a site plan for the project. He explained what was already allowed under the regulation but that self-storage use was not. Since self-storage was included in the project, they were requesting the text amendment. He showed them a zoning map as to where self-storage use is allowed in the city. He noted that the drafted amendment was restrictive so that there would not be a proliferation of self-storage projects.

There was a discussion about the elevation of the property. Much of the property would remain a forested area. There would be 4 stories to the project. Atty. Blank then discussed other areas in the city that are over 7 acres but could not accommodate self-storage. All of them are fully developed. There was a discussion about the market analysis for the property. There is a need for

self-storage in Norwalk because the applicant's other self-storage development is fully occupied. Atty. Blank noted that it was also in the draft 2019 Plan of Conservation and Development ("POCD") as a need in Norwalk.

There was a discussion about a change in the demographics for single home buyers. Rental properties seem to attract young people after college who will then purchase homes in Norwalk. There was a discussion about traffic which explained that self-storage is not a large traffic generator. There was a discussion about the look of the building and whether glass could be added to mitigate that. Self-storage units are more desirable than they were 20 years ago. Atty. Blank noted that the application met the POCD requirements, both the current and the revised 2019 draft.

Mike Galante, the traffic engineer, continued the presentation with an explanation of his letter to the Commissioners about traffic generation. He noted that there is minimal traffic generation from self-storage buildings. It complements residential use. He also noted that other uses allowed, such as pre-schools, would generate more traffic.

There was a discussion about the text amendment in relation to other properties around the city, including the Stew Leonards' property which is not 7 acres. There was also a discussion about the other mixed use, self-storage property on Connecticut Ave. It had made the area more walkable because of the residential component.

The Zoning Department staff had concerns about limiting the regulations to other areas of the city. Mr. Kleppin said that conditions had been added to them to deal with that.

There was a discussion about the renderings for the self-storage which some of the commissioners did not think were not attractive. Mr. Kleppin noted that when the applicant filed their special permit application, the renderings would be more fully vetted. He also noted that there were no design guidelines in this zone, like there was in some of the other zones.

Since the housing units were more affordable, people could live close to their jobs in the area and traffic would be lessened. There was a discussion about the amount of school age children living in multi-family units. Since there were not many, there did not seem to be an undue burden to the public school system.

There was a discussion about adding a size limit to the facility, "not to exceed 125,000 sq. ft." to the referral for the Zoning Commission to add to the text amendment. There was a discussion about the other uses on the property which included a warehouse or distribution center. It was noted that the impervious surfaces would be reduced. Traffic would come through on Willard Road. There was a discussion about the environmental impacts. There was a discussion about the use of the existing POCD items in the resolution. Mr. Kleppin noted the change that would be recommended to the Zoning Commission to the text amendment.

**\*\*\* MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED BE IT RESOLVED** that the proposed amendments to the Building Zone Regulations as shown on a certain document entitled "**#5-19R** – 587 CTA LLC d/b/a EDG Properties – Proposed amendments to Section 118-522 Business #2 zone to permit storage facilities by special permit on parcels a minimum of 7 acres in size and located more than 250 feet

from the centerline of Westport Avenue, Connecticut Avenue, Main Avenue or Main Street” and dated Revised June 17, 2019, be **APPROVED**;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the reasons for this action are:

- 1) To implement the Plan of Conservation and Development goal to "Examine and modify existing zoning where necessary to achieve the goals of this plan" (F.2.1, p. 42); and
- 2) To implement the Plan of Conservation and Development goal to "Encourage development that seeks to provide maximum returns to the City in the Grand List tax revenue consistent with public purpose" (A.1.1.9, p. 10); and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that notice of this action be forwarded to the Norwalk Zoning Commission.

**Mr. Mushak seconded.**

**Frances DiMeglio; Michael Mushak; Mary Peniston; Brian Baxendale; John Lesko voted in favor.**

**No one opposed.**

**No one abstained.**

**b) Special Capital Appropriation – Operations and Public Works – Update of Recreation and Parks Master Plan and closure of various projects - Report and recommended action**

Nick Roberts, recently named Director of Recreation and Parks, realized after he started the position that there was no Master Plan for Recreation and Parks and had not been one for 26 years. He explained what the new Plan would encompass. They had received estimates for the Master Plan for \$250,000. He then explained Capital Budget line items that would be closed out for the cost of the Master Plan. The Master Plan would guide the work for the department as it moved forward. There was a discussion about benchmarks.

It was noted that Norwalk’s park system is one of the best in the state of Connecticut but had not been that way 20 years ago. There was a discussion about allowing dogs in parks in the city as well as having park rangers.

There was a discussion about the shortfall of \$2,502 and a clarification as to why there was cost savings in some projects. The commissioners discussed their concern about using materials that were safe for children and the environment. There was also a discussion as to why the Master Plan had not been funded through the Capital Budget. There was a discussion about using cork which other towns seemed to be using.

**\*\*\* MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED: BE IT RESOLVED** by the Planning Commission that the special capital project appropriation request from the Operations and Public Works Department for an update of the Recreation and Parks Master Plan in the amount of \$2,502 AND the request to return to the Capital Budget of 3 various projects totaling \$247,498 {BMHS Turf Field Project (\$12,976 and \$101,372) and the Testa Field Project (\$133,150)} be **APPROVED** to allow a budget for the master plan of \$250,000; and

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

**Mr. Mushak seconded.**

**Frances DiMeglio; Michael Mushak; Mary Peniston; Brian Baxendale; John Lesko voted in favor.**

**No one opposed.**

**No one abstained.**

**c) Discussion of capital budget process and POCD coordination** - This item would be postponed for a Special Planning Commission meeting since several of the commissioners were not at this meeting. Ms. DiMeglio noted that the Finance Department would not be available for the Planning Commission meeting in August, thus a special meeting would be necessary. There was also a discussion about a possible charter change regarding the Capital Budget process.

**d) Subdivision #3637 – 35 Meeker Court LLC – 35 Meeker Court – 4 lots – Status report of sedimentation & erosion controls - Report and recommended action**

Mr. Kleppin said that the staff had been to the site last week but that silt fences were down. They were told that no more hammering would be done. They would continue to monitor it once a week.

#### **IV. DISCUSSION OF PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT (POCD)**

**a) Update on 2019 - 2029 POCD**

Mr. Kleppin said that a formal referral had gone to all required parties. He would go to the Planning Committee of the Common Council on August 1. The latest draft is on the website and a public hearing would be scheduled for September 5 which is their regularly scheduled meeting. It could be finalized by October or November. There is a new initiative, Vision Zero, which would be added, and could be helpful for the city to obtain grants.

**b) Update on East Avenue TOD study**

Mr. Baxendale, who was also a member of the committee which was working on this study, spoke about the public hearing on July 25. They are looking forward to hearing from the public. Business cards will be handed out at the train station for residents to take a survey. It was expected that many would do it on their phones. There was a discussion about the project at 230 East Avenue and whether they had their building permits. The applicant should be breaking ground shortly.

There was a follow-up discussion about the payments for the POCD.

Mr. Baxendale did not think that the consultants were good with communications but the committee was working on reaching out to the public. Building owners in the area seemed to

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be waiting for the rezoning to see what more they could do with their properties. There was a discussion about the process for finalizing the TOD plan and then the POCD would have to be updated or have the plan added as an appendix. The consultants would come to the Planning Commission for a presentation before it is adopted.

**V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: June 18, 2019**

Ms. DiMeglio said that she was not ready to approve the Minutes until further revisions had been made.

**VI. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR**

Mr. Kleppin noted that an RFP was sent out for the Zoning regulations to be updated. Zoning Department staff and commissioners would be on the committee to review.

**VII. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS**

Mr. Mushak welcomed Mr. Lesko. There was a discussion about when Planning Commissioners should be contacted for meetings. It could be an email in the morning to all the commissioners.

Ms. DiMeglio said that she had sent a list of properties, to Mr. Wrinn, that she had concerns about including signage around the city.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**Ms. Peniston made a Motion to Adjourn.**

**Mr. Mushak seconded.**

**Frances DiMeglio; Michael Mushak; Mary Peniston; Brian Baxendale; John Lesko voted in favor.**

**No one opposed.**

**No one abstained.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero