

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
SEPTEMBER 5, 2019**

ATTENDANCE: John Kydes, Chair; John Igneri, Thomas Livingston, Eloisa Melendez, Barbara Smyth, George Tsiranides

STAFF: Tammy Strauss, Redevelopment Acting Director; Sabrina Church, Community Development Planning, Steve Kleppin, Planning and Zoning Director

PUBLIC HEARING ON PY 44 CAPER

Mr. Kydes called the public hearing for the PY 44 CAPER to order at 7:15 p.m. A quorum was present.

Mr. Kydes asked if there was anyone present who wished to speak to the Committee about the CAPER. No one came forward.

Mr. Kydes repeated his question. Hearing none, he closed the public hearing on the PY 44 CAPER at 7:16 p.m.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Kydes asked if there was anyone present who wished to address the Committee.

Ms. Jo-Ann Horvath came forward and read a statement into the record. (See attached)

Mr. Kydes said that if Ms. Horvath would email him, and they will try to get as much information as possible to her. He said he understood it was a hefty document that they were discussing.

Ms. Laura Dunn said that on page 60 of the Plan there were policy notes about the residences including the preservation and maintenance of the overall character of traditional single family neighbors and another bullet point supporting housing policies that promote higher density housing near existing and future and employment centers, and availability of public transportation.

These policies clearly maintain the status quo of Norwalk's segregated areas. Single family neighborhoods can accommodate two family homes without disrupting anyone's way of life, and continuing to promote high density housing and low income areas clearly keeps our community segregated, or this plan touts, Norwalk diversity. It contradicts itself with policies that maintain the segregated areas of our town. Could you explain or tell me how Norwalk neighborhoods could be integrated? Thank you.

Ms. Susan Cole of Mary Street said her comments were a follow up to what Ms. Cole said. In reference to work for housing on page 25 of the manual, she proposed reconsideration of changing the zoning requirements from 10% to 20% to promote more diversity and equity in housing and in a few schools, because the two are clearly connected. In the document it said that Norwalk prides itself in its diversity. It's one of our strengths. Requiring 20% of new multi-unit housing is going to do a lot more good at integrating neighbors. Thank you.

Ms. Audrey Cozzarin, Kendall Court, came forward and said as head of the Norwalk Citizens Traffic Safety Committee, her concern was traffic congestion. (See attached).

Mr. Bob Giuletto stated that currently multifamily housing is not permitted in some Norwalk zones even with a special permit. For example, in the triple A resident zone. Multifamily is permitted by right only in D resident zones, where halfway homes and group homes are also permitted by special permit. This type of zoning tends to have a disparate impact on people of color because it often generates poverty concentration. The Director of Zoning agreed to undertake a study of the Zoning Code to identify zoning elements that have this kind of impact and then work with community members to develop new zoning rules that promote equitable development throughout Norwalk.

Ms. Diane Lauricella of Taylor Avenue came forward and said that she wanted to reiterate a number of items she had mentioned earlier at the public hearing because she had not seen an amendment yet and wanted to get some ideas as to whether they will be changed.

There were some errors and things were left out that are important in order to plan well and one was in listing utilities as assets on page 27. They mentioned the Second and Third Taxing District Electric companies but fail to mention Eversource.

Eversource is the primary supplier to almost every part of Norwalk, north of 95, which is pretty important. Number two, is that with the water utilities, there was only mention of the Second and First Taxing District Water utilities. Ms. Lauricella mentioned that this was what brought her to Norwalk originally when she worked for the First Taxing District Water Company to help them find the pollution source in their wells. The drinking water in wells makes approximately up to 22% of water supply. It's very important that we have it in this document to help plan because those sources are very sensitive. Often they're not from anything more than cracks in the bedrock and they need to be protected. But without people knowing they're there, how can Land Use Commissioners plan and the Health Department plan to educate people or even plan to limit the growth in those areas?

Ms. Lauricella said that she had mentioned this to Marissa, the consultant. Ms. Lauricella feels this is important, and will continue to lobby for it to be added.

The last thing she mentioned was limits to growth and the need for really super duper industrial zone review. She said initially speaking with Mr. Kleppin and others that that was going to be looked at and was very pleased, she had heard that there is going to be zoning. She said she thought they were out dating zoning rules.

It is important to make sure we have a real focused review on the industrial zones, because there was a study done when Mr. Kummel was on the Council so it is now ancient history. A while ago, there was a proposal for a review of every document, however that particular study was never finalized and voted on by the City Council. Now residential and big box development of retail have been allowed in the industrial zones, therefore limiting a very, very good source for the tax base. There will never be belching smokestacks. There were some land use developers like Mr. Zullo that kept crowing about the reduction in industry. Ms. Lauricella said she always disagreed with that. If towns and cities don't look for industry, they are never going to attract it.

Ms. Lauricella said she will be lobbying for industry because there are still zones such as Pearl Street and Emerald Street that are a group of gemstone streets off of Perry Avenue. These are an untapped resource of mostly underutilized industrial zones. Miller Park used to be a thriving industry. Now it's an artist colony, which is great. But the City is not getting what we're doing by not developing our industrial zones and letting them peter out. This is putting more of a burden on the residential homeowners to pay for all the operation of government through their property taxes.

Ms. Lauricella said she would like to know what this committee is going to do about that, whether or not it wasn't mentioned in any part of the 340 pages that she could find, as far as making a big effort to optimize our industrial zones and possibly down zone, former industrial zones that were because of lack of creativity and myopia. They are just observing things when there was an odor instead of ceasing the odor. That's what happened to Miller Park. There was someone that was roasting coffee beans and it stunk to high heaven. This was when Doug Mintz was the chair of the Conservation Committee. They allow grandfathering of industrial uses on that property, but they also will not allow new clean industry in there. Thank you.

ADMINISTRATION

A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approve Minutes of August 1, 2019.

**** MR. IGNERI MOVED THE MINUTES OF AUGUST 1, 2019.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF AUGUST 1, 2019 AS SUBMITTED PASSED WITH THREE (3) IN FAVOR (KYDES, IGNERI AND**

TSIRANIDES) AND THREE (3) ABSTENTIONS (MELENDEZ, LIVINGSTON AND SMYTH).

Ms. Strauss introduced Ms. Lori Gutman, who is the new Community Development Planner.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

- A. Advance the PY44 CAPER to the Common Council for approval with authorization for the Mayor to sign all forwarding documents required by HUD.**

Ms. Church said that the CAPER had met all the goals with the exception of the Walk Bridge. The Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) was approved last year.

Mr. Livingston asked about the funding for Code Enforcement. Ms. Church reviewed the process with him.

Mr. Livingston asked what happened if the organizations did not have space for a homeless individual. Ms. Strauss said that there was a database that had been set up and when there is someone who needs a bed, the system finds space for the person. It may not be in Norwalk, but it will be in the surrounding area.

**** MS. MELENDEZ MOVED TO ADVANCE THE PY44 CAPER TO THE COMMON COUNCIL FOR APPROVAL WITH AUTHORIZATION FOR THE MAYOR TO SIGN ALL FORWARDING DOCUMENTS REQUIRED BY HUD.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (POCD)

- A. Advance the Plan of Conservation and Development (Citywide Plan) to the Common Council for its consideration and adoption, with the following recommended changes:**

- 1. Modifications to the Executive Summary, page 180, 182, 188, 191, 192 and 202 to reflect the inclusion of the Vision Zero initiative.**
- 2. Other requested modifications.**

Mr. Kydes asked Mr. Kleppin why Eversource was not included in the POCD. Mr. Kleppin said that he thought it was in Chapter 11, but he could include it on the particular page that had been mentioned. Ms. Smyth pointed out that Eversource and other utilities were listed on page 211.

Mr. Livingston asked about the issues around including the water companies. Discussion followed about the details.

Mr. Kleppin said that he had to compile a list of changes for the POCD and would send those changes to the Committee. Discussion followed about how the follow up will be handled. Mr. Kleppin said that at the start of the budget cycle, there would be a meeting with the Mayor and Department heads to check in about what kind of progress they have made towards the POCD goal. Ms. Strauss pointed out that the Capital Budget request process has been changed to indicate if a project is advancing the POCD goals.

Mr. Kydes asked about the Executive Summary. Mr. Kleppin said that this would essentially be an outline or map along with an abbreviated version with the major bullet points and goals. Those who want more information can go to the specific section of the complete Plan. He gave an example about developing a Master Transportation Plan.

**** MR. KYDES MOVED TO ADVANCE THE PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (CITYWIDE PLAN) TO THE COMMON COUNCIL MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 24, 2019 FOR ITS CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION, WITH THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDED CHANGES:**

- 1. MODIFICATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, PAGE 180, 182, 188, 191, 192 AND 202 TO REFLECT THE INCLUSION OF THE VISION ZERO INITIATIVE.**
- 2. OTHER REQUESTED MODIFICATIONS.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

NORWALK TOMORROW WEBSITE.

- A. Advance the Sole Source Procurement approving Snyder Group to update the Norwalk Tomorrow website to the Common Council for approval.**

Mr. Kleppin explained that the City's website did not have the flexibility to handle surveys. Ms. Strauss said that the company would be able to allow information to be shared both to and by the public. The way the site was originally designed is no longer functional because there are multiple projects running concurrently. The company will update the site and it requires a highly skilled individual. Mr. Kydes asked if the work could be brought in house. Mr. Kleppin said that once the upcoming studies are completed, it will be less labor intensive, but that is several years down the road.

**** MR. TSIRANIDES MOVED TO ADVANCE THE SOLE SOURCE PROCUREMENT APPROVING SNYDER GROUP TO UPDATE THE NORWALK TOMORROW WEBSITE TO THE COMMON COUNCIL FOR APPROVAL.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

AGREEMENT WITH PLANIMETRICS

A. Approve forwarding to the Common Council authorization for Mayor Rilling to enter into an agreement with Planimetrics to perform the following services:

“Consultation Services for Building Zone Regulations Analysis and Recommendations”

in an amount not to exceed \$20,000.

Mr. Kleppin said that one of his first goals was to update the Zoning Regulations. Planimetrics was chosen and the representative has met with Planning and Zoning Staff about their concerns. Ms. Smyth said that while it is nice to have familiarity with the firm, she had concerns about whether the firm was experienced with a large city with such a diverse population. Mr. Kleppin pointed out that they would not be writing the zoning regulations. He will set up meetings with various focus groups and public open houses to analyze how an application works its way through the process.

Mr. Igneri asked how a zone change would be handled. Mr. Kleppin said that there would have to have a public hearing. He gave a brief overview of the process. There was a very tight timing window and the amount of money expended is not very large. Discussion followed.

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO APPROVE FORWARDING TO THE COMMON COUNCIL AUTHORIZATION FOR MAYOR RILLING TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH PLANIMETRICS TO PERFORM THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:**

“CONSULTATION SERVICES FOR BUILDING ZONE REGULATIONS ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS”

IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$20,000.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

OLD BUSINESS

There was no additional old business to consider at this time.

NEW BUSINESS.

There was no new business to consider at this time.

ADJOURNMENT.

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services

**PUBLIC HEARING – PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON
COUNCIL – SEPTEMBER 5, 2019 – AGENDA ITEM POCD**

I am Jo-Anne Horvath and I live at 1 Cobblers Lane in the Main Avenue/Creeping Hemlock Drive area in the northern part of Norwalk.

First of all, my main objective for attending tonight's meeting is to get clarification of the PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT (POCD) commonly referred to as the Master Plan for the City of Norwalk in my area of town.

I think it would be wise (if it has not been done already) to display a map on Poster Board which shows exactly what type of zones are planned for each section of the city so that residents who live in the North, South, East and West parts of Norwalk can fully understand what type of development is going to be in their respective neighborhood.

Obviously, I am very interested in the Route 7/Main Avenue area. I did access the POCD'S website, but found it to be too cumbersome for me with close to 300 plus pages in addition to approximately 73 pages of appendices.

On January 30th of this year, I did write an e-mail to Mr. Kleppin (Director of Planning & Zoning) outlining my city-wide suggestions concerning the DRAFT of the POCD for the years 2019-2029. I can provide a copy of my e-mail to the Planning Committee tonight if they want it.

I have read the minutes of your last meeting on August 1, 2019 and found that the points that Councilman Doug Hempstead brought up as very important.

So what is planned for my area? Can anyone here tonight show me visually and explain in simple terms what type of development is being planned for the Route 7/Main Avenue corridor? The old saying -- "a picture is worth a thousand words" is all I need so that I can truly be an informed resident.

THANK YOU.

Common Council Planning Committee Meeting
POCD / Master Plan
September 5, 2019

Topic of Concern: TRAFFIC CONGESTION

It was reported in March 2018 in The Norwalk Hour a POCD Committee finding that **traffic** is the main concern of residents and businesses in Norwalk. Does the POCD/master plan address continuing chronic/worsening traffic congestion in Norwalk? The Norwalk Citizens Traffic Safety Committee was formed in June to address increasing concerns about traffic and its effects on our quality-of-life in Norwalk due to traffic stressors. We have found, validated by AAA Northeast, that the poor/outdated engineering on state and federal roads causes local roadways to become more dangerous. When motorists are frequently delayed on I-95, the Merritt Parkway, Rt. 7, Rt. 1, and other state and federal roadways, they spill onto local roads with behavior that is often angry, stressful, aggressive, and lawless.

Private development projects (such as apartment houses, new mall, and big-box stores) in Norwalk are creating congestion within the city. What does the master plan propose to alleviate further traffic congestion in Norwalk due to more and more development?

What does the master plan include to help alleviate stresses on our local roads in coordination with the State of CT and FHA to remedy the regional tie-ups that Norwalk residents and businesses are experiencing? We are naturally very concerned about aggressive driver behavior which is increasingly reducing safety for other motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

Who wants to live and conduct business in a city where you can't get around timely and safely, a city whose roadways are challenging and unfriendly, whose traffic laws are not adequately enforced?

~

Audrey Cozzarin
NORWALK CITIZENS TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
19 Kendall Court
Norwalk, CT 06850
203-838-3332