

CITY OF NORWALK
JOINT MEETING OF PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSIONS
December 11, 2019

PRESENT: Louis Schulman, Chair of the Zoning Commission; Michael Witherspoon; Galen Wells; Stephanie Thomas; Richard Roina; Roderick Johnson; Nicholas Kantor; Joshua Goldstein; Frances DiMeglio, Chair of the Planning Commission; Mike Mushak; Brian Baxendale; Tammy Langalis; Mary Peniston; Nathan Sumpter and Frank Mancini (arrived after the roll call)

STAFF: Steve Kleppin; Mike Wrinn

OTHERS: Glenn Chalder

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Schulman called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. He welcomed the new Zoning Commissioner, Joshua Goldstein

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Kleppin called the roll for the Planning Commission and then the Zoning Commission.

III. DISCUSSION OF ZONING REGULATIONS ANALYSIS

Mr. Kleppin began with a brief review of the process that led to the report to be presented by Planimetrics.

Mr. Schulman reminded the public that this was not a public hearing and the public would not be allowed to speak. He also noted that the joint meeting would be held for 1 hr. so that the regular Zoning Commission could start at 7:30 p.m.

Mr. Chalder began the PowerPoint presentation of his report about the Building Zone Regulations Update. He gave a brief overview of his company and then identified issues and recommendations. He noted that he had meeting with different stakeholders in the city about how they worked with the city's zoning regulations.

He then explained that the current regulations are not intuitive. He also noted the configuration is not user-friendly and the presentation is not consistent. He said that the regulations on-line sometimes were not up to date. As an example, he noted that some regulations were out of date, such as the ones for driveways. He also explained that some provisions are missing such as design guidelines. Standards have changed over the years. He also noted that Zoning Department interpretations are not codified. He said that the approval process could be more clearly explained.

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Mr. Chalder then went over the recommendations. He believed they should be organized intuitively. There should be regulatory basics, then zones and uses, development standards and lastly, permitting and enforcement. Some of his recommendations included using a numbering system with a color coded system, illustrations and graphics, as well as tables and charts.

Mr. Chalder also discussed the input he received from the community and listening sessions. He also addressed POCD recommendations and Planimetrics own technical review. This review could then be used by another consultant who would do the actual re-write of the Zoning regulations. It could be used in an RFP.

He then discussed different ways to post the regulations on-line. One was to use pdfs which could be searched. Another way would be xml which he explained how this functionality could be used. He also explained how they could tie the regulations to the zoning map. It was more intuitive and enhance compliance. He then discussed the next steps and there were recommendations in the report. This would be important for the consultant that would work on the re-write.

At this point, they began with questions from the Planning Commission. There was an explanation of power users. There was a question about whether they should look to other cities that had written their zoning regulations. Mr. Chalder suggested possibly Hartford and Bridgeport and look to other cities as part of their process. He said to clean up what the city already had. He also noted that they had to be cautious about the re-write in order to not have non-conformities. There was a discussion about the current Zoning Department's files for different properties and whether they would have to be incorporated into the digital maps that would be created. He had not considered those files as part of his report. It could be something that the city could consider later.

There was a discussion about the cost of the re-write. Mr. Chalder suggested an RFQ first in order to review different consultants. There was a discussion about ongoing public input. Mr. Chalder suggested that the consultant that was hired should continue to take public input, along the way. There was also a discussion about regulations that the public considered having deleted, changed, revised, etc. Mr. Chalder said this would be an opportunity to talk through different situations before there was an actual application. It could help public policy. There was a discussion about form based code. He gave some examples of other Connecticut cities that are using it.

The Zoning Commission then addressed questions to Mr. Chalder. There was a discussion about public housing and affordability. Mr. Chalder said that this would be a policy to be addressed by the city because it had come up during his public sessions. There was also a discussion about accessory units and having a minimum time frame that the homeowner had to have been an owner. There was also a discussion about whether data could be obtained in the instance of a regulation being changed. There would be an impact on many properties. Several of the commissioners thanked Mr. Chalder for the well-written report. Mr. Chalder made suggestions about how the process could continue especially with funding issues. He also said that he would like to consider submitting a proposal to the Zoning Commission. However, if the

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Zoning Commission decided to do a form based code that he had not had much experience with that.

There was a discussion about climate change and the land use perspective. Mr. Chalder also discussed sea level rise. He suggested that they should set the stage for adding provisions for climate change later. There was a discussion about key word terms and how that would work in a search. Mr. Chalder thought that xml could work well to alleviate issues. There was a discussion about interpretations of regulations. Mr. Chalder suggested that these interpretations could be included in the regulations. The goal would be to make the regulations transparent.

Ms. DiMeglio thanked the Zoning Commission for allowing them to be a part of the meeting. Mr. Schulman thanked the Planning Commission for being a part of the process.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Langalis made a Motion to Adjourn.

Mr. Baxendale seconded.

Louis Schulman; Michael Witherspoon; Galen Wells; Nathan Sumpter; Stephanie Thomas; Richard Roina; Roderick Johnson; Frank Mancini; Nicholas Kantor; Joshua Goldstein; Frances DiMeglio; Mike Mushak; Brian Baxendale; Tammy Langalis; Mary Peniston voted in favor.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero