

**CITY OF NORWALK  
ZONING COMMISSION – SPECIAL MEETING  
May 11, 2020**

**PRESENT:** Louis Schulman, Chair; Galen Wells; Richard Roina; Michael Witherspoon; Joshua Goldstein; Stephanie Thomas; Frank Mancini; Nathan Sumpter; Rod Johnson  
**STAFF:** Steve Kleppin; Bryan Baker  
**OTHERS:** Diane Lauricella; Larry Katz; Ernie Dumas; Ron Weiss; Luigi DiMeglio; Sonya Oliver; State Representative Travis Simms; Darlene Young

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Schulman called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. It should be noted that this meeting was held on Zoom.com with all participants calling in, separately.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Mr. Kleppin called the roll. Mr. Schulman explained how the public meeting participants would be allowed to speak on Zoom.

**III. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

a. **#1-20R – Zoning Commission – Proposed amendments to establish a 12 month moratorium on certain uses in Industrial #1 zone including building material and storage yards, contractor’s storage yards and single and two family dwellings**

Mr. Schulman opened the public hearing and explained that it would be held open until at least May 18, 2020 for written comments. He also noted that the meeting would have to end at 6:50 p.m. for another Zoom presentation by the Mayor and State Senator Duff.

Mr. Kleppin began the presentation with a description of the application. The city would be starting a study next month about the Industrial Zones in the city. They thought it would be wise to place a moratorium on applications for contractor’s storage yards for 1 year until the study is completed. It is an amendment to the Zoning Regulations.

Mr. Schulman asked the commissioners for questions. There was a discussion about whether the pandemic affected any of the areas. Mr. Kleppin said that it would not have any relevance to this amendment. There was also a discussion about new applications which could affect the City financially. Mr. Kleppin said that there had been a couple of applications pending but they had not seen an influx of new ones. There was a discussion about a possible shortage of contractor yards because of the moratorium. There was also a discussion about surrounding towns not allowing contractor’s yards. They would only be allowed in South Norwalk. There had not been a cessation of use of the contractor’s yards, because of the Governor’s Executive Orders during the pandemic, as far as Mr. Kleppin knew. There was also a discussion about the length of time of the moratorium.

Mr. Schulman asked members of the public to raise their hands through Zoom to make themselves known before making their comments.

Diane Lauricella thanked the commissioners for allowing the public to speak. She believed that Industrial Zones were necessary for the city. She thanked the Zoning Department staff for lists of legal and illegal contractor's yards. She appreciated the extension of time and would submit written comments.

Larry Katz, 71 East Main Street (office), spoke in support of contractor's yards. He noted that some contractors needed yards in Norwalk so that they didn't have to drive from further away. He thought it was a mistake to constantly take away contractor's yards.

Ernie Dumas spoke in favor of the moratorium. It would be a help for people in the area. However, he also thought that the people who live in the area should be respected. Some areas are contaminated.

Ron Weiss, 75 Place Street, said that he grew up in South Norwalk and that they must take into consideration the needs of the people that live in the area. He was grateful to those working on the Zoning Commission on this matter.

Luigi DiMeglio, 20 Lubrano Place, said that he thought this would be a great study for Norwalk. He had lived with a contractor's yard in his backyard for 7 years. He noted that many of the legal yards later became illegal yards. He appreciated the commissioners allowing them to speak.

Sonya Oliver, 15 Madison Street, spoke in favor of the moratorium. She said that the neighborhood looked like an eyesore with all of the contractor's yards. It would only bring down property values.

State Representative Travis Simms spoke in support of the moratorium. He looked forward to working with the Zoning Commissioners and his colleagues on the local and state levels and all those who had a vested interest.

Darlene Young thanked them for allowing everyone to speak. She noted that many people were affected by the dust from the many yards in South Norwalk. She was hopeful that they could figure out how this could be worked out through the study. She thanked prior speakers who had been involved for a long time on this issue. She appreciated the openness of the Zoning Department and the Zoning Commission.

At this time, Mr. Schulman asked that the public hearing be held open until May 18, 2020 for residents to respond in writing. They would be able to take action at their next Zoning Commission meeting on May 20, 2020.

#### **IV. REVIEW AND ACTION ON PENDING APPLICATIONS**

##### **a. Action on Item III.**

Mr. Roina said that the public hearing should be held open without conditions and that all parties should be able to speak at the next meeting. Mr. Mancini agreed. Mr. Schulman explained that the moratorium would not stop any business from operating. Ms. Thomas said that this had been on the Zoning Commission agenda since January. Mr. Roina said that he thought that there were other parties that had not been heard from. Ms. Thomas thought that holding the public hearing through Zoom, it was a more equitable forum for residents. Mr. Kleppin clarified uses of contractor's yards for the commissioners. Mr. Johnson said that he believed the public hearing should be left open for further oral comments from the public at the next Zoning Commission meeting.

**\*\* MR. ROINA MOVED: BE IT RESOLVED** that the public hearing be held open for both written and oral comments until the next Zoning Commission meeting on May 20, 2020.

**Mr. Johnson seconded.**

**There was a roll call vote as follows:**

**Mr. Roina – Yes**

**Mr. Witherspoon – Yes**

**Ms. Thomas - No**

**Ms. Wells - No**

**Mr. Goldstein - Yes**

**Mr. Mancini - Yes**

**Mr. Johnson - Yes**

**Mr. Schulman - Yes**

**Mr. Sumpter - Yes**

**No one opposed.**

**No one abstained.**

#### **V. EAST NORWALK TOD: East Norwalk TOD Presentation**

Mr. Kleppin noted that it was getting late and that he could make the presentation on May 20, 2020 to which Mr. Schulman agreed. After completion of several other items, the commissioners decided to listen to the presentation since there would be many applications on May 20, 2020.

Mr. Kleppin began with a Power Point presentation of the study. He noted that Ms. Thomas was a part of the committee which had been working on it for 14 months. He showed them a map of the study area. Area #1 was currently zoned as Neighborhood Business but would be re-named as a village district. This would allow the Zoning Commission to have design control. He then discussed Area #2 which the committee would like to keep because of the affordable housing in that part of town. He also said that the Department of Public Works had their garage there but they would like to move it. They would like to create a new village district in Liberty Square. He also discussed adding a promenade to Cove Avenue to connect it to South Norwalk. He discussed Winfield Avenue as well. Some of the recommendations of the study were to provide outdoor spaces, different heights and amenities. He discussed a point system to certain types of things for developers. He noted that green infrastructure was being used as part of the landscape. He showed them a before and after of one site in the study area of what could be built under the revised regulations. He discussed the design guidelines and noted that they had looked at other cities that had nautical, beachy aesthetics.

There was a discussion about the point system. Ms. Thomas noted that the committee was still reviewing it, although they were in favor of it. There was a discussion about the goals of the committee. There was a question about construction on 230 East Avenue and then there was a discussion about next steps for the study. It would go out to the Planning Commission which would have to hold a public hearing on it. The study would become a part of the POCD.

## **VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: April 7, 2020 Special meeting**

**\*\* MR. GOLDSTEIN MOVED to approve the April 7, 2020 Zoning Commission - Special Meeting minutes.**

**Mr. Witherspoon seconded.**

**Louis Schulman; Galen Wells; Richard Roina; Michael Witherspoon; Joshua Goldstein; Nathan Sumpster; Rod Johnson**

**No one opposed.**

**Frank Mancini and Stephanie Thomas abstained.**

## **VII. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR**

Mr. Kleppin said that there would be a meeting on May 20, 2020. He explained that one of the applicants was from a previously approved application in 2019. He also said that there was a new application on Glover Avenue. Mr. Schulman suggested that since this was a big application, they should have a separate meeting for it. It would have significant public input. There was also an application on Wilson Avenue for a proposed contractor's yard. There would also be a discussion on May 20 about guidelines for outdoor dining based upon the Governor's Re-Open plan.

There was a discussion about the time of the next meeting. Most said 5:30 was fine, however, it was decided to hold it at 6 p.m.

#### **VIII. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS**

There were no comments from the commissioners.

#### **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

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

**Mr. Roina seconded.**

**Louis Schulman; Galen Wells; Richard Roina; Michael Witherspoon; Joshua Goldstein; Stephanie Thomas; Frank Mancini; Nathan Sumpter; Rod Johnson approved.**

**No one opposed.**

**No one abstained.**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero