

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 5, 2020**

ATTENDANCE: John Kydes, Chair; Tom Keegan, Tom Livingston, Lisa Shanahan, Barbara Smyth, George Tsiranides, Darlene Young (7:37)

OTHERS: Jessica Casey, Chief of Economic and Community Development; Lori Ellyn Guttman, Norwalk Redevelopment Community Development Planning Director; Steve Kleppin, Planning and Zoning Director; Katie Blake, Highstead H2H; Casey Hamilton, Highstead H2H

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Kydes called the meeting to order at 7:03pm

ROLL CALL

Mr. Kydes called the roll. A quorum was present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

Mr. Kydes asked if there was anyone present who wished to address the Committee on the Enterprise Zone Expansion.

Rich Bonenfant, Park Hill Avenue

Mr. Bonenfant said he thought the Enterprise Zone expansion was a bad idea because people were having trouble paying taxes, and while he understood it was important to keep the schools funded, it was a problem to give tax breaks to others. He said that they were permanent zones, and that each time a project started it started a seven year clock on improving property. He said that it would lead to all the single floor stores getting knocked down and the city getting built up. He said that he disagreed with using tax breaks as an incentive to build up the Wall Street area. He said that area would improve with parking and something to do in the area.

Diane Cece, East Norwalk

Ms. Cece said she remembered some meeting where this idea had been rejected in the past, and she asked the committee to research that and the reasons for the rejection. She said that she remembered an issue about expansion as it impacted applications

retroactively. She said developers might wait for the tax break, and she'd want to know if there was retroactivity in the plan.

She also said that the last time they expanded the Enterprise Zone, they ended up with a big property flip and the mall. She said she was concerned with the criteria used to designate a census tract that was eligible for these things. She said they should be more stringent.

She said that she thought there were other incentives to use to attract business to Norwalk.

Donna Smirniotopoulos, Shorefront Park

Ms. Smirniotopoulos agreed that the last Enterprise Zone expansion resulted in the mall.

She said she'd been researching Enterprise Zones and they had mixed reviews, leaning to negative. She said the intent was to bring life an economically challenged area, and that it wasn't closed borders and they should see the uptick. She said it should be working as it was.

She said the expansion seemed redundant, but that for larger developers the opportunity fund should be sufficient.

Mr. Kydes closed public participation, noting that there was a lot to discuss at the next committee meeting.

ADMINISTRATION

A. Approval of the Minutes of February 6, 2020 Regular Meeting

**** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 2, 2020 REGULAR MEETING.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 2, 2020 REGULAR MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED WITH FIVE (5) IN FAVOR (TSIRANIDES, SMYTH, KEEGAN, KYDES, AND SHANAHAN) AND ONE (1) ABSTENTION (LIVINGSTON).**

NEW BUSINESS.

a. Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling to execute any and all agreements related to Census 2020 initiatives.

Ms. Casey stated that Census Day was April 1, and that the City had been working to educate Norwalk Citizens about the importance of the Census.

She said that they got two grants to print and disseminate materials and advertising.

She said she'd shared a budget, and what they would be spending the money on and asked the committee to authorize Mayor Rilling to execute agreements related to that budget.

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL AGREEMENTS RELATED TO CENSUS 2020 INITIATIVES.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

b. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

1. Recommend CDBG PY46 funding allocations.

Mr. Kydes said that they'd received 14 public service proposals which totaled \$380,220 with only \$135,408 to allocate. He said that everyone on the committee received their first choice, and for many, their second choice as well. He said they were as follows:

- East Norwalk Library - \$7,900
- Higher Education Literacy Professionals - \$9,702
- Liberation Programs - \$15,702
- Malta House - \$45,702
- Open Door Shelter - \$30,702
- Serving All Vessels Equally (SAVE) - \$25,701

He said that they had 10 public facilities proposals totaling over 1.1 million dollars with \$605,004 available to allocate. He said that everyone on the committee go their first choices again, and they are as follows:

- Carver Center - \$40,236
- Domestic Violence Crisis Center - \$35,000
- HomeFront - \$17,000
- Keystone House - \$10,075
- Malta House - \$50,000
- Norwalk Housing Authority - \$60,500
- Norwalk Redevelopment Agency - \$355,193
- Open Door Shelter - \$37,000

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO RECOMMEND THE CDBG PY46 FUNDING ALLOCATIONS**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. Advance the draft PY46 Action Plan (2020-2021) and 5-year ConPlan (2020-2024) to public comment period (March 23, 2020 to April 21, 2020), with a contingency provision for the final allocation by HUD.

Ms. Guttman said that they didn't need a contingency plan because funds had been approved nationwide. She said they had to provide a five year consolidated plan which was due on May 15. She said they were working with a consultant to draft that and working on fund distribution.

She said that the draft would be ready in time for 30 day public notice starting on March 23. She said that the public notice would appear in The Hour, on the City Website, the agency website and other locations around the city. She said it had to pass the common council, and then had to be sent by May 15.

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO ADVANCE THE DRAFT PY46 ACTION PLAN (2020-2021) AND 5-YEAR CONPLAN (2020-2024) TO PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD (MARCH 23, 2020 TO APRIL 21, 2020), WITH A CONTINGENCY PROVISION FOR THE FINAL ALLOCATION BY HUD.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. Approve scheduling a public hearing on the draft PY46 Action Plan (2020-2021) and 5-year ConPlan (2020-2024) during the Planning Committee meeting on April 2, 2020.

**** MS. SMYTH MOVED TO APPROVE SCHEDULING A PUBLIC HEARING ON THE DRAFT PY46 ACTION PLAN (2020-2021) AND 5-YEAR CONPLAN (2020-2024) DURING THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING ON APRIL 2, 2020.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. Advance to the Common Council permission to authorize the Mayor to submit waiver requests related to the CDBG program to HUD on behalf of the affected persons as identified by the PY46 Public Disclosure forms.

Ms. Guttman said that she had received some completed waiver forms and would send a reminder to others.

Mr. Kydes asked her to place waivers in the Caucus room to ensure that they were signed by Monday night.

**** MR. TSIRANIDES MOVED TO ADVANCE TO THE COMMON COUNCIL PERMISSION TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR TO SUBMIT WAIVER REQUESTS RELATED TO THE CDBG PROGRAM TO HUD ON BEHALF OF THE AFFECTED PERSONS AS IDENTIFIED BY THE PY46 PUBLIC DISCLOSURE FORMS.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

c. Mapping initiative presentation by the Norwalk Land Trust.

Ms. Shanahan said that she'd been approached by the head of H2H who said that they'd done a lot of mapping of conservation areas in local suburbs and exurbs but were looking to apply it to a city. She said that they'd asked the Norwalk Land Trust to facilitate the project to start mapping an urban area. She introduced conservationists Katie Blake and Casey Hamilton of H2H noting that they were close to final draft, and that this information could yield positive opportunities for Norwalk.

Ms. Blake gave an overview of the company, and the project and said that their mission was to advance the pace and scale and practice of, regional conservation. She explained that they'd done some strategic conservation planning, developing maps like the ones in her presentation to serve as a tool to create a clear vision of what needed to be done.

She said that the framework for mapping was different for conservation in a city, the people had different priorities, so they had to think about things like street flooding, street trees and pollinators

She listed the seven drivers of urban mapping: connectivity, ecological, urban heat island, equity and social vulnerability, flood risk, recreation and public health. She noted that they'd established that economics was important to stakeholders, so they'd added that.

She noted that she and Mr. Hamilton had worked with Ms. Shanahan to ensure feedback from all stakeholders on the priorities in Norwalk.

Mr. Hamilton gave an overview of GIS research.

Ms. Young arrived at 7:37

He said they'd overlaid, areas of to show what could be could be viewed as priority. For example, he said if one was interested in ecology, they could look at ecology map, which was the darkest green and presumably highest areas of value. He said it was a lacking a broad call to action, and target for conservation efforts.

He said to find that they tried to recombine data in a way to cover off on that. They came up with three categories: preservation/conservation, equitable access to nature and climate change risk areas.

He showed what each of those maps looked like. He said the preservation/conservation map showed land that would be good for protections. He said that they'd done analysis to show areas that would be good for increased access to green. Finally, he said that the last one, climate change risk, mostly revealed areas closest to the coasts.

Mr. Hamilton said that the next steps would be to produce documentation, develop outreach maps, develop a web based application for the maps, and develop a framework that could be replicated in other urban areas. Ms. Blake said they'd have the documents in the next few months.

Ms. Shanahan thanked everyone for getting involved and helping with this project.

d. Update on the East Norwalk Train Station proposed

Mr. Kydes said that a subcommittee had been meeting on this for some time, and they were at a point where there was a substantial information to share and introduced Mr. Kleppin.

Mr. Kleppin said that the subcommittee had been meeting for about a year and the consultant was getting close to finishing the first draft of a report to share some time in March. He said he would share some information on where they were heading with the plan.

He distributed maps to the committee members and discussed lane use changes proposed. He said that one potential recommendation was relocation the DPW garage, but he wasn't sure that was feasible.

He said that map #4 showed the area around Selleck Street and Osbourne Avenue. He said that there was a lot of affordable housing, and to try to keep that, they were recommending exploring things like façade improvements for the area.

He said items six and ten they were considering preserving those areas, perhaps by imposing village district regulations to distinguish them.

Mr. Kydes noted there was a lot of commercial use in that area.

Mr. Kleppin talked about some broader changes they would recommend. In the areas on the map labeled 'seven', he said that they were zoned Neighborhood Business. They

were proposing rezoning to C residential. He said that the goal was to pull some disjointed uses back toward the center, concentrating activity closer to East Avenue.

He said they were focusing on East Avenue, which was zoned Neighborhood Business, proposing that they create a new village district which allows the city to have design control in potential redevelopment. He said the area needed a boost. He said that they would offer incentives for people who wanted to redevelop (up to 3.5 stories). He said that would be tied to amenities, which the subcommittee was still considering.

He said that the area parallel with the rail tracks was industrial one zoning, he said there were small manufacturing type businesses in there. He said they'd try to enhance that.

He said that one use they'd looked at was the need for 'maker space', which was currently undefined. He showed a slide that showed what's available now and what they were proposing.

After some technical issues, Mr. Kydes invited Mr. Kleppin back for the next meeting to finish his presentation.

ADJOURNMENT.

**** MS. SMYTH MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lora Grassilli
Telesco Secretarial Services