

CITY OF NORWALK
ZONING COMMISSION – SPECIAL MEETING
June 1, 2020

PRESENT: Louis Schulman, Chair; Galen Wells; Richard Roina; Stephanie Thomas; Nicholas Kantor; Nate Sumpter; Rod Johnson (arrived at 3:15 p.m.); Michael Witherspoon (arrived at 3:24 p.m.)

STAFF: Steve Kleppin; Bryan Baker

OTHERS: Robert Grzywacz; Alan Plattus

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Schulman called the meeting to order at 3:03 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.

III. REVIEW AND ACTION ON NEW APPLICATIONS a. #1-20M - Merritt Station Norwalk, LLC et all - 67, 69, 79, 87, 111, 117, 129, 135, 155, 156 & 201 Glover Avenue and 2 Oakwood Ave - Proposed change to the zoning map from AAA Residence and Business #2 zone to entirely Executive Office zone – Further review b. #2-20R - Merritt Station Norwalk, LLC et all - Proposed amendments to add a new definition for Executive Office Development Park and to permit the new use in the Executive Office zone and related technical amendments – Further review c. #2-20SPR - Merritt Station Norwalk, LLC et all - 67, 69, 79, 87, 111, 117, 129, 135, 155, 156 & 201 Glover Avenue and 2 Oakwood Ave – Site plan review of proposed Master Plan for Executive Office Development Park – Further review

Mr. Kleppin gave a brief overview of the three applications, including the text amendments and the site plans for projects on Glover Avenue as well as the Master Plan. They would be discussing the First Phase of the consultants review of these applications and how they fit in with the Plan of Conservation and Development (“POCD”). There would be a discussion of design practices. Mr. Schulman reminded the public that were watching, this was not a public hearing therefore, there would be no opportunity for comments. He advised them to submit questions or comments to Mr. Kleppin.

Mr. Grzywacz stated that he and Mr. Plattus were at the meeting to listen to what the commissioners would like included in the Phase One of their review. He compared this project to

one in Newton, MA which was similar. Mr. Kleppin noted that most of the commissioners seemed to have a neutral opinion of the project. There was a discussion about the Master Plan for this project and concerns about the fact that there is no traffic plan. The applicant suggested doing a traffic plan for each building in the project. They were also relying on state transportation projects which had been stalled for many years. There was also a discussion about the open space and whether it would be enough for the scale of the project. There was also a discussion about whether these should be special permit or site review applications. There was a discussion about whether the applicants' current buildings on Glover Avenue fostered a community and whether this new project would be able to help foster that sense of community, especially due to the large number of units. There was also a discussion about the parking garages and the Route 7 connector. There was a concern about the number of schoolchildren in these developments which would affect the school enrollment. There was also a discussion about the parks and walkability in this area. There was then a discussion about the lot area for these multi-dwelling projects. There was also a discussion about the timeline for meetings on these applications.

Mr. Grzywacz discussed the proposal for their services and what would be covered. Since the city's traffic consultant had a conflict on this project, Mr. Schulman discussed whether Mr. Grzywacz said if a traffic analysis was necessary that they would have to go outside the firm. Mr. Schulman was concerned that if city residents were against the project, they would make traffic an issue. There was also a discussion about the fact that there were only 2 entrances/exits from the project area, one at each end. There was a discussion about the branch line of Metro-North in this area although many residents drive to the South Norwalk train station. There were concerns about state transportation projects in the area that had not been completed and could have a significant impact on this development. Mr. Grzywacz noted what his firm could handle as far as traffic analysis. There was also a discussion about Mr. Grzywacz' opinion about the project which he described as "not that special." It does not seem like the Newton project. He was asked for some suggestions to make it a better project.

Mr. Plattus believed that the Newton project was more sophisticated than this one. However, without discussing this project with the developer, he might not be aware of any constraints they had. He noted that in the Newton project, there was a legitimate commuter train station. There was a discussion about the boundaries of the project. Mr. Kleppin said that it would be a good idea for the consultants to speak with the applicant. There was a further discussion about the borders of the project or study area. The consultants have not recently driven through the area but intend to do so. There was a discussion about how their report would look and if there were examples from other towns that were doing similar projects. Mr. Kleppin suggested since this is a larger project, the approval process should be multi-level, with the Master Plan being a special permit application. If that had been approved, then he suggested that the individual projects be considered site plan reviews.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: May 26, 2020 Special meeting

**** MR. SUMPTER MOVED to approve the May 26, 2020 Zoning Commission - Special Meeting minutes.**

Mr. Roina seconded.

Louis Schulman; Galen Wells; Richard Roina; Stephanie Thomas; Nicholas Kantor; Nate Sumpter; Rod Johnson; Michael Witherspoon approved.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

V. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR

Mr. Kleppin noted that the next Zoning Commission meeting would be held on June 17, 2020. He would also confirm the date of the next special meeting for these applications and notify the commissioners.

VI. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

There were no comments from the commissioners.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Thomas made a Motion to Adjourn.

Mr. Sumpter seconded.

Louis Schulman; Galen Wells; Richard Roina; Stephanie Thomas; Nicholas Kantor; Rod Johnson; Michael Witherspoon; Mr. Sumpter approved.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero