

CITY OF NORWALK
PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 14, 2013

PRESENT: Jill Jacobson, Chair; Joseph Santo; Emily Wilson; Jim White; Nathan Sumpter; Mike O'Reilly

STAFF: Michael Wrinn; Dori Wilson; Frank Strauch

OTHERS: Atty Marc Grenier; Ray Sullivan; Jim Rotondo; Mike Galante; Sara Caskalewicz; Andrew White; Tim Sheehan

Jill Jacobson called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

SITE PLAN REVIEWS & COASTAL SITE PLAN REVIEWS

a) Comments of Zoning Commission Chair

Mr. Santo began the meeting by explaining the rules for the committee meetings. He wanted the Chair of each committee to run the meeting, with comments from all the commissioners. However, when there was a decision/recommendation to be made, it would be made by the committee members only.

He then appointed the committees. The Plan Review committee would be chaired by Jill Jacobson and its members were to be Mike Mushak. The other member was to be Harry Rilling, who had been elected Mayor, so this seat would be vacant until Mr. Rilling filled the position. Emily Wilson would chair the Zoning Committee and its members would be Nat Sumpter and Linda Kruk.

Mr. Santo further clarified the rules of the committee meetings as well as the Zoning Commission meetings. He thought it was necessary for anyone speaking to be recognized by the chairperson. He then noted that the commissioners were on the Zoning Commission for the whole city. They did not represent any certain district in the city.

Mr. Sumpter had some questions about the rules that Mr. Santo had set forth. Mr. Wrinn said that the by-laws stated that the Zoning Commission chair appoints the committee chairpersons. He explained that one of the reasons that he was urging these rules to be used is that in some of the lawsuits against the city, it had been said that the committees acted like the Zoning commission. Mr. Sumpter believed that the same people were appointed as the committee chairs. Ms. Jacobson reminded Mr. Santo that she was the only one at the meeting who was on the Plan Review Committee. Mr. Santo then appointed Mr. White and Mr. O'Reilly onto the committee.

b) #17-13CAM – Glazer – 79 Rowayton Ave – New single family residence – Final review prior to public hrg

Mr. Strauch began the presentation by discussing Marcy Balint's letter. He discussed the meaning of "acceptable impacts" which was mentioned in her letter as well as discussing several other points from her letter. He stressed that the commissioners were the ones to make the decision about this application. It would be on the Zoning Commission agenda for the following week.

c) #8-13SPR – FM Investments LLC – 587 Connecticut Ave - Proposed mixed use development with 34,700 sq ft office and 80 multifamily dwelling units – Further review

Mr. Strauch began the presentation. He told them that a CEAC meeting was scheduled for the following week.

Atty Grenier, who represented the applicant, continued the presentation. He said this was a mixed use building which would be on the same site as a 2 story office building. He gave a description of the current property. He then described the mixed use building which would include work force housing. He introduced the development team. He then asked for a waiver of a public hearing since they were not requesting any zone changes and the neighbors were all businesses.

Ray Sullivan, the architect on the project, continued the presentation. He showed the commissioners site photos as well as an aerial map. He then showed the proposed plans for the mixed use building as well as for each of four floors. He also showed them the materials board and went over the landscape plans. Mr. Santo asked why there were stairs in the back but Mr. Sullivan did not know. Mr. Sumpter asked questions about the work force housing units. Mr. Sullivan said they would not be located at the same place and the amenities are the same for them as the other renters. Emily Wilson asked about the front doors and whether they were easily accessible for those in wheelchairs.

Jim Rotondo, the civil engineer on the project, continued the presentation. He explained the sidewalks and access currently on the property, which would be expanded and redeveloped for the project. He said there would be pedestrian access with the sidewalks. He then went over the storm water management plan.

Mike Galante, the traffic engineer, continued the presentation. He oriented the commissioners as to the location of the property on an aerial map. He then went over the traffic counts as well as future traffic counts and level of service. He concluded that this would not change after the project is completed. Mr. Santo asked what the level of service was. Mr. Galante said that it was a C which surprised Mr. Santo.

There was then a discussion about whether there would have to be a public hearing. The committee members decided that there should be one which was scheduled for December 11.

d) #23-13 CAM – Twenty North Main St, LLC - 20 N. Main St – Tenant fit-up for new restaurant (Pasta Nostra) – Preliminary review

Mr. Strauch began the presentation by orienting the commissioners to the location of the restaurant on an aerial map. He described the proposed plans. He also reminded the commissioners that since they were in an exempt zone, they were not required to have parking. The committee members decided to move the item to the Zoning Commission agenda.

e) #16-13CAM – Norwalk Sailing School – Calf Pasture Beach – Replace and move storage structures due to Hurricane Sandy – Preliminary review

Mr. Strauch began the presentation by orienting the commissioners to the location of the sailing school on an aerial map. The school sustained damage during Superstorm Sandy. He explained the process that the applicant had been through since the storm. He then described the history of the school which is approximately 50 years old. There was a discussion as to whether it would be moved to the Zoning Commission agenda. Sara Caskalewicz, a member of the program, answered Mr. Sumpter's questions about it.

f) #9-11SPR – North Water LLC – 20 N. Water St – Request to modify sidewalk, add 7 on street parking spaces and reduce # of street trees - Determine if minor change

Dori Wilson began the presentation by discussing a background of the site plan approval. She passed around aerial photos of the site. She summarized the changes to the sidewalk that the applicant was requesting. She mentioned that a consultant had suggested that Norwalk could slow down cars with more on street parking. In this situation, they would like to widen the roadway by narrowing the sidewalk from 16 ft. to 13 ft. This would allow for 7 vehicles to park on North Water Street.

Andrew White, hired by the Redevelopment Agency, continued the presentation. He showed the commissioners aerials of North Water Street. He explained the improvements to the street which would help slow down cars. He said that they had worked with city staff on them. He also said there would be new drainage improvements. Mr. Sumpter asked about the speed hump on the street which Mr. White said would be eliminated. The sidewalks would be widened north of the Metro-North bridge. Mr. Santo asked about what would be done to get people to walk underneath the bridge. Mr. White explained that there would be changes to the lighting and the sidewalks. Metro-North would be cooperating with these changes. Mr. Sumpter had questions about the width of the road in connection with bikers. He thought the road should be wider, not narrower. Mr. White agreed that making the street narrower was not necessary. He also questioned the idea of having vehicles park on North Water Street.

Tim Sheehan, of the Redevelopment Agency, continued the presentation. He explained how studies have shown that pedestrians feel safer when there are vehicles parked on the street, creating a barrier between them and the road. He also said there was an economic issue in South Norwalk in that there is no on-street parking. He said that they have worked with the Department of Public Works as well as the Zoning

Department staff to make sure that everyone agreed about what was being presented. Emily Wilson thought that by having vehicles on the street, it would increase the foot traffic in the area. Mr. Sheehan said that they would like to have this matter decided quickly since they would have to begin construction on the curbs soon.

The members of the committee decided that this application was not a minor change and it would be on the Zoning Commission agenda for the next meeting.

g) #X-13SPR – Van Dyk Baler – 360 Dr. MLK Jr. Dr. – Modification to existing building – Determine if minor change

Michael Wrinn began the presentation by orienting the commissioners as to the location of the property on a map. He explained how the applicant wanted to raise the roof. The commissioners considered it a minor change.

II. SPECIAL PERMITS

a) #X-13SP - Second Taxing District – 9 Lakeview Rd – Modify wells – Determine if minor change

Michael Wrinn began the presentation by orienting the commissioners as to the location of the well field on a map. The applicant would like to construct another well on the property. The commissioners considered it a minor change.

b) #7-08SP – SoNo Field House – 365 Dr. MLK Jr. Dr. – Request to modify special events operations plan to extend hours of operation and maximum capacity for December special event – Determine if minor change

Dori Wilson began the presentation by discussing the history of the site plan. The applicant had previously submitted an operation plan and now they were requesting a change from the plan. She discussed the changes which included a change to the end time as well as the maximum capacity of occupants for a special event in December. The Fire Marshall has signed off on the increased capacity. The committee members agreed that the changes were a minor change. They were told there would be off-duty police officers to handle the crowds.

c) #4-00SP – Merritt River Apartments – 399 Main Av – Request to modify cornice sign with new logo – Determine if minor change

Dori Wilson began the presentation by showing the commissioners a photo of the existing sign. The applicant was requesting to modify their sign with a new one. She briefly described the regulations for the commissioners. The committee members agreed it was a minor change.

d) #3-10SP – Maplewood – 73 Strawberry Hill Av – Congregate housing facility - Unauthorized modification to approved plan without prior authorization to add multi-purpose room

Mr. Strauch began the presentation. He described the unauthorized modification and said that the applicant had paid the fees. Mr. White said that they would have approved it anyway. Since it was unauthorized, it would have to be on the Zoning Commission agenda in the following week.

e) #20-92SP – Shell Oil Co – 395 Main Av – Convert service area to retail space – Determine if minor change

Mr. Strauch began the presentation by orienting the commissioners to the location of the property on a map. He described the changes to the service area of the gas station to add the retail area, as well as changes to the landscaping and garbage areas. There would also be changes to the drainage system. The committee members agreed it was a minor change.

III. MOTOR VEHICLE - #1-13MV/#24-13CAM – 33 Merwin St., LLC – 33 Merwin St – Motor vehicle use – Replace repair garage – Preliminary review

Mr. Strauch began the presentation by orienting the commissioners to the location of the property on a map. He told the commissioners that the applicant received an approval from the Zoning Board of Approval to continue the auto repair use at the property. There are some non-conformities on the property which Mr. Strauch discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Diana Palmentiero