

CITY OF NORWALK
ZONING COMMITTEE
November 13, 2014

PRESENT: Jill Jacobson, Chair; Emily Wilson; Joe Santo; Adam Blank; Nora King; Jim White; Nathan Sumpter

STAFF: Michael Greene; Mike Wrinn; Dori Wilson

OTHERS: Atty. Al Vasko; Ray Sullivan; Earl Goven; Atty. Liz Suchy; Mr. Galante

Emily Wilson called the meeting to order at 8:05 p.m.

I. PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE BUILDING ZONE MAP & SPECIAL PERMIT/COASTAL SITE PLAN

a) #2-14M/#8-14SP/#20-14CAM – Head of the Harbor South, LLC - 6 Smith St/2 East Wall St - Proposed map change for 2 East Wall St from entirely East Ave Village District (EAVD) to EAVD (in part) & Central Business Design District Subarea C (in part) and special permit for 4 story mixed use development with 5,000 sq ft office and 60 dwelling units in 2 buildings – Preliminary review

Dori Wilson began the presentation by orienting the commissioners as to the location of the property on an aerial map as well as showing them site plan for the project.

Atty. Vasko continued the presentation by introducing all the members of the project's team. He then described the proposed buildings by going over the site plans. He said that this project has been a long time in the making. The applicant would give the city 15 dedicated parking spaces for the Mill Hill area museum as well as a stairway. He also explained the workforce housing units that the applicant would provide.

There was a discussion about retail for the project. There was also a discussion about rentals vs. condos for this project. Mr. Greene said that the approval would allow the applicant to build whichever would work best in the marketplace.

Mr. Sullivan, the architect, continued the presentation by detailing the number of units in each of the buildings, the amenity spaces, and office areas. He described how they determined where the "view corridor" between the buildings should be located. He provided a materials board and discussed the materials that would be used for the project. Mr. Greene said they were trying to make the area more pedestrian friendly. There was a discussion about where the workforce housing units would be located throughout the buildings. They would like to try to be able to start the project in Spring of 2015.

It was decided that the applicant would not have to provide a model.

Earl Goven, the landscape architect, continued the presentation. He mentioned that the plaza in between the two buildings will be a public plaza and would have a handicapped accessible route. There would be a public pergola. He described the storm water management system. There would be a nautical theme with bollards.

Mr. Galante, the traffic engineer, continued the presentation. His first question, from Mr. Santo, was how they would stop cars from going the wrong way. Mr. Galante explained that part of it was signage as well as road width, and changes in pavement. There was a discussion about receiving a modified model for the project. Mr. Blank suggested receiving different views of the project.

There was a discussion about the number of children who would be living in these buildings. They did not anticipate a lot of children. There was also a discussion as to how people could find out from developers about the workforce housing in these new developments that are being built. Mr. Greene said that he could put them in touch with the developers.

II. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE BUILDING ZONE REGULATIONS/ SPECIAL PERMIT/CSPR

a) #7-14R/#1-09SP/#1-09CAM – TR SoNo Partners, LLC - SoNo Hotel – 43 - 47 South Main St – Proposed amendments to Washington Street Design District and modify special permit to 110 room extended stay hotel (formerly 121 room hotel) with 70 space indoor valet parking in an automated garage – Preliminary review

Before Dori Wilson began the presentation, by describing the approval on the property from 2009, Mr. Blank left the room. She described the changes from the previous approval to the current application which included the number of rooms and type of hotel. She then showed the commissioners an aerial map of the property which is currently a parking lot. She also described the use of valet parking spaces.

Atty. Suchy continued the presentation by discussing the 2009 approval and current application in greater detail. She noted that there were parts of the regulations that had to be amended to allow the extended stay hotel. The application has also been sent to the Redevelopment Agency for review. She described the amenity areas and parking. There was a discussion of the meeting areas. They have received some of their sign-offs. Atty. Suchy said they would like to break ground in June of 2015. There was a discussion about the width of the sidewalks as well as the on street parking and valet parking. The Committee recommended a December hearing on the proposed amendment.

b) #X-14R – Zoning Commission - Proposed amendments to require notification of neighbors for pending Coastal Site Plan applications – Draft for discussion

Mr. Blank returned to the room. Although Dori Wilson began the presentation, Mr. Santo said that he had contacted Marcy Balint, about statements made at the previous Plan Review meeting which Commissioner King had attributed to her. Ms. Balint wrote an email in which she stated that she had not made the statements that were attributed to her. Ms. King claimed that Ms. Balint did have a conversation with her. She also said that Mr. Santo was calling her a liar. She then said that Mr. Santo had spent 18 years covering up a lack of planning in Town Hall. She also noted that they were not reviewing Mr. Greene. Ms. King believed that Ms. Balint's email supported the basis of Ms. King's conversation with her. She said that she had also spoken with Sue Jacobson 20 times. She believed that Mr. Santo was mad at her for wanting Mr. Greene to be reviewed. She said that she wanted performance evaluations which she believed that Mr. Santo was not willing to do. She said there was no plan in place on how to communicate with the Board of Education, with regards to counting the children that will be entering the school system. At this point, Emily Wilson reminded them that they were off topic and should remain focused on the proposed amendments.

Dori Wilson continued the presentation by explaining how the proposed amendments had come about. Some commissioners had requested that the applicant notify neighbors when they were filing a Coastal Area Management ("CAM") application. She said that the notification could be within 15 days from the date that the application had been submitted. However, she noted that the number was arbitrary and the commissioners could change it. The Committee decided to revise it to 10 days. They discussed the procedure that could be used to start the notification process. Mr. Santo said that the proposed amendment was unnecessary because these were single family homes and views were not protected. It would be a burden to the homeowner. Ms. King thought there should be a sign on the property to show what the house would look like. Ms. Jacobson did not understand why a property owner shouldn't be allowed to build what they wanted on the property. Mr. Blank thought that since it didn't cost a lot to send a certified letter, it would not be a burden to the property owner. A public hearing would be held on the proposed amendments in January.

c) #X-14R – Zoning Commission – Proposed amendments to Section 118-700 Industrial #1 zone to revise affordable housing requirements for Transit Oriented Developments from 30% and 20% to 10% – Draft for discussion

Dori Wilson began the presentation by giving a brief history of the current regulations. She explained the difference levels of affordable housing at 10%, 20% and 30%. The commissioners thought that the regulations should be kept simple. There was a discussion about which section of the city that would be affected by these regulations; Industrial #1 properties located in the TOD area around the South Norwalk railroad station. Dori Wilson described the current levels of workforce housing requirements. Mr. Santo was concerned about not meeting the state requirements for affordable housing. There was a discussion about the different levels and which would work for Norwalk. The amendments would be referred for a public hearing on the proposed amendments in February.

d) #X-14R – Zoning Commission – Proposed amendments to Section 118-1050 Workforce Housing regulation to require that workforce units in all zones be located on-site – Draft for discussion

Mr. Greene gave the commissioners a brief history of how the current Workforce Housing regulations were voted on by past commissioners. There was a discussion among the commissioners as to whether the units should be on site. Many of the commissioners thought it would be best to require them to be on site. The amendments would be referred for a public hearing on the proposed amendments in February.

e) #2-14R – Zoning Commission – Proposed amendments to revise minimum lot size for indoor contractor parking facility from 12,500 sf to 10,000 sf, to allow as principal use in Bus #1 & Bus #2 zones subject to submittal of Environmental impact statement (EIS) and related technical amendments – Final review prior to public hearing

Dori Wilson said that this item would be on the Zoning Commission's agenda for the following week. She also said that the Planning Commission recommended denial because they had issues with smaller lot sizes; therefore 5 votes would be needed to approve the amendment.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Diana Palmentiero