

CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MINUTES
April 2, 2025

PRESENT: Galen Wells, Chair; Chapin Bryce; Diana Lenkowsky; Louis Schulman; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Tammy Langalis; Ana Tabachneck; Nick Kantor; Richard Roina; Darius Williams (after the roll call)

STAFF: Steve Kleppin; Bryan Baker

OTHERS: Atty Mario Coppola; Atty Nicholas Bamonte; Atty Matt Sapienza; Atty Liz Suchy; Atty Rick Constantini;

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Wells called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. It should be noted that this meeting was held on Zoom.com with participants calling in, separately.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Kleppin called the roll.

III. TRAINING

A. Planning & Zoning Commission Training from 6:00pm to 7:30pm

At this point, Ms. Wells said that the commission would begin their training session. Atty Mario Coppola introduced an attorney from his law firm, Nicholas Bamonte, as well as the assistant corporation counsel, Matt Sapienza. He said that they would try to provide training every one or two years, especially since there is a requirement for it. He asked that the Planning & Zoning Department keep a record for each of the commissioners of the trainings.

The training session covered various aspects of the commission's responsibilities, including legal notice requirements, participation and attendance, voting procedures, and the implications of the Freedom of Information Act. The training team also discussed the enforcement mechanisms for planning and zoning commissions, as well as various zoning and land use regulations, including changes to flood zone regulations, maximum heights for industrial zones, and setbacks for marine commercial zones. The training ended with the possibility of setting time limits for public comments during meetings.

IV. APPLICATIONS PRELIMINARY REVIEW BEGINNING AT 7:30PM

A. #2025-15 R/SP – Norwalk Center, LLC & The Auto Collective – 10 Norden Place (District 3, Block 17, Lot 40) – Zoning regulation text amendment application to amend Article 4 and Article 9 to create a “Car Club” use within the SD-LI zoning district and special permit application for a +/- 137,000sf Car Club within an existing building

Atty Liz Suchy began the presentation with a description of the project which would be a car club within the building at 10 Norden Place. Owners would store their luxury cars or classic cars for short or long periods of time. There would be no outdoor storage or work on the cars. It would all be inside. She also gave them a brief background of the property. Last year the commission had also approved a maintenance center for the MTA which is under appeal. The motor vehicle club is a new use for the property so she explained what they would be. She explained how the cars would enter the building. She then introduced the project team. She discussed the number of employees and hours of operation. They had also received sign-offs from some City departments.

There was a discussion about where in the building this car club would be. Atty Suchy said that there is additional space in the building where the MTA maintenance center is. Atty Suchy said that there is a similar car club adjacent to the Danbury airport which the commissioners could look at.

There was a discussion about how many members the club would have, which Atty Suchy said would be around 400 people. She said there would have to be a cap on the maximum number of people attending the club's larger events. Large events would happen less frequently than smaller ones. There was also a discussion about which building this would be in since there are three on the site. There was a discussion about the parking on the site. They also reviewed an aerial photo of the site. There was a discussion about an area where cars would be cleaned before entering the space. There was also a discussion about a limited time when cars would be shown outside such as during a Formula One simulcast. The maximum number of cars would be 420.

Atty Suchy requested that a public hearing be scheduled and notified the commission that the neighbors had been notified of the submission of the application and would be notified of the public hearing. Members of the club would not have 24 hour access to their cars, but rather, they would set up an appointment through an app to take their cars out of the facility.

**B. #2025-18 SP - Indian Hill RE, LLC - 284 New Canaan Avenue
(District 5, Block 46, Lot 76) - After-the-fact clearing of 15,000 square feet which is
to be restored with plantings**

Atty Rick Constantini, the attorney representing the applicant, introduced the project team and noted that they may need multiple special permit applications. He then explained that they had received a notice of violation due to clear cutting on the property. This application contained the restoration plan that was approved by the Inland Wetland commission. However, he said that the commission had asked for different varieties of trees so that the restoration plan may have to be updated. He also noted that the applicant is still working with the inland wetland agency on the retention system, so they have not received an approval. A second special permit application will be submitted once an approval has been received. Another meeting is scheduled for April 22 with that commission.

Brian Carey, the soil scientist for the applicant, continued the presentation by explaining that he had been before the Inland Wetland Agency. They have until April 22 to approve or deny the application. Atty Constantini said they were not looking to expand the site.

There was a discussion about the size of the trees. Mr. Carey showed them the plans that had already been approved by the Inland Wetland Commission and explained what some of the trees would be and how many would be planted. Mr. Schulman asked Mr. Kleppin to speak with the conservation department about the size of the trees which he thought were small.

There was a discussion about how the area became cleared which Mr. Carey explained there was a misunderstanding between the applicant and his staff. There was also a discussion about why the business was removed from where it was to its current location. Mr. Carey said it was due to eminent domain for the repairs to the Walk Bridge.

**C. #2025-08 R - Planning & Zoning Commission - Zoning Regulation
Text Amendment to Articles 4, 6, 8 and 9 regarding changes to the flood hazard
zone regulations for buffer areas and construction methodology for residential
flood compliance; maximum building heights for the SD-LI and SD-HI zones; rear
setbacks for the SD-MC zone; Frontage requirements for Watercourse Lots;
requiring a site plan review application for changes in use that exceed a certain
size; how Trade or Vocational Schools are permitted; changes to Indoor &
outdoor storage of passenger motor vehicles, Motor Vehicle Storage, Warehouse,
and Warehousing uses; Workforce Housing incentives and income buffers;**

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clarification on mailings required for public notice; amending the definitions of Story, Lowest Floor and Motor Vehicle Body Shop and adding definitions of Unfinished Area and Finished (Habitable) Area

Mr. Baker began the presentation by noting that this should be the last of the zoning changes that the staff would be recommending. The first change was in the flood regulations and what would count as the lowest floor and the construction that could happen on that floor. The next change was also a flood zone change for properties in the AE or VE zones. There was a discussion about lifting a house and not being able to further improve the structure.

The next change would be to amend charts in light and heavy industrial zones to add in maximum heights of a story. There would also be a change to the rear setbacks within the marine commercial zone. There were modifications to watercourse lots which would be limited to zones that abut the Norwalk Harbor, but there could be further revisions. There would be modifications to the regulations in connection with trade or vocational schools that an existing business would run.

Mr. Kleppin discussed the next set of suggested modifications which came from the affordable housing plan. One modification was in the instance where someone who previously qualified for workforce housing no longer did. Although they could remain in the unit, it could not be counted in the city's workforce housing. However, they did create a buffer that the amount of workforce housing could not go below 12%. Another modification would be deed restricting some units to increase density. There would also be another modification for more affordable units which Mr. Kleppin would have to develop. He would be looking at what other towns were doing, as a model for the city. Mr. Kleppin said that he would send the commissioners information on SMI as well as the number of units that could affect the city's workforce housing percentage. The Planning & Zoning Department monitored the workforce housing provisions and provided information to the state. The last change was for the mailing of notifications which would be consistent with state statutes.

Mr. Baker discussed recommended changes to some definitions including unfinished area, story and lowest floor.

V. DISCUSSION

There were no comments at this time.

VI. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting: March 19, 2025

**** MR. BRYCE MOVED to approve the March 19, 2025 minute, as amended.**

Mr. Williams seconded.

Galen Wells; Chapin Bryce; Diana Lenkowsky; Louis Schulman; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Tammy Langalis; Darius Williams approved.

No one opposed.

Ana Tabachneck; Nick Kantor; Richard Roina abstained.

VII. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR

Mr. Kleppin reminded the commissioners about the meeting on Wednesday, April 9 at the GrayBarns. He asked them to review the applicant's narrative. The meeting was to orient them on the site as well as how activities were processed. They would also go over where the neighbors were located in connection with the different uses. He also reminded them not to have conversations amongst themselves or with the public since it wasn't being recorded. They would discuss questions during the public hearing. He would send out information to the commissioners before the meeting. They would go into the barn as well. Ms Tabachneck said that she would not be able to attend the meeting but would visit the site on the weekend. Mr. Kleppin said that they could arrange for staff to meet her there. There would be a meeting the following week, but then there would be two weeks with no meetings.

VIII. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

There were no comments from the commissioners.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Bryce made a Motion to Adjourn.

Mr. Williams seconded.

Galen Wells; Chapin Bryce; Diana Lenkowsky; Louis Schulman; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Tammy Langalis; Darius Williams; Ana Tabachneck; Nick Kantor; Richard Roina approved.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero