

**CITY OF NORWALK
ORDINANCE COMMITTEE
AUGUST 21, 2018**

ATTENDANCE: Eloisa Melendez, Chair; Douglas Hempstead; Thomas Livingston;
Beth Siegelbaum; Douglas Stern; Chris Yerinides

STAFF: Mario Coppola, Brian Candela, Corporation Counsel; Ray Burney,
Director of Personnel; Timothy Sheehan, Executive Director
Norwalk Redevelopment Agency

1. ROLL CALL

Ms. Melendez called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m. and called the Roll.

2. PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Coppola read a statement recommending the public hearing be rescheduled because the legal notices did not provide a description of the ordinance. He said that while it has been the practice of the City to not publish a copy of the ordinance, out of an abundance of caution, he recommends rescheduling the public hearing.

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO RESCHEDULE THE PUBLIC HEARING
ON THE FOLLOWING ITEMS TO TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2018 AT
7:00 IN A ROOM TO BE DETERMINED**

- VOTE ON PROPOSED ORDINANCE - INNOVATION DISTRICT**
- DISCUSS AND VOTE ON PROPOSED ORDINANCE - DEPARTMENT
OF CHIEF OF STAFF**
- DISCUSS AND VOTE ON PROPOSED ORDINANCE - ECONOMIC
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT,**
- DISCUSS AND VOTE ON PROPOSED REVISIONS/AMENDMENTS TO
ARTICLE III: DEPARTMENT OF
RECREATION AND PARKS ORDINANCE**
- DISCUSS AND VOTE ON PROPOSED REVISIONS/AMENDMENTS TO
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
ORDINANCE**

Mr. Stern said he looked forward to hearing from all who want to speak. Mr. Hempstead thanked the Law Department. He noted if they did not properly act tonight, they could incur a fine and jail time.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

3. PUBLIC HEARING DISCUSSION

There was no discussion this evening.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public participation comments are not verbatim and represent a summarization of statements unless otherwise noted.

Ms. Nancy Rosett, spoke in support of the reorganization and said she looks forward to working with the Transportation Planner.

Mr. Jud Ally spoke in support of the reorganization and in particular the Chief of Economic and Community Development.

Mr. Richard Bonenfant, said he had 10 arguments why the public hearing was illegal, but that was addressed. He spoke against the Innovation District and said it was one of the worst ideas to come down the pike in a long time. He also addressed the reorganization and said he wondered if Ms. L. King came to work every day crafting her new powers. He asked to keep the term of Chief of Staff and the Mayor concurrent.

Ms. Lisa Brinton Thomson, said this is August and a lot of people are on vacation. It is unfortunate to hold a public hearing at this time. She said this is a major reorganization and in the spirit of transparency, the Ordinances should have been published. She said there must be checks and balances in the Mayor's office. She said that Norwalk is in a fiscal crisis and giving money to some through the Innovation District smacks of cronyism.

Ms. Deborah Goldstein strongly recommended that the developer put their money where their mouth is. She said the developer should agree that they would not seek amendments once they receive their approval and that they will only propose a viable project. She said that the reorganization starts and ends with a faulty premise. This proposal is a solution in search of a problem. She urged all to get back to run the City. Ms. Goldstein said the schools are underfunded and children are not getting the proper services they need and now people from apartments who do not pay taxes are being added.

Ms. Donna Smirniotopoulos said when she attended a Planning Committee meeting where they discussed the Innovation District, Mr. Sheehan described it as a tool for the Common Council. She said a lot could go wrong and the tool is only as good as the people administering the tool. She talked about the process used to appoint people to commissions.

Mr. John spoke against the reorganization. He said there were so many conflicts of interest and so many problems. He said the reorganization and the Innovation District are bad ideas.

Mr. Tod Bryant, said he had questions about the Innovation District and understood it is being created to incentivize the development of Wall Street. He said he believed there is a Federal program that would provide similar incentives and asked if that has been taken into consideration. He said the Innovation District did not address existing businesses and noted they have to be taken into consideration. Mr. Bryant added that the incentive for the preservation of historical buildings should be in line with new development.

Mr. Bryant talked about the reorganization and said the City is working under the 1913 government system. It is time for a change.

Ms. Marija Bryant said that as far as the Innovation District, POCD has to be in place first and in terms of existing businesses, things are bubbling up on Wall Street. She said the way the ordinance is drafted is not fair to the people there now. There needs to be an incentive for them. It needs to be fair and balanced.

Mr. Adolph Neiderland said it is obvious the Redevelopment Agency did not acknowledge POCD at all. He said they advocate for mixed use/residential, when the consultants for POCD suggested that Norwalk should look at light industrial and high tech. He said the number one recommendation of the consultants was to be more transparent. He said a one day notice for a 30 page meeting is far from transparency.

Mr. Neiderland said Norwalk's grand list only grew 3% since 2014. He asked the Committee to think of the money invested in multi-story housing. He said it did not help Norwalk. He said Norwalk needs a strong city-wide economic leadership. He said neither of the plans should be approved.

Ms. Diane Lauricella said the Innovation District is not just about apartments being built. She said the ordinance as written lacks an in-depth discussion. Ms. Lauricella suggested going back to the drawing board and wait until the Chief of Economic and Community Development is hired. In addition, she suggested waiting until POCD was completed. ✓

Ms. Lauricella said it is premature to reorganize; some departments have a silo way of thinking and the efficiency of any reorganization is how it is managed. She said if it is truly a reorganization, they are not looking at the pros and cons.

Mr. John Romano said he owns a number of properties in Norwalk and built and maintained those without any incentives. He asked the Committee to put the brakes on these items and bring in stakeholders. Mr. Romano said Norwalk does a great job of chasing small businesses out of town. He asked the Committee to think it out.

No other members of the public wished to speak.

5. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

July 17, 2018

**** MR. YERINIDES MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED**

**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MR. HEMPSTEAD)**

Mr. Sheehan discussed the Innovation District and said he received a lot of good feedback. He said the Planning Committee spent a year on this and the Ordinance Committee spent four to five months on this. He noted the area is the second least populated tract in Norwalk. He said he understood the concern about housing, but for businesses to be successful there has to be on going demand for people to live in that area. Mr. Sheehan said they have to populate the census tract.

Mr. Sheehan explained that the initiative for the Innovation District came from the Mayor's office. The Redevelopment Agency did not just bring this forward it was a Mayor's initiative. One of the big constraints is that the City has to have an enabling statute to structure a tax.

Mr. Sheehan said he would be happy to submit answers to questions he took down this evening and post them on their website. Mr. Hempstead asked Mr. Sheehan what was available for small retail space and what was the occupancy rate wherever there are incentives.

Mr. Burney gave a summary of the Mayor's proposed reorganization plan. He said they are 2/3 of the way through the process.

6. OLD BUSINESS

Chapter 12, Article I, Section 12-1 of the
Ordinances of the City of Norwalk

Mr. Livingston said if there were no changes to the policy it holds. The Committee members discussed Sunday Hours. Mr. Candela said he would research what other communities are doing. Mr. Livingston said he was concerned about Washington Street at 1:45 a.m. Mr. Candela said he could ask the Police Chief about closing time on Washington Street.

7. NEW BUSINESS

No new business was discussed.

8. DISCUSSION ITEM

9. ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. YERINIDES MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services