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Members of the public who wish to “view the meeting live” and/or “provide live comments” can use the Zoom meeting platform by going to www.norwalkct.org/meetings and clicking on the “View/Participate Live on Zoom” link that is on the line with the meeting date and time. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, click the “raise your hand indicator” and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section.

Members of the public who wish to view the meeting, but are not participating, can view a live stream on the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. This stream is delayed by approximately 20 seconds. Please find the information using the link above. The meeting recording and minutes will be posted on the City of Norwalk website within seven (7) days after the meeting.

Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be read into the record, they should be submitted at least three hours in advance of the meeting start time. Please email Brian Candela at bcandela@norwalkct.org to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

**CITY OF NORWALK
COMMON COUNCIL ORDINANCE COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 17, 2023
BY VIDEOCONFERENCE AND TELECONFERENCE**

ATTENDANCE: Lisa Shanahan, Chair; Edwin Camacho; David Heuvelman;
Thomas Livingston; Nora Niedzielski Eichner; Joshua Goldstein

STAFF: Brian Candela, Corporation Counsel; Sabrina Godeski, Director of
Business Development and Tourism; Jessica Vonashek, Chief of
Community and Economic Development

OTHERS: Tod Bryant, Norwalk Preservation Trust; Dana Laird, Liz Golden,
Mark Jackson and Lisa Wilson Grant, Norwalk Historical Commission

1. ROLL CALL:

Ms. Shanahan called the roll as indicated above. She noted that Mr. Goldstein would be joining the meeting momentarily.

2. PUBLIC HEARING (possible action on):

There was no public hearing scheduled this evening.

3. PUBLIC HEARING DISCUSSION:

4. PUBLIC COMMENT:

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

Ms. Diane Lauricella noted the difficulty she had joining the meeting this evening. She spoke about request to form a new Arts and Culture Commission and questioned the need for another commission. She also spoke about the Demolition Delay ordinance and suggested making it more user friendly. In addition, when an individual makes an application, they should be informed if the building is over 50 years old.

Ms. Lauricella said that all departments should be trained in sign offs and they can flag the buildings with historical significance in the Tax Accessors books. Under 55-7 – she said she was

nervous where a decision regarding what is safe being left to judgement. She suggested adding language to clarify ‘unsafe’.

There were no other members of the public who wished to comment this evening.

5. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:

- November 15, 2022 – regular meeting of the ordinance committee

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED**
**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MR. CAMACHO)**

6. OLD BUSINESS:

- Discuss and vote Chapter 55 - Demolition Delay ordinance

Mr. Livingston gave an overview of the Ordinance and noted the POCD (Plan of Conservation and Development) has a chapter devoted to historical preservation. He reviewed the goal and the strategy to preserve buildings 50 years old and over. Mr. Livingston highlighted the changes in the Ordinance and pointed out that the process has been streamlined.

Mr. Livingston shared Mr. Ireland’s demo delay requests and said of the 136-demolition application, three were delayed and of the three delays, two were withdrawn and the third applicant waited and tore the building down.

The Committee members discussed the Ordinance and offered suggestions.

Ms. Wilson Grant said she was one of the first people on the scene following the demolition of the Willow Street home. She said that remodeling should also trigger the historical community and perhaps there should be more visits by the body that oversees renovations. Mr. Livingston said this Ordinance is drafted for exteriors only and they would not have the ability to do anything with interiors. Ms. Wilson Grant expressed concern about someone blatantly ignoring the process.

Mr. Jackson questioned why the demo notice is no longer required to be posted in the newspaper. Mr. Livingston said the Ordinance requires it to be noticed with the Historical Commission and Planning and Zoning.

Mr. Bryant said he understood the language concerns and said that it may be that when the Building Department gets a request for a major renovation, that they pass it to the Historical Commission, but noted that even an Historical District would not be able to regulate the interior of a building. Ms. Shanahan said that may be beyond the scope of this Ordinance. Mr. Bryant said it was a good idea to post the demolition notice on the City’s website.

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Ms. Laird spoke about demo by intentional neglect and asked if language could be added to the Ordinance.

Ms. Niedzielski Eichner said 50 years was far too recent and said she would much prefer to see this Ordinance focus on houses that are tied to the area's history. She added that she was generally concerned about an ordinance that imposes a delay. Ms. Niedzielski Eichner said she was a fan of the historical inventory project. She said she understands that a delay is a way of negotiating with the property owner, but there are not a lot of resources to save a lot of homes. She suggested preserving the funds to preserve specific homes with historical/architectural significance.

Mr. Livingston said they are working on developing and expanding the historical inventory, but that is a couple of years away. He explained that when 50 years was selected, it was meant as a moving target and a baseline where they would start to look at a building. Mr. Livingston said that not all buildings over 50 years are significant, but they don't know that.

Mr. Jackson asked what would happen if a property sold during the delay. Ms. Shanahan said she believe the delay the follows the property. Mr. Candela said there are penalties if a property owner violates an ordinance.

Mr. Camacho said he agreed with Ms. Niedzielski Eichner and asked why they are using 180 days when they could do it in 120 days. Mr. Bryant said the 180 days are in place as a deterrent to the property owners. Mr. Camacho said it was troubling to make someone wait six months to come to the table. He asked if there could be a difference of opinion on determining if a building is work saving. Mr. Livingston said there could be.

Mr. Camacho said he was concerned they may be losing the perspective of the property owner. Mr. Livingston said this was in the works before the demolition at Willow Street. He said that other towns deemed the 180 day delay to be appropriate. Mr. Camacho said he did not know why they were moving to 180 days, but things should be able to get done quicker now than 25 years ago. Mr. Livingston said the 180 days gives people more time to find a solution. He said this is a state law and has not been a burden to date.

Mr. Camacho asked Mr. Bryant if 120 days was a burden. Mr. Camacho said he did not know, but aid that 93 East Avenue would not be standing if not for a delay and legal action by the Attorney General.

Mr. Goldstein said he was sympathetic to Mr. Camacho's point. He said he could not vote to take this item to a public hearing tonight. He added that he was sympathetic to Ms. Niedzielski Eichner's concern about 50 years. Ms. Niedzielski Eichner suggested talking about doing something that would be tailored to Norwalk. She agreed that they should not move forward.

Mr. Livingston suggested everyone take a look at the issues for further discussion next month.

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO TABLE CHAPTER 55 - DEMOLITION DELAY
ORDINANCE TO NEXT MONTH'S MEETING
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

7. NEW BUSINESS:

- Discuss the Arts and Cultural District Proposal and Approval Process (Chapter 17A – Arts Commission)

Ms. Godeski highlighted her presentation. She reviewed the goal that came from the POCD: Chapter 6. She presented the existing model along with the proposed model which will become an amendment to the existing ordinance.

Ms. Godeski presented the proposed geographical area and said it could be altered. She also presented the seven steps to implement the proposed model. Members of the new Commission do not have to be residents of Norwalk, but they have to be members of the Norwalk arts community. Mr. Heuvelman asked about soliciting funding. Ms. Godeski said that presently as a commission, they can not seek funds. They are looking to make this change, so they can solicit donations.

Ms. Niedzielski Eichner said she was in favor of this and asked if there were other area they could look at, such as Parks and Recreation. Ms. Godeski said she was only familiar with cultural districts, but said it comes with other items such as theater and music, so they may be able to use this statute for other things.

8. DISCUSSION ITEM:

There were no other discussions this evening.

9. ADJOURNMENT:

**** MR. GOLDSTEIN MOVED TO ADJOURN
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services

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