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**CITY OF NORWALK
ORDINANCE COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 18, 2021
BY VIDEOCONFERENCE AND TELECONFERENCE**

ATTENDANCE: Lisa Shanahan, Chair; David Heuvelman; Dominique Johnson; Thomas Keegan; Thomas Livingston; Kadeem Roberts (7:16 p.m.)

STAFF: Brian Candela, Corporation Counsel; Steven Kleppin, Director of Planning and Zoning; Jessica Vonashek, Chief of Economic and Community Development

OTHERS: Francis DiMeglio; Chair Planning Commission; Louis Schullman, Chair Zoning Commission; Broderick Sawyer, Fire Marshall

Ms. Shanahan called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Shanahan called the Roll as indicated above. A Quorum was present.

PUBLIC HEARING (possible action on):

A public hearing was not held this evening.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No members of the public wished to comment this evening.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

April 20, 2021 – regular meeting of the Ordinance Committee

Mr. Candela made corrections to the minutes.

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS AMENDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

OLD BUSINESS

Discuss and Vote on Chapter 59A Housing: Equal Opportunity:

Section 59A-1

Section 59A-2

Ms. Shanahan thanked Ms. Johnson and Ms. Johnson thanked the Corporation Counsel.

The Committee members reviewed Chapter 59A. Ms. Johnson explained that the Code reflects the relevant state statutes regarding sexual orientation nondiscrimination. Ms. Johnson also noted that Margaret Suib was consulted in the revision of this language. Mr. Livingston said there still needs to be some grammatical and other revisions for consistency in the document. He said he can help with the language to be sure it is revised accordingly.

**** MR. HEUVELMAN MOVED CHAPTER 59A HOUSING: EQUAL
OPPORTUNITY TO A PUBLIC HEARING
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Discuss and Vote on Chapter 60 Human Relations Commission:

Section 60-1
Section 60-2
Section 60-5

Mr. Candela explained that this section has been on the agenda at least twice.

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED CHAPTER 60 HUMAN RELATIONS
COMMISSION TO A PUBLIC HEARING
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Discuss Chapter 38, Article II, (Fireworks and Firecrackers) Sections 38-7 through 38-13

Ms. Shanahan thanked Mr. Livingston for taking the lead on this item.

Mr. Sawyer said he was here this evening to answer questions. Ms. Shanahan asked if people should notify Mr. Sawyer if they plan to sell fireworks in their store. Mr. Sawyer said he will be receiving a list from T&T Fireworks of who they sell fireworks to. Mr. Livingston said he did not think that anyone selling illegal fireworks were going to notify Mr. Sawyer.

Mr. Roberts joined the meeting at 7:16 p.m.

Mr. Candela said that part of what they are trying to do is provide the Fire Department with an Ordinance. Ms. Shanahan asked Mr. Sawyer to think about this further.

The Committee members discussed and made revisions to the proposed revision. Ms. Shanahan said that the changes discussed will be included in the Ordinance and will be discussed further at next month's meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business discussed this evening.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Discuss the possible merger of the Planning and Zoning Commissions

Ms. Shanahan said that Mr. Livingston discussed this item with her and said he has been thinking about this for a long time.

Mr. Livingston said that now the POCD (Plan of Conservation Development) has been completed, and with the support of the Mayor, the time has come to discuss the merger of the Planning and Zoning Commissions.

Mr. Livingston gave an historical overview of the Planning and Zoning Commissions. Planning and Zoning were one commission from 1971 to 1988; however, Mr. Livingston said it appears that they were separated in 1988 for political reasons.

Mr. Kleppin presented data that laid out the reasons for the merger and a memo outlining the workload. He said it was important to note the significant functions are outlined in the Statute.

The number of subdivision applications have gone down over the past three years. They are averaging a total of four per year. Another major task, the City wide POCD is a 10 year document. The Planning Committee is also tasked with looking at 8-24 referrals. The Ordinance tasks the Planning Committee with looking at the capital budget and those requests.

Ms. Vonashek said this is a timely request to bring the Planning and Zoning Commissions together. She said that by bringing both Commissions together, they will work as one consistent group working for the City.

Ms. DiMeglio said she has been on the Planning Commission for a long time, first being appointed by Mayor Knopp. She said that when she was first appointed, along with the Planning Commission, they had the Sub Division Committee and the Land Use Committee. There were lots of subdivisions and referrals from the Zoning Commission. Currently, subdivisions are few and far between.

Ms. DiMeglio said that capital budget process is intensive. Last year, she streamlined it. In the past, they would hold meetings until midnight or 2:00 a.m. This year, she held the meetings from 5 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. over the course of three nights.

Ms. DiMeglio said that some of the frustration is that one Committee does not know what the other Committee is doing.

Ms. DiMeglio said she heard there was a legal directive to separate the two Commissions. Mr. Livingston said that when he looked for information in *The Hour*, it did not appear to be a legal issue.

Ms. DiMeglio said she supports merging the Planning and Zoning Commissions. She would propose increasing then number of members because they will need to create sub committees. She also asked the Committee to think about the membership of the Commission and be sure there is representation from the entire City to create a balanced membership.

Ms. DiMeglio said this is a positive thing and should be looked at as a whole.

Mr. Schullman said that he was a little concerned for the members of the Zoning Commission. He said it operates extremely well and everyone gets along extremely well. He said he would like to be involved in the discussions about how to make this work.

Mr. Schullman said that capital budget puts an enormous stress on the people dealing with that issue.

Mr. Schullman explained that the Zoning Commission meets between 20 – 30 times a year and the meetings run 3 – 4 hours. He said lately the meetings have been limited so they do not run late into the night. He said he welcomes the opportunity to be involved as they work through this issue.

Mr. Livingston proposed working with Ms. Shanahan, Ms. DiMeglio, Mr. Kleppin and Ms. Vonashek and come back with a proposal for consideration at the June meeting. He suggested starting with the pre-1988 Ordinance. He said he wants to do all he can to not make the burden overwhelming.

Mr. Heuvelman asked if this change would require Charter Revision to combine these two commissions or if this was an ordinance change only. Mr. Livingston replied that Charter revision was not necessary because of the 1971 changes to the charter. Mr. Heuvelman said it makes sense to explore combining these commissions as long as we are cognizant of the workload.

Ms. Johnson asked about diversity on the Commissions. Mr. Schullman noted that the Commissions have a political breakdown. People need to be from various areas so the City as a whole is represented. In addition, each Commission has term limits.

Ms. DiMeglio said they have four year terms and the Mayor appoints members to the Commission. She said they are a diverse group and leave their political affiliation at the door to do what is best for the City.

Mr. Candela said that when he reviewed the Ordinance, he saw political affiliation and geographic area.

Mr. Kleppin said that one area that would increase the workload would be the capital budget process.

ADJOURNMENT

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

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services