CITY OF NORWALK
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
SPECIAL MEETING
MARCH 17, 2025
VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING

ATTENDANCE: Joshua Goldstein; Chair, James Frayer, Heather Dunn, Barbara Smyth,
` Jalin T. Sead, Darlene Young (6:13p.m.), Lisa Shanahan (6:30 p.m.)

STAFF: Sabrina Godeski

OTHER: Steve Kleppin, Johan Lopez, Nicole Eaddy, Anne Wennerstrand, Nora Niedzielski-Eichner, Greg Pacelli, Ben Yeung, Michelle Andrzejewski

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Goldstein called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

The roll was called as reflected above. A quorum was present.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Approval of the minutes of January 16, 2025 special meeting

** **MS. DUNN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY 16, 2025 MEETING.**
** **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no one present for public participation.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Transportation Mobility and Parking

1. Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to enter into any and all Project Authorization Letters and other documents required by Conn. DOT needed for expenditure of funds Page 1 of 36under the Connecticut Department of Transportation's Urban Action Grant (UAG) Program for Route 53 Chestnut Hill Road Sidewalk Project.
   ACCT: 0924 3750 5777 C0824
   0925 3750 5777 C0824

**** MS. SMYTH MOVED TO APPROVE THE MOTION**

Mr. Pacelli discussed the urban action grant for sidewalks along Chestnut Hill Road (Stade Route 53. He stated they were working to secure a consultant to perform the design work. He explained they hoped to finalize the design and advertise the project for construction in the fall of 2025.

Mr. Goldstein requested a construction completion estimate. Mr. Pacelli indicated considering elements like the weather, funding guidelines, and state requirements they were looking at spring of 2026.

Ms. Smyth wanted to know where the sidewalk would begin and end. She also asked if it is part of the Safe Streets to School project. Mr. Pacelli responded in the affirmative and stated the sidewalks would run from Cranbur Market on Newtown Avenue to Field Street.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling to execute an Agreement between the City of Norwalk and VHB for 100% Design Services, Bid Advertisement, and Bid Analysis for the Roundabout at the Intersection of South Main Street, Meadow Street, Wilson Avenue, & Meadow Street Extension, in an amount not to exceed $377,000.
   ACCT: 0924 3750 5777 C0835

**** MR. FRAYER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MOTION.**

Mr. Yeung outlined the roundabout project. He stated it would be the city's first modern roundabout. He noted they were asking for approval for funding to cover the design fees. He described what they were planning to do at the location. He noted they would be adding space in front of the school on the west side of south Main Street for drop-offs and pick-ups. Mr. Yeung indicated there would be a public meeting hopefully in the summer about the project.

Ms. Smyth asked about available safety data for roundabouts. Mr. Yeung stated he had no data off hand but noted roundabouts have a proven safety countermeasure.

Mr. Frayer wanted to address the concern that roundabouts cause more traffic. H stated he would like to see studies done about roundabouts and traffic flow. Mr Yeung described how a roundabout is more efficient than a signal at the intersection. Mr. Frayer then noted that the abutment they are planning to remove looks like it is being prepped for a mural. Mr. Yeung offered the option that it had been painted to cover graffiti.

Ms. Young joined the meeting at 6:13 p.m.

Mr. Goldstein asked if there were considerations to ensure optimal traffic flow until such time as the roundabout is completed. Mr. Yeung indicated the company first contracted for the project had created a traffic management plan.

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner expressed the need for zoning enforcement to be discussed over the next six months in preparation for the opening of the new school.

** **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to enter into any and all documents and agreements required by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CT DOT) to accept funding related to the West Rocks Road Sidewalk Project under both state project(s) 102-365 and 102-374.

** **MR. SEAD MOVED TO APPROVE THE MOTION.**

Mr. Pacelli described both projects included in the motion. He noted they were for sidewalks and sidewalk improvements along the West Rock Road corridor. He listed the various elements of the project including raised crosswalks and flashing beacons. Mr. Pacelli stated they had held a public meeting on both projects that provided valuable feedback. He also indicated they would be bidding out the job by the end of March with the ultimate goal of getting construction started as soon as school gets out.

Mr. Goldstein commented that the three-year delay in getting the project started was disappointing.

** **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

B. Planning and Zoning

1. Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to execute any and all documents to amend the Plan of Conservation and Development to implement the recommendations of the Affordable Housing Action Plan.

** **MS. SMYTH MOVED TO APPROVE THE MOTION.**

Ms. Andrzejewski gave a slide presentation on the Affordable Housing Action Plan that covered the following.

- The requirements of the Affordable Housing Plan Statute requirements.
- The outreach process and coming up with a needs assessment. Based on interviews with local stakeholders, discussions with residents, housing needs webinars and in-person events, pop-up events, and a survey with RDA.
- Recommendations for zoning and land use, public/private partnerships, tax and financing innovations, and federal and state advocacy.
- High priority action items that include expansion of inclusionary zoning provisions, construction of affordable units on city owned land, updating "naturally affordable units" tax incentives for affordable units and advocating for more government funding for public affordable housing.
- The latest changes made to the plan following the meeting with planning and zoning.
- What planning and zoning is working on including: zoning ammendments, legislative proposals, community land trusts, tax incentives, an affordable housing account, and an AHP tracker.

Ms. Shanahan Joined the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner commended Ms. Andrzejewski and Mr. Kleppin for their work creating a moving plan. She noted there are plans currently in place for events and speakers. She added the tracker was helpful to keep track of who is working on what. She noted that the ad hoc committee will be joined by Redevelopment and Norwalk Housing Authority next month and urged the EOC members to join the meeting.

Ms. Smyth commented on what she referred to as a complex and difficult issue. She noted the ideas that have been put forward are creative and thoughtful.

Mr. Goldstein noted the needs assessment should be required reading. He also listed several statistics that indicate the genuine lack of deep affordable housing.

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner stated that 75% of the people who work in Norwalk commute. She then noted the effect this has on the city's ability to attract new business.

I response to commuter statistics Ms. Dunn expressed a need for business development in the city. She also wished to know if areas being in food deserts is the only thing the plan covers. Mr. Kleppin re-outlined what they were currently working on in that regard.

There was a group-wide discussion on Norwalk's housing issues. Mr. Kleppin noted the they couldn't solve all the problems, what he wanted for the plan was good data to work off of.

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner expressed her hope that people attend the April Ad Hoc Housing meeting. She noted they are having an expert talk about tax incentives. She also bemoaned the constraint placed on them by state law.

Mr. Frayer was also excited about learning more from some of the experts. He was interested in determining the changes in the demographics of the city and the rationale behind the changes. He stated he didn't want to rush into anything without an understanding of the demographics and all the statistics discussed by Ms. Dunn.

Ms. Young asked if there is an uptick in accessory dwellings. Mr. Kleppin answered in the affirmative noting loosened regulations. He suggested outreach or possibly polling to determine what barriers are in the regulations.

** **THE MOTION PASSED WITH SIX IN FAVOR AND ONE OPPOSED (MS. DUNN).**

VI. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to discuss

VII. **ADJOURNMENT**

** **MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**
** **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
China Mayhew
Telesco Secretarial Services