

CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MINUTES
December 6, 2023

PRESENT: Louis Schulman, Chair; Nick Kantor; Mike Mushak; Galen Wells; Chapin Bryce; Darius Williams; Ana Tabachneck; Tammy Langalis; Richard Roina; Jacquen Jordan-Byron (arrived at 6:47 pm)

STAFF: Steve Kleppin; Bryan Baker

OTHERS: Matt O'Neill; Lisa Brighton; Donna Smirniotopoulus; Robert Ertel (sp?); Beverly Krieger; Diane Cece; Jim Carter; Diane Lauricella; Anthony Lima; Emily Hayden

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Schulman called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. It should be noted that this meeting was held on Zoom.com with participants calling in, separately as well as the Community Room at 125 East Avenue, Norwalk, CT.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Kleppin called the roll.

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS

a. #2023-19 R/M – Planning & Zoning Commission – Zoning text amendment for complete re-write of the zoning regulations and map amendment for complete rezoning of the entire city

Mr. Schulman said that this was a continuation of the public hearing that had begun the previous evening. He then explained how the meeting would proceed. He reminded the speakers to be brief. He asked the Spanish translator to let everyone know that she is available for translating during the meetings. Mr. Schulman noted that the application had been referred to other municipalities and other agencies for comments.

Mr. Kleppin said that they would rotate between speakers online and in-person. Mr. Schulman noted that although they do not limit a speakers' time, they will not allow anyone to speak again, if they spoke on the previous evening.

Matt O'Neill, a representative of OMG Industries, said that they object to the reclassification to the proposed CD4W zone. He said that it would take away everything they do in their business and could not enhance their business for the future. He explained the business which was to provide materials to the construction industry. He said that the barges represent 50 truckloads of materials that would be on I-95. He asked that the city look at the proposed regulations. They wanted continued industrial use. He explained a recent renovation of their building. He explained his interaction with a consultant during the POCD process.

Lisa Brighton, 19 Shorefront Park, said that she thanked the commission for the public hearings in the summer. She said that she had listened to the comments from the public the previous evening. She also discussed the housing shortage, as well as the density in other cities.

Donna Smirniotopoulos said that she thought they should do another round of changes later. She appreciated that they had changed the upzoning language. She also thought that things had been added, especially regarding substantial improvement. She also had concerns under vegetation, landscape and drainage preservation. She thought there should be less changes. She was also concerned about her taxes doubling.

Robert Ertel (sp?), 42 Harborview Avenue, had concerns about the changes of the substantial improvement rules.

Beverly Krieger spoke about the Argent request for a Manresa Island overly zone. She discussed some of the possible uses that they were proposing. She did not think there were any limitations. She also noted that there were drainage problems.

Diane Cece, East Norwalk Neighborhood Association (ENNA), Olmstead Place, made two general comments. She asked if they could keep the public hearing open for comments. She asked about the timeclock that was running on this application since it was a city generated one. She also said that they were just learning about the substantial improvement regulation changes. She thanked the consultants and staff for their work on the proposed regulations. She also suggested that these regulations made it easier for developers to build what they wanted without notification to the public. She asked that they put a pause on the adoption. She discussed what some other municipalities required of developers before an application was filed. She also discussed software that was used by some of these municipalities. She then discussed the primary concerns from ENNA, including an increase in allowed uses, some unclear terms, upzoning, EVTZ changes from special permits to as of right uses, and EVTZ overlay. She said that ENNA may not have been able to catch all the changes. She asked that the commissioners review spreadsheets of changes from the staff.

Jim Carter, 16 Northport Drive, said that he would be speaking in opposition to the proposed regulations in connection with the substantial improvement language.

Diane Lauricella discussed energy overlays as well as other forms of renewable energy including geothermal. She thought that their solar regulations were conservative and that rooftop panels were not the only ones to use. She had concerns about emergency management and energy. She said there should be microgrids in each zone. She also spoke about river conservation zones. She said that she had read the DEEP letter that they had received the previous day. She spoke about ADUs, as well as advocated for industrial uses. She asked that the public hearing remain open for written comments and asked them to wait until after the new year to make a decision. Sheh would also be sending them books after the meeting if the hearing was held open for written comments.

Anthony Lima said that he lived in the Golden Hill area of the city because he liked to walk and bike. He discussed the parking regulations and asked to either end them or limit them.

Emily Hayden said that she was opposing the change from C zone to CD4 on Cottage Street which she did not understand. She did not understand where everyone would park. She noted that Cottage Street is a cut-through street.

Mr. Kleppin asked if there were any more speakers online or in person but there were none. Mr. Schulman said that there would be an additional meeting on December 13 in the Common Council Chambers at 6 pm. He said that although it was a public meeting, there would not be any other public comments.

There was a discussion about extending written public comment until Friday, December 8. There was also discussion about the proposed substantial improvement regulations and Manresa overlay and separating them from the proposed regulations. Mr. Schulman said that they could decide on these matters at the next meeting. It seemed as if there was some confusion as to the current regulations regarding substantial improvements and flood regulations.

**** MR. KANTOR MOVED to allow public input via email or written comments until Friday at 10 am.**

Mr. Bryce seconded.

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

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

i. Review & action on #2023-19 R/M

IV. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR

Mr. Kleppin noted that this is not the end for zoning regulations so they could find out what works and what doesn't work. However, they had to make the changes.

V. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

Mr. Mushak said he would oppose adding the Manresa overlay to these regulations.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Langalis made a Motion to Adjourn.

Mr. Bryce seconded.

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

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero