CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
November 8, 2023

PRESENT: Louis Schulman, Chair; Nick Kantor; Mike Mushak; Galen Wells; Chapin Bryce; Darius Williams; Ana Tabachneck; Darius Williams; Tammy Langalis (arrived at 7:16 pm); Jacquen Jordan-Byron (left at 7:41 pm); Hector Pachas (left at 7:55 pm)

STAFF: Steve Kleppin; Bryan Baker

OTHERS: Steve Klocke

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Schulman called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. It should be noted that this meeting was held on Zoom.com with participants calling in, separately.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Kleppin called the roll.

III. DISCUSSION 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. Topics:

i. Conservation Commission Letter

Mr. Kleppin said that the staff did not have any objections to what was contained in the letter. There was a discussion with Steve Klocke, the chair of the Conservation Commission, about solar energy on a roof. Mr. Schulman said that he would like to see the 100% coverage of the roof being reduced. Mr. Klocke explained that it was not technically 100%. There was a discussion about it being changed to 90% coverage. There was also discussion about the mechanicals on the roof. The language would be revised.

There was also a discussion about the language that the Conservation Commission was suggesting for grading, tree removal and drainage. Mr. Kleppin said that the staff did not have an objection to this language. The commissioners did not object to the language.

There was a discussion about the language for the flood hazard zone overlay for raising the elevation of a house 2 ft. over the base flood. Mr. Mushak asked if this would have an effect on insurance which could be costly.

There was a discussion about the coastal area management overlay. Mr. Kleppin did not think it would be feasible to remove existing seawalls. There was a discussion about a building setback from an average high tide. Mr. Kleppin said that they had met with CIRCA the prior week and would meet with them again.

There was a discussion about street trees. Mr. Kleppin said that the city was working on the Complete Streets plan. Mr. Klocke noted that it was missing from some of the proposed districts.

There was a discussion about Electric Vehicle Charging stations and whether they would be added to the city's street parking. Mr. Kleppin said that it could be added to infrastructure as the city repaves roads, but it is not a part of zoning. There was a discussion about payment for the charging stations.

Mr. Schulman noted that with these charging stations in the front setback, there would be vehicles there as well. There was a discussion about the language for new construction vs. existing structures especially for multifamily developments. There was also a discussion about whether it was a fire hazard for EV chargers in a parking garage. There was also a discussion about infrastructure being ready for EV charging stations.

ii. Sustainability Discussion

At this point, they reviewed language for structures over 25,000 sq. ft and the requirements that the construction is certifiable as LEED Zero, Enterprise Green Communities Plus, etc. There was a discussion about the language stating certifiable vs. certified. Mr. Kleppin said that they did not want to require developments to go through the process but that the building would be consistent with the standards. Mr. Klocke made suggestions as to consultants that should confirm these standards.

There was also a discussion about the gross floor area. There was a discussion about how 75% of the building's energy usage would be obtained from the development and Low Impact Development (LID) practices. There was also a discussion about what types of buildings this would work in. There was a discussion about businesses partnering with others to achieve the 75%. There was a lengthy discussion about this after which Mr. Schulman asked Mr. Kleppin to re-draft the language for them to review.

iii. EVTZ Point System

Mr. Kleppin said they sent out the modifications to the point systems, including items that some people thought should be required. Mr. Schulman made some suggestions to require more points as well as reducing some points. There was a discussion about comments received from the public on these changes. Mr. Kleppin said that he had received an email from ENNA late that day which he would forward to the commissioners.

The commissioners began to review the different points for each amenity. Mr. Schulman suggested reducing the points for shaded public seating. Mr. Kleppin also reminded them that the numbers of seats could vary depending on the size of the lot. Some commissioners did not see the appropriateness of adding points for shading public seating, while others thought it should be required since it could not be assumed that developers would do it without being required. At this point, before Mr. Klocke left the meeting, he said that he and the Conservation Commission appreciated what the commissioners were doing and looked forward to working with them. Mr. Schulman said that he would like to see the amenity points, or that developers should be required to shade public seating. There was a discussion about requiring trees.

The next item they discussed was amenity points for wider sidewalks. There was a discussion about public art that the commission may refer to the Arts Commission. There was also a discussion about adding bike racks and bicycle repair stations.

The next item for discussion were indoor pedestrian seating and outdoor pedestrian plaza. There was a discussion about the size of the plaza. Mr. Schulman suggested lowering the amenity points. The commissioners thought to keep the number of amenity points but to lower the maximum square footage of the plaza.

There was a discussion about Net Zero Building. Mr. Kleppin said they would make sure the language matched the language in a prior provision. At this point, Ms. Jordan-Bryon left the meeting. There was a discussion about rainwater retention. Mr. Kleppin also said that they would like to add language for battery storage. There was a discussion about EV chargers receiving points for Level 3. There was also a discussion about points for rooftop solar and green or blue roofs. Developers could also achieve points or additional workforce housing units.

At this point, Mr. Schulman asked the commissioners if they could continue the meeting for another 30 minutes. Most said that would be fine but Mr. Pachas said that he had to leave.

There was a discussion about adding public restrooms as an amenity for points. There was a concern about the amount of work involved with maintenance of a public restroom. There was a discussion about whether it should be open 24/7 and how many amenity points.

iv. Corner Store/Neighborhood Retail Limitations

Mr. Kleppin discussed the revisions to corner store limitations. There was a discussion about the fact that a corner store did not have to be on a corner lot. There was a discussion about not allowing temporary signs or banners.

v. Village Districts and Viewsheds/Public Views & Vistas

There was a discussion about Pinkney HIstoric Park and Mill Hill Park.

vi. CD-3C Height & Density Clarification

Mr. Kleppin asked that the regulations go back to the initial standards because of items in the POCD. He said that they would work on developing higher density at these nodes by adding additional height for density. There would be an amenity point system similar to the one discussed earlier in the meeting. Mr. Kleppin said that they would study the area and change the regulations by the end of 2024. Mr. Mushak said that there should be more housing in business areas. He also said that it seemed that since there are sidewalks on Connecticut Avenue there are more people walking.

IV. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR

Mr. Kleppin showed them a part of the website with all the edits that have been made up to this point. The maps have been updated as well. Staff memorandums have been added, as well.

At this point, there was a discussion about the dates for the public hearings for the proposed zoning regulations. Mr. Kleppin said that there should be a date for members of the public to listen as staff discusses the changes that have been made. The dates that this meeting could be held would be either November 20 or November 21. Mr. Kleppin thought the meeting could last 1.5 hrs., starting at 6 pm. It would be a virtual meeting since there would not be public participation. Ms. Tabachneck asked if there could be more Q&A for the public. Some of the commissioners agreed that there should be more dialogue.

There was a discussion about the possibility of not completing the meeting on December 13. Mr. Kleppin said that a second meeting could be held on December 15.

V. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

There was a discussion about the residential parking passes in East Norwalk.

There was also a discussion about the Manresa property being sold and what was proposed to be built. Mr. Kleppin said that he would be sending information about it.

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; Darius Williams; Tammy Langalis approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero