CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MINUTES - SPECIAL MEETING
October 10, 2024

PRESENT: Louis Schulman, Chair; Nick Kantor; Diana Lenkowsky; Ana Tabachneck; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Chapin Bryce; Darius Williams; Galen Wells (arrived after roll call) Tammy Langalis arrived at 7:17 pm)

STAFF: Steve Kleppin; Bryan Baker

OTHERS: Lou Garcia; Diane Lauricella; Alina Pichon; Richard Bonenfant; Pia O'Connell; Diane Cece; Maureen Faulkner; Mayra Garcia; Chris _____, Dennis Brown

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Schulman called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. It should be noted that this meeting was held on Zoom.com with participants calling in, separately.

II. ROLL CALL & SEATING OF MEMBERS

Mr. Kleppin called the roll. Mr. Schulman said that he would seat Ms. Lenkowsky and Ms. Tabachneck until other members arrived.

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS

a. Zoning Regulations Revisions per Staff Recommendations

Mr. Schulman opened the public hearing with an explanation of the process including when the commission would vote on adopting the changes. Mr. Kleppin explained that since there would be changes from this meeting, there would still be another public hearing, most likely in December.

Mr. Kleppin began the presentation with the history of the revised regulations at which time they realized that there would be changes after they were adopted. They have proposed changes from feedback they received. He started a slide presentation which showed the proposed changes. He continued with changes related to building coverage and impervious surface coverage which turned out to be too restrictive in smaller lots. The change would be to approach it similar to how commercial properties are addressed, including how to define building coverage. This regulation helped to improve stormwater quality and reduce runoff and flooding. He also noted that the presentation would be posted to the website and the meeting would be posted to the city's YouTube channel. He explained the new calculations for these smaller lots which were similar to the prior regulations. He also explained the changes that were proposed for determining finished grade.

He continued with the proposed changes to building height/flood zone stories. He explained why these changes were necessary. Mr. Kleppin said they tried to clarify where the height measurements are taken to, as well as how the stories are counted. They tweaked the story and basement definitions. He showed them examples of what the buildings should look like. He discussed how the building height had gone up to 35 feet but with feedback they were recommending that it be lowered to 32 feet. He also noted that there were changes to the definition of grade, finished based upon feedback.

Mr. Baker then discussed the CD-2 and two-family residences. Some other requirements in the CD-2 made it difficult to construct a 2 family residence. He discussed the current requirements and then the proposed revised ones. He said that they suggested a 36 feet width. He also said that they suggested detached garages.

Mr. Kleppin said that there are other items that he brought to the commission's attention. One of them was child day care centers in residential zones. Also, they suggested modifications to the upper story setbacks in commercial zones, changes to the definition of commercial vehicle, changes to regulations for waterfront clubs and driveway setbacks. The commission would also have to consider parking exemptions in the CD-4, EV charger requirements, TMP suggested edits, ZBA, etc.

Mr. Kleppin then discussed the next steps in the process of adopting these changes. He said one of their goals had been to increase the 2 family housing stock but realized that would not happen unless the changes were made.

There was then a discussion about driveways and the increase in their width. Mr. Kleppin said that on some roads backing onto the street is an issue. There was also a discussion about parking on the street versus having more impervious surface.

Lou Garcia, an architect, said he had a few clients in Norwalk who are in limbo because of the regulation changes. He then discussed the 50 ft. lots regulations and asked why this could not be rectified quickly. He discussed the driveway regulations as well as retaining walls. He also discussed drainage and average grade which calculations would be done by engineers. He also discussed impervious areas. He also discussed some of his projects that were on hold.

Diane Lauricella, 21 Little Fox Lane, thanked the staff but asked that the commissioners also speak into the microphones so that they could be heard by those online. Her comments were about detached accessory dwelling units (ADUs). She asked that green building designs be increased. She did not think the buffers were wide enough. She believed that some of the regulations were inhibiting affordable housing. She suggested that shipping containers could be used as housing. She had concerns about the vape shops, as well as redlining in single family home zones.

Alina Pichon, Skyview Builders, 285 Main Street, said that her company had designed a house under the old regulations but it is not buildable under the new regulations. She said that if the regulations are passed, the house could be built.

Richard Bonenfant, 17 Park Hill Avenue, had comments about high density housing. He believed that the roads are filled up as well as the strains on education, and first responders. He asked that dog walking areas be included on the sites of larger developments. He also discussed parking requirements in urban areas. He had concerns about daycare centers in residential areas.

Pia O'Connell, 12 Coachman's Court, discussed the traffic going to the city dump. She also asked if the street would be expanded and whether there would be designated parking spaces. She also discussed an area near Lockwood-Mathews mansion.

Diane Cece, Olmstead Place, asked questions about the process and whether she could speak again at the public hearing for adoption. She also noted that she could not hear some of the commissioners. She asked them to reconsider feedback about the vape shops. She also asked when they would receive comments from TMP and ZBA for the public to review. She disagreed with a previous speaker and said that the city needed more daycare centers. She asked why in some zones there was a special permit for a center and in others there is not. They should be spread out through the city. She said that some uses should be reconsidered such as the vape shops, adult use establishments, etc. She had questions about the designation for schools and special education schools for the disabled, as well as trade and vocational schools. She also had a question about referrals to the Historic Commission.

Maureen Faulkner, 277 Sunrise Hill Road, had concerns about the affordable housing at 68 Wall Street and hoped that other affordable housing projects would be constructed quickly.

Mayra Garcia, 43 Bettswood Road, asked that daycare centers be allowed in residential zones. She thought it would help families. She also said that she had a waiting list at her center.

Chris _____, 3 Edgewood Street, had comments on parking and retaining walls. He read a letter by Wayne D'Avanzo, an engineer in Norwalk, into the record.

Dennis Brown, 22 Clara Drive, said that he had been trying to build at 72 Soundview Avenue. He had concerns about the parking in the back. He said he may consider withdrawing his application if there were to be changes to the garage requirements.

Mr. Schulman closed the public comment portion of the hearing.

Mr. Kleppin addressed some of the comments from the public including those about 2 family housing. He also addressed the timing of the changes.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: September 18, 2024

**** MR. KANTOR MOVED to approve the September 18, 2024 minutes.**
Ms. Tabachneck seconded.
Louis Schulman; Nick Kantor; Diana Lenkowsky; Ana Tabachneck; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Darius Williams; Galen Wells; Tammy Langalis approved.
No one opposed.
Chapin Bryce abstained.

V. DISCUSSION

a. Capital Budget

Mr. Schulman said that he had attended a special public hearing a few weeks prior to this meeting. It was a high level conversation with a presentation by the finance director for the city and board of education. He explained why he had been invited. He said that he is no longer sure what the role of the Planning & Zoning Commission was in the Capital Budget process or whether they would go through the Capital Budget as they had done in the past. Ms. Tabachneck said that it seemed that the meeting was the opportunity for residents to comment on the budget but that most were on the operating budget. There was a discussion about the capital budget ordinance revisions. Mr. Kleppin said that they would not be effective for this Capital Budget cycle.

VI. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Schulman said that he, along with Mr. Roina and Mr. Williams served on the nominating committee to nominate as Chair, Nick Kantor, Vice Chair, Galen Wells, and Jacquen Jordan-Byron as Secretary. He said that he had notified them of their nominations. He asked if there were any nominations from the floor but there were none.

**** MS. TABACHNECK MOVED to elect Nick Kantor as the Chair for the Planning & Zoning Commission.**

Mr. Bryce seconded.

Louis Schulman; Nick Kantor; Chapin Bryce; Diana Lenkowsky; Ana Tabachneck; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Darius Williams; Galen Wells; Tammy Langalis approved.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

**** MS. LENKOWSKY MOVED to elect Galen Wells as the Vice Chair for the Planning & Zoning Commission.**

Mr. Bryce seconded.

Louis Schulman; Nick Kantor; Chapin Bryce; Diana Lenkowsky; Ana Tabachneck; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Darius Williams; Galen Wells; Tammy Langalis approved.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

**** MR. BRYCE MOVED to elect Jacquen Jordan-Byron as the Secretary for the Planning & Zoning Commission.**

Ms. Tabachneck seconded.

Louis Schulman; Nick Kantor; Chapin Bryce; Diana Lenkowsky; Ana Tabachneck; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Darius Williams; Galen Wells; Tammy Langalis approved.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

Mr. Schulman turned the meeting over to the new Chair, Nick Kantor. Mr. Kanter thanked Mr. Schulman for his service as well as thanking everyone.

VII. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR

Mr. Kleppin said that he would look at some tweaks in CD-2 after the comments from the public that evening. They would have them for their next meeting. He said that there is one scheduled meeting in December, but this may get rescheduled.

VIII. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

There were no comments from the commissioners.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Bryce made a Motion to Adjourn.
Mr. Williams seconded.
Louis Schulman; Nick Kantor; Chapin Bryce; Diana Lenkowsky; Ana Tabachneck; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Darius Williams; Galen Wells; Tammy Langalis approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero