

CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MINUTES
August 7, 2024

PRESENT: Louis Schulman, Chair; Hector Pachas; Galen Wells; Diana Lenkowsky; Tammy Langalis; Nick Kantor; Darius Williams; Ana Tabachneck (arrived at 6:15 pm) Jacquen Jordan-Byron; (left the meeting at 6:32 pm)

STAFF: Steve Kleppin; Bryan Baker

OTHERS: Amanda Cleveland; JoAnn Acquarulo; Dan Phillips; Vanessa Valadares; James Meehan; Greg Pacelli; Kevin Huffman; David Christopher Morris; Rich Roller; David Davidson; Anthony Conte; Brian Fleming; Chris Jones; Peter Bondi; Steve Weisheit;

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 & SEATING OF MEMBERS

Mr. Kleppin called the roll. Mr. Schulman said that he would seat Ms. Lenkowsky and Mr. Pachas for the meeting. If Ms. Tabachneck joined later, he would seat her as well.

III. REVIEW & ACTION ON PENDING APPLICATIONS

a. #2024-41 CAM – City of Norwalk – 98 South Main Street (District 2, Block 62, Lot 10) – Construction of a gymnasium addition to the Norwalk Community Recreation Center – Report & recommended action

Amanda Cleveland, the architect for the city, began the presentation with the current status of the project. She showed them the site demolition plans for the existing building. The proposed construction was for a gymnasium and storage rooms, which connected to the existing building. There would be modifications to the parking lot. She discussed the flood zone and the elevations. The mechanicals would be on the roof since there is no basement. Construction documents would be completed by the end of the month.

Mr. Schulman said that there was a memo from Alan Lo which said solar panels would not be economically feasible for the roof. Mr. Schulman asked to see the plans for the roof. Ms. Cleveland said that in the future the building could support pv (?) and would have a cool roof. There was a discussion as to the use of the gymnasium.

Mr. Kantor asked if other sustainable options were reviewed. JoAnn Acquarulo said that she was Mr. Lo's assistant and that they had looked at options. She confirmed that it was not feasible in the SNEW area and that it would cost the city money. She said that an RFP had been sent to contractors.

Mr. Baker discussed options to the commissioners about whether they could vote on this resolution. At this point, Mr. Schulman asked Mr. Baker to review the resolution.

There was a discussion about how the gymnasium was attached to the existing building. There are no floors above the gymnasium. There was also a discussion about the landscape plan as well as the windows. There was a discussion about the addition being in the flood zone.

At this point, the commissioners reviewed the resolution which included a discussion about the sustainability aspect of the project. Ms. Cleveland said that they were following the LEED silver inspired checklist. Mr. Baker reviewed the three options that developers can use. Ms. Cleveland said that Connecticut's High Performance was similar to LEED silver.

**** MS. JORDAN-BYRON MOVED: THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission that application #2024-41 CAM – City of Norwalk – 98 South Main Street (District 2, Block 62, Lot 10) – Construction of a gymnasium addition to the Norwalk Community Recreation Center be **APPROVED** subject to the following conditions:

1. That the site shall be developed in accordance with the following plans submitted as part of this application, and as further modified by the Commission:

a. Per site plans entitled, "Addition and Renovation Project, Norwalk Community Recreation Center," dated July 11, 2024, prepared by Silver Petrucelli and Associates, and as modified by the Commission to:

i. Increase the first-floor elevation as well as all utility service to a minimum of elevation 14' or provide adequate dry flood-proofing measures to ensure that the existing and proposed structure(s) shall be compliant with Section 6.9 Flood Hazard Zone Overlay of the Norwalk Zoning Regulations; and

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ii. Confirm that the structure(s) shall comply with Section 8.4.5.N.2.g. of the Norwalk Zoning Regulations; and

b. Per architectural drawings entitled, "Addition and Renovation Project, Norwalk Community Recreation Center," dated July 11, 2024, prepared by Silver Petrucelli and Associates, and as modified by the Commission to:

i. Increase the first-floor elevation as well as all utility service to a minimum of elevation 14' or provide adequate dry flood-proofing measures to ensure that the existing and proposed structure(s) shall be compliant with Section 6.9 Flood Hazard Zone Overlay of the Norwalk Zoning Regulations; and

ii. Confirm that the roof will be comprised by a sustainable roofing zone covering the usable roof area as required by Section 6.11.2 of the Norwalk Zoning Regulations; and

1. Provided further that the applicant has indicated that a cool roof system will be installed and that the roof will be able to accommodate solar panels; and

2. That such cool roof system must be shown on plans prior to the issuance of a zoning permit; and

iii. Confirm that the structure(s) shall comply with Section 8.4.5.N.2.g. of the Norwalk Zoning Regulations; and

1. Provided further that documentation that the building shall be designed to be LEED Silver certifiable prior to the issuance of a zoning permit; and

2. Provided that documentation that at least 75% of the stormwater shall be retained on site via Low-Impact Development (LID); and

2. That any additional changes to the approved plans shall be submitted to the Commission's Staff (Staff) for review and approval prior to implementation. If any proposed changes are determined to be substantive by Staff, such changes shall be referred to the Commission for their review and approval prior to implementation; and

3. That any and all conditions required by Norwalk Health Department are applicable to this approval; and

4. That any and all conditions required by Norwalk WPCA are applicable to this approval; and

5. That any and all conditions required by Norwalk DPW are applicable to this approval; and

6. That any and all conditions required by the Norwalk Fire Marshal are applicable to this approval; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the effective date of this approval shall be August 16, 2024.

Mr. Pachas seconded.

Louis Schulman; Hector Pachas; Richard Roina; Nick Kantor; Galen Wells; Diana Lenkowsky; Darius Williams; Tammy Langalis; Jacquen Jordan-Byron approved.

No one opposed.

Ms. Tabachneck abstained.

b. #2023-32 SP/CAM – City of Norwalk – 1 Meadow Street Extension (District 2, Block 27, Lot 71) - Modification to approved site plan for the construction of the new South Norwalk Elementary School – Report & recommended action

Mr. Schulman said that he would seat all three alternates as Ms. Jordan-Byron left the meeting.

Dan Phillips, the project manager on this application, began the presentation. He explained how they had closed on 3 of the 5 properties and he then discussed the new site plan as per Transportation, Mobility and Parking (TMP) recommendations which allowed for a better flow of traffic. They added a basketball court. There would be a slight increase in the number of parking spaces.

There was a discussion about the location of the driveway. Mr. Phillips showed them a four way stop on the site which he said that TMP had approved. There was also a discussion about the 4 acres at the top of the property which Mr. Phillips said there are no plans at this time. Ms. Acquarulo confirmed that there are no plans yet. There was also a discussion about a field being built.

**** MR. PACHAS MOVED: THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission that application #2023-32 SP/CAM – City of Norwalk – 1 Meadow Street Extension (District 2, Block 72, Lot 71) – Modification to approved site plan for the construction of the new South Norwalk Elementary School be **APPROVED**.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the site shall be developed in accordance with the site plans entitled, “South Norwalk Elementary School,” dated May 29, 2024, and prepared by Tecton Architects and Langan Engineering and Environmental Services, Inc.

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all other conditions of approval from the original approval, effective August 11, 2023, shall remain in effect.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the effective date of this approval shall be August 16, 2024.

Mr. Roina seconded.

Louis Schulman; Hector Pachas; Richard Roina; Nick Kantor; Galen Wells; Diana Lenkowsky; Darius Williams; Tammy Langalis; Ms. Tabachneck approved.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

IV. PUBLIC HEARINGS

a. #2024-42 – Department of Public Works – Fillow Street – Repaving a portion of Fillow Street between Richards Avenue and West Norwalk Road which is a designated scenic road

Mr. Schulman again noted that all three alternates could vote on this matter. He then opened the public hearing with an explanation of the rules.

Vanessa Valadares began the presentation by introducing the project team. James Meehan continued the presentation with a brief summary of the application. He noted that Fillow Street was on the paving list. He said that there would be pedestrian ramps and sidewalks. He noted that they had found out that the street was designated a scenic road. Some pedestrian ramps had been installed. He showed them current pictures of the intersections on Fillow Street.

There was a discussion about letters received from the neighbors, some who had concerns about alterations to be made to the street. Greg Pacelli, the transportation planner in Planning & Zoning, said that they had installed many sidewalks throughout the city, especially around schools. He said that concrete curbs were now the standard and would be installed on this street as well.

There was a discussion about whether Fillow Street would become more narrow. The intersections would be adjusted.

Mr. Baker then discussed the ordinance which referred to scenic roads. Although there would be maintenance there would not be any removal of stone walls, etc.

There was a discussion about sidewalk and footpath improvements. Ms. Valdares said that they would refer to Complete Streets to make the roads more pedestrian and accessible. There was also a discussion about the bus routes in the area for the children. Mr. Meehan showed them which area on Fallow Street the commissioners would be voting on. There was no intention to remove any structures.

Mr. Baker explained how the public could make comments at this meeting.

Kevin Huffman, 286 Fallow Street, noted that his house is outside of the sidewalk area. He said that it looked like there had been a footpath in front of his house. He was told that the city had said that if he wanted a sidewalk in front of his house, he would have to pay for it. He asked them to extend the sidewalk through Princess Pine and Geneva.

David Christopher Morris, 2 Princes Pine, said that he appreciated that stone walls were not being taken down. He said that he had done a survey and it seems that there had been a stone wall. The ramp has reduced the width of Princes Pine and there are some parts where it will be difficult for two vehicles to pass, even to the point of one going onto the curb.

Rich Roller, 272 Fallow Street, said that he thought the scenic road went all the way to West Norwalk Road. He said he had also emailed comments to Mr. Kleppin. He said the area was distinctly rural. He had concerns about the work being done especially the curbing. He thought that concrete was suitable for urban zones and that they should have asphalt curbs in this area. He also noted that he did not think that Department of Public Works (DPW) was reviewing the project carefully because the street was a scenic road. He had safety concerns. He also had concerns about the intersection of Princess Pine.

David Davidson, 16 Betmarlea Road, said he spoke in support of the application because he thought that the changes would save lives.

Anthony Conte, 25 Betmarlea Road, said he spoke in support of the application but that the site lines should be improved.

Brian Fleming, 46 Princes Pine Road, discussed the ramp on Princess Pine Road, as well as the cement curbs because they did not fit the area.

Chris Jones, 249 Fallow Street, said that was in support of the plan. He also had questions about the trees and asked if it was possible to add a stop sign on Little Fox and Fallow Street.

Peter Bondi, 15 Princes Pine, said that he agreed with past speakers who were in support of the project. However, he also had concerns about the crosswalks and the accessibility of the area.

Steve Weisheit, 308 Fallow Street, asked about other additional sidewalks.

Ms. Valadares addressed the concrete curbs and said that this was the city's standard now. She also noted that narrowing the road will reduce speeding. She addressed drainage concerns, trees, sidewalk and footpaths. She also spoke about the ADA ramps.

Greg Pacelli continued the presentation and addressed the concerns about the concrete curbs. He said that they would define the edge of the roads. Although they were narrowing the road, he said that would be enough for two buses. He believed that they were being respectful to the community because they were building a safe network for the community.

Mr. Meehan addressed the concerns about the ADA ramp and its location on Princes Pine. He reminded everyone that they had to follow both city and Federal guidelines.

There was a discussion about the city's ADA coordinator and if he had been a part of these plans. Ms. Valadares said that they work with him every day and he was aware of this project. There was a discussion about whether ADA compliance supersedes scenic road regulations. There was a discussion about the footpaths. Ms. Valadares said that they would make a new one. There was also a discussion about concrete curbs on Weed Avenue.

At this point, Mr. Schulman closed the public hearing.

i. Action on #2024-42

The commissioners began their review of the resolution that Mr. Baker was drafting.

**** MR. PACHAS MOVED: THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission that in accordance with Chapter 101 of the City of Norwalk's ordinances that the following facts have been found regarding application #2024-42 – Department of Public Works – Repaving a portion of Fallow Street between Richards Avenue and West Norwalk Road which is a designated scenic road:

1. That concrete curbs are the new standard that applies city wide; and
2. That concrete curbs are safer than asphalt curbs and based on nationwide safety research; and
3. That any narrowing of vehicular travel lanes will slow traffic and provide a safer pedestrian experience; and
4. That ADA ramps connecting to footpaths, regardless of whether the footpath is ADA compliant, is safer than no ADA ramps connecting to the footpaths; and
5. That there are limitations that prevent footpaths from being widened such as lack of right-of-way width, stone walls, and travel lane width requirements; and
6. That the roadway between Richards Avenue and Little Fox Lane is being narrowed to 26 feet which still allows safe traffic maneuvers while slowing the speed of traffic to increase pedestrian safety; and
7. That no stone walls and potentially one mature tree is being removed as part of the scope of work; and
 - a. That if the tree (or any others) are removed, that if possible, trees be replanted in consultation with the City Arborist; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that these findings of facts shall be provided to the Director of Public Works for their consideration.

Mr. Roina seconded.

Louis Schulman; Hector Pachas; Richard Roina; Nick Kantor; Galen Wells; Diana Lenkowsky; Darius Williams; Tammy Langalis; Ms. Tabachneck approved.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

Mr. Roina said that he believed the concrete curbs in his neighborhood work.

V. DISCUSSION

a. Zoning Regulations Revisions per Staff Recommendations

Mr. Kleeping discussed the problems that the staff were seeing with the form based code especially in single family zones. They would present the edits to the commissioners over the next few meetings and hold a public hearing in October.

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Mr. Baker said they spoke with the Planning & Zoning staff about when they were approving permits for their comments. They then reviewed a spreadsheet to discuss these changes. Mr. Kleppin said that they had also reached out to engineers, etc. who work on projects in Norwalk to receive their comments.

There was a discussion about the impervious surfaces. Mr. Baker said that they would remove the limitations for garage width. Mr. Baker said that garages would be able to face the street. There was also a discussion about different size boats which would have to be parked in the back. Mr. Baker also discussed retaining walls. He also discussed where single family dwellings are allowed in the city, as well as materials storage yards, and allow more than 1 marine commercial vehicle in that zone. He explained modifications to definitions and clarifications to the regulations, as well as the tables. He noted for which items the commissioners would receive memos from the staff. He also said that they would have to draft language for waterfront clubs. There was a discussion about the removal of trees. There would be a change for notices to be sent to current occupants. He also discussed calculating frontage. There were some problems which would help with enforcement. He also discussed the height of signs for noticing public hearing. Some of the problems with the regulations were clarifications and adding or changing words to the regulations.

Mr. Kleppin said that memos would help and would be sent over the next week.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: July 10, 2024

**** MR. PACHAS MOVED to approve the July 10, 2024 minutes.**

Mr. Williams seconded.

Louis Schulman; Hector Pachas; Galen Wells; Diana Lenkowsky; Darius Williams; Ms. Tabachneck approved.

No one opposed.

Richard Roina; Nick Kantor; Tammy Langalis; abstained.

VII. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR

Mr Kleppin had no comments.

VIII. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

There were no comments from the commissioners. Mr. Schulman noted their upcoming meetings and said he would appoint the nominating committee in September.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Roina made a Motion to Adjourn.

Mr. Pachas seconded.

Louis Schulman; Nick Kantor; Ana Tabachneck; Richard Roina; Tammy Langalis; Galen Wells; Darius Williams; Diana Lenkowsky approved.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero