

CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION - SPECIAL MEETING
June 28, 2022

PRESENT: Louis Schulman, Chair; Richard Roina; Brian Baxendale; Mike Mushak; Nick Kantor; Tammy Langalis; Galen Wells; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Steve Ferguson; Darius Williams (arrived at 6:22 pm)

STAFF: Steve Kleppin; Bryan Baker

OTHERS: Atty Liz Suchy; Carlo Schiattarella; Andrew McLaughlin; Mike Galante; Steve Cipolla; Marissa Tarallo; Dean Evans; Jay Zelermyer; Rich Roller; Zach and Madeline Bennett; Lana and Henry Sexton; Brenda and Ron Koroscil; Karen Del Vecchio; Jordan Harter; Jason Gonias; Anthony Carrano; Alik Panagiotidis; Alisa Matthews; Diane Lauricella; Bill Mitchell; Bryan and Betsy Wryn; Cheryl McNeil; Sue Brotherton and Bob Anderson; Jennifer Valiante; Paul Cantor; Rose Carroll; Erin Willigan

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 all participants calling in, separately.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Kleppin called the roll.

III. REVIEW ON NEW APPLICATIONS

a. #2022-30 R – Planning & Zoning Commission – Zoning regulations text amendment to Article 10 and Article 42 to revise Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) regulations – Preliminary review

Mr. Schulman noted that they had previously voted to reject the state mandated language for these regulations and that it has been referred to the Common Council. He explained that they are not just rejecting the language, but noted that they accepted most of the state's language. With these regulations they would be allowed to make changes to the necessary language. He also explained that since Mr. Ferguson was not at the last meeting, he could not vote on this matter. Mr. Kleppiin noted that since they were not adopting regulations, he could vote.

There was then a discussion about the language for owner occupied accessory units. Ms. Wells asked that it be removed from the draft language. Mr. Mushak said that he lived in a neighborhood with absentee landlords who used them as income generating properties,

which they didn't maintain. For the multi-property units, the ones that are owner occupied are better maintained. Mr. Schulman explained that they would be referring these proposed regulations to the Common Council, who would make recommendations. These regulations would then come back to the Planning & Zoning Commission for a public hearing. It was also noted that these regulations could be revised over many years which was one reason they did not want to adopt the state's regulations. There was a discussion about investors coming into the city and flipping houses. This would not help Norwalk's neighborhoods.

Mr. Kleppin noted that this is a draft and that the Common Council would make revisions as well.

**** MS. JORDAN-BYRON MOVED to APPROVE Zoning regulations text amendment to Article 10 and Article 42 to revise Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) regulations.**

Mr. Mushak seconded.

Louis Schulman; Brian Baxendale; Mike Mushak; Nick Kantor; Tammy Langalis; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Steve Ferguson; Darius Williams approved.

No one opposed.

Galen Wells and Richard Roina abstained.

IV. PUBLIC HEARINGS a. #2022-16 SP – Schoolhouse Academy Inc – 32 Weed Avenue – Proposed prekindergarten through grade 12 private school i. Action on #2022-16 SP

Mr. Schulman opened the public hearing and explained the rules of it.

Atty Liz Suchy began the presentation with an introduction of the project team. She gave a background of the application. She also noted that the certified, return receipt cards notifying the public hearing to the abutting neighbors, had been submitted to the Planning & Zoning Department. She then showed them pictures of the current property as well as descriptions of the property. She also explained the new school which would start as a kindergarten through middle school and then through high school. The school is a permitted use. They will pay taxes since they are a non-sectarian school. Alterations would be done to the interior of the building. There was a discussion about the use of the barn on the property but it will not be removed or demolished. They have received all necessary approvals from the city's departments.

Carlo Schiattarella, who lives in Stamford, gave the commissioners a brief background of his history in education. Andrew McLaughlin, who lives in Riverdale, NY also gave a brief background of his education which is in private and charter schools for other clients. This would be a school that he would own with Mr. Schiattarella.

Mr. Schiattaralla said that there would be a STEM focus and art focus for their curriculum. There are no current plans for the barn at this time. There would be teacher development programs. He explained why they were starting another school. It would be another choice for parents in the area.

Atty Suchy noted that a traffic study had been submitted. She then introduced Mr. Galante on the traffic analysis.

Mike Galante, the traffic engineer, continued the presentation with a summary of the original report and then a supplemental report. He said they had spent several months on their turning movement counts. He explained the time periods which were similar to the time periods of a school. He also described the peak hour volumes and accident history. He then explained the varying hours of arrival/dismissal of the different grade levels. No student will be allowed to walk to school. They will either be driven or take a bus. He discussed the driveways as well the fact that there is an overpass which will not allow buses to go under. This means that buses will come in on Weed Avenue. The buses will belong to the school. He explained how the traffic models were used. Mr. Galante then discussed the analysis results. He said the morning was busier than the afternoon. He addressed the concerns of the city. There was a discussion about adding language to the resolution to address the applicant having to change their start times to accommodate Norwalk's public school system start time changes.

Steve Cipolla continued the presentation with a discussion of the school's campus improvements. He discussed the current situation as well as the proposed changes. Improvements included directional signage, etc. He explained how a staff person would handle traffic flows on the property.

Mr. Galante explained other analyses including a sensitivity analysis. He showed them various graphs of the site traffic analysis.

Marissa Tarallo, the city's consultant from AKRF, discussed the various traffic studies that the applicant had submitted. She noted that they had only received the latest report last week so they had not fully reviewed it. She explained the various time shifts. She explained that they had received their sensitivity analysis and would have to be fully reviewed. She noted that the peak period for traffic would be increased because there is another school in the area.

Mr. Galante discussed the possibility of starting the school 15 minutes later in order to mitigate the traffic. Families could drop off kids earlier if there were siblings that were also being dropped off.

There was a discussion about whether families would actually drop off at the time they are required to drop off. There was also a discussion about comparing some of the other schools around the city. Ms. Tavallo said that they could do some research on that. There was a discussion about the size of the roads in the area especially on Little Fox Road. Mr. Galante

said that the site needed to have 2 entrances. There was a discussion about having a roundabout on Richards and Fillow.

Atty Suchy addressed some questions that had been submitted from the public about the Stations of the Cross that are on the property, having athletic fields on the property as well as conservation easement.

There was a discussion about the buses being low emissions or EV as well solar panels on the roof which had not been contemplated. ATty Suchy said that they would get back to the Commission on this. There was also a discussion about the buses that would be used on the property.

Dean Evans, 8 Fox Run Road, had concerns about the traffic and whether it was appropriate. He also noted that the neighbors were not used to traffic 5 days a week. There is traffic sometimes on the weekend. He said he was unclear how 600 students would fit into the building as well as having 12th graders in the same building as kindergarten schools. He also asked about whether this was a charter school and whether the owner would pay taxes.

Jay Zelermeyer, 178 Gillies Avenue, had questions about the conservation easement as well as whether bicycles would be allowed. His wife, Diane Seldig, had questions about the walking paths.

Rich Roller, 272 Fillow Street, had concerns about the public access to the grounds.

Zach and Madeline Bennett, 24 Chipmunk Lane, spoke in support of the project.

Lana Sexton, 5 Weed Avenue, noted that Norwalk has met the teacher/child ratio and has recently added another school to the city. She also thought that students would be coming from other areas. Her husband, Henry Sexton, also had concerns about the traffic. He also noted that Old Rock was a close intersection to Weed Avenue but it had not been mentioned in the traffic study. He also noted that many of the neighbors were not happy with this project.

Brenda and Ron Koroscil, Huckleberry South, had concerns about the noise and air pollution from the buses but also had concerns about the aesthetics and traffic. Mr. Koroscil also had concerns about the traffic on Fox Run Road.

Karen Del Vecchio, 26 Old Rock Lane, had concerns about speeding, as well as the fact that the street is used as a cut through. She was concerned about the dangerous situations with the potential doubling of traffic and speeding. She also had concerns about the traffic from the fit-out for the school with all the construction and when would it end. She also asked whether the number of students would be limited.

Jordan Harter, 1 DeWalt Court, spoke in support of the application. She wanted to send her child to a high performing school in the area. She hoped traffic would not prevent this school from opening.

Jason Gonias, 8 Huckleberry South, had concerns about the hiking on the property during school grounds. He wondered if there were other uses for the property.

Anthony Carrano spoke in opposition to the application and noted that there was a petition sent to the Planning and Zoning Department. He said that there is a lack of trust between the neighbors and the West Norwalk Homeowners Association. There were concerns about student safety, and the lack of sidewalks. There were also concerns about the barn. There were also concerns about deliveries to the site.

Aliki Panagiotidis, 19 Huckleberry Drive South, had concerns about the adding another school into Norwalk. She also questioned why an old site map was used because her property was not on it. She questioned whether there would be sports on the property. She also wondered how they would stop juniors and seniors from driving into school.

Alisa Matthews said that she had concerns about the traffic and the deer in the area. She also had concerns about the pond.

Diane Lauricella, 21 Blue Mountain Ridge Road, had concerns about traffic, idling cars, diversity, as well as the number of students.

At this point, Mr. Schulman requested a 10 minute recess and the meeting resumed at 9:12 pm.

Bill Mitchell, 79 Weed Avenue, had concerns about this application that there will be more people on the property. He also concerns about the public's access to the property. He had concerns about the traffic and the buses.

Bryan and Betsy Wryn also had concerns about the increase of usage of the property and the traffic.

Cheryl McNeil, 39 Weed Avenue, said she had concerns about the traffic as well as the lack of sidewalks and the wildlife including bears. She also thought there should be sidewalks and that students would drive to school.

Sue Brotherton and Bob Anderson, 45 Weed Avenue, had concerns about the wildlife. Her husband also noted that there would be no public access with an easement which he was concerned about. Ms. Brotherton said that she was concerned about losing parking.

Jennifer Valiante, 31 Weed Avenue, said she used the property often, and had concerns about the traffic. Her husband, Joe, also spoke about possibly losing tax revenues

Paul Cantor, Fillow Street, felt that this application would undermine the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Rose Carroll, 9 Weed Avenue, had concerns about the traffic.

Erin Willigan, 20 Lagana Lane, had concerns about the traffic as well.

There was a discussion about the conservation easement. There was also a discussion about the process for the application.

Mr. Schulman noted that this public hearing would be held open and be on the agenda once they had received all outstanding information.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: June 15, 2022

**** MS. LANGALIS MOVED to approve the June 15, 2022 meeting minutes.**

Mr. Williams seconded.

Louis Schulman; Richard Roina; Brian Baxendale; Tammy Langalis; Mike Mushak; Nick Kantor; Galen Wells; Jacquen Jordan-Byron approved.

No one opposed.

Steven Ferguson abstained.

VI. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR

Mr. Kleppin said that the July meetings would be very busy and the meetings would be long. The previous application would be at the later meeting in July. He thought that August would be busy as well. Mr. Schulman asked that the smaller applications be at the beginning of the meeting so that large public hearings would be at the end.

VII. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

There was a discussion about disabling questions on the Zoom chat as well as the scheduling of meetings in the summer.

Mr. Roina asked to attend a seminar by the city's corporation counsel about special permits and what the commission's role was. Mr. Kleppin said that the commissioners will have to do a certain number of hours of training, which will begin next year.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Langalis made a Motion to Adjourn.

Mr. Williams seconded.

**Louis Schulman; Richard Roina; Brian Baxendale; Darius Williams; Mike Mushak;
Nick Kantor; Galen Wells; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Steven Ferguson approved.**

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero