

CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MINUTES
April 12, 2023

PRESENT: Louis Schulman, Chair; Mike Mushak; Galen Wells; Ana Tabachneck; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Darius Williams; Richard Roina (arrived at 7:10 pm)

STAFF: Steven Kleppin; Bryan Baker; Amelia Williams

OTHERS: Vanessa Valadares; Atty Liz Suchy; Andy Soumelidis; Phil Cerrone; Terry Atkin; Diane Cece

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Schulman called the meeting to order at 6:06 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. Mr. Shulman said that he would allow Ms. Tabachneck to vote on matters at this meeting.

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

IV. REVIEW & ACTION ON APPLICATIONS

a. #2023-20 8-24 – Department of Public Works – 15 Oakwood Avenue – 8-24 Referral for the acceptance of a sanitary sewer easement over 15 Oakwood Avenue – Report & recommended action

Vanessa Valadares began the presentation by noting that they needed a small easement on the property for access. Mr. Schulman said that they had been provided the maps for this item.

**** MR. MUSHAK MOVED: THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission that application #2023-20 8-24 – Department of Public Works – 15 Oakwood Avenue – 8-24 Referral for the acceptance of a sanitary sewer easement over 15 Oakwood Avenue be **APPROVED**.

Ms. Jordan-Byron seconded.

Louis Schulman; Mike Mushak; Galen Wells; Ana Tabachneck; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Darius Williams approved.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

b. #2023-06 SP/CAM – 49 Van Zant Street, LLC – 49 Van Zant Street (District 3, Block 34, Lot 7) – Construction of mixed-use, multifamily development with 13 dwelling units and ground floor commercial space – Preliminary review and approval of third party peer review(s)

Atty Liz Suchy began the presentation with a brief overview of the application and then introduced the project team. She said they had received all sign-offs from city departments except for Transportation, Mobility and Parking. They had received comments from TMP prior to this meeting and would be responding before the next meeting.

Andy Soumelidis, the engineer on the project, continued the presentation by orienting the commissioners as to the location of the property on an aerial map. He said that the site plan was straightforward by explaining the office space and residential area above. There would be rain gardens. The sides are open and at grade.

Phil Cerrone, the architect on the project, continued the presentation with the floor plans of the different levels of the building. It is being designed as a sustainable project. They did consider solar panels but because of the green roof, they would not have enough room for them. There was a further discussion about the library next door which does have solar panels. Mr. Cerrone said it was a small amount of solar panels and that would not be justifiable. He said they would study it further with his clients. There would be a mural on the side of the building since it was where the stairs would be.

Atty Suchy said that a design review would be done by the city. There was a discussion about whether they were rentals which Atty Suchy said they would be. She would also find out the rental price for units. There was a discussion about the style of the building.

Ms. Williams discussed her staff memo about the amenity points including the pollinator gardens which would not be accessible to the public.

Mr. Schulman said they would have to authorize the peer review, which had already started.

**** MR. WILLIAMS MOVED: THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission that a peer review be authorized for application #2023-06 SP/CAM – 49 Van Zant Street, LLC – 49 Van Zant Street (District 3,

Block 34, Lot 7) – Construction of mixed-use, multifamily development with 13 dwelling units and ground floor commercial space.

Ms. Wells seconded.

Louis Schulman; Mike Mushak; Galen Wells; Ana Tabachneck; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Darius Williams approved.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

Atty Suchy said they would work with Mr. Grzywacz and hoped the public hearing would be scheduled in early May.

V. PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF THE PROPOSED DRAFT ZONING MAP AND Q&A

Mr. Schulman said that the consultants had presented the draft zoning regulations at the prior meeting. He noted that there had been many members of the public on the call last week but this week, there are less people. He said that the map is more interesting of the two documents. It would be hands on and easy to use.

Mr. Kleppin began the discussion of the draft zoning map. Mr. Schulman noted that this is not a public hearing and that they are not seeking questions about specific properties. Mr. Kleppin began with the purpose/intent/goals of the zoning map. He then explained what Mr. Baker and Ms. Williams would present.

Mr. Kleppin said that one of the purposes was to simplify and reduce the number of zones. There are currently 31 zones which would be reduced to 14 base zones with overlays. It would be easier to view and simpler to regulate. Their goal was to align zoning districts with the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). This would make it consistent with future Land Use Map, and reduce the number of zones, among other goals. There would be little change to the AAA zone. They would consolidate the AA and A zones, along with B residences and C residence zones. He noted that they would like to increase home ownership opportunities. They would like to consolidate the urban core. They would also consolidate the business zones into a single zone, as well as consolidating smaller multi-family zones and neighborhood zones. A new zone, the civic zone, had been created which included city buildings. There would also be a waterfront area.

Mr. Baker then showed them a map of existing zoning and proposed zoning. He explained what areas of the city would see major changes and which would not. He then showed them the full proposed map. Mr. Kleppin said that the lines on the zones could move as the city grows. It would allow for flexibility.

Ms. Williams then explained how residents could access the map and interact with it. She showed them the interactive map and the pdf map.

Mr. Kleppin noted the dates and times on the outreach schedule. There would be many meetings over the next 6 weeks in various neighborhoods. He said that there could be a public hearing at the end of June and then another in September. He also said that the commissioners did not have to attend all of the meetings for residents.

Terry Atkin said that she thought everything was too simplified. She said she saw no measurements as limits. Mr. Baker said that the definitions tell what the height of a story is. Mr. Kleppin said they would look at this again.

Diane Cece, spoke on behalf of East Norwalk Neighborhood Association (ENNA), and asked if Mr. Kleppin and Mr. Baker could speak at their meeting on May 15. Mr. Kleppin said that they would discuss that date the next day. She asked about the mechanism for change in the proposed regulations. Mr. Kleppin explained the process. She then asked what would happen if there were many people lobbying for something other than what is being presented. She also felt that sometimes the changes that the public were asking for were not being made. He said he could not speak as to what the Planning & Zoning Commission would do. He said he would advocate for something that was good for the city in the long run, although it may not be good for one neighborhood. However, the commissioners could still vote against his recommendations. Ms. Cece said that neighborhood associations would continue to engage by writing emails, and speaking up at meetings. She asked about the role of the Common Council in this process which Mr. Kleppin explained. He also noted that the notification process would be enumerated in Article 8. Ms. Cece then discussed the ENNA ad hoc committee which had reviewed the regulations and had submitted comments and suggestions a few years ago. Mr. Kleppin was not sure whether the consultants had incorporated it into the proposed regulations but directed Ms. Cece to Article 4. She said that ENNA would like to know whether it had been reviewed.

There was a discussion about the notices for public hearings and whether it would be a part of the proposed regulations. Mr. Kleppin thought it was in Article 8. There was also a discussion about the existing zones and new proposed zones. There was also a discussion about the percentage of areas that will be upzoned and downzoned.

VI. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR

Mr. Kleppin said he had no further comments.

VII. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

There was a discussion about Transportation, Mobility and Parking (TMP) speaking to the commission about parking passes and complete streets. Mr. Schulman said that TMP has not completed its work on that.

Mr. Schulman said that it was a terrific start to new zoning regulations and zoning map. He thanked the staff for their work on this. He said there would be another meeting on April 25 with the consultant

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Wells made a Motion to Adjourn.

Ms. Jordan-Byron seconded.

Louis Schulman; Mike Mushak; Nick Kantor; Galen Wells; Ana Tabachneck; Hector Pachas; Darius Williams approved.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero