

CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
March 3, 2022

PRESENT: Louis Schulman, Chair; Galen Wells; Mike Mushak; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Nick Kantor; Tammy Langalis; Richard Roina; Darius Williams; Steve Ferguson (arrived after roll call)

STAFF: Steve Kleppin; Michelle Andrzejewski

OTHERS: Atty David Waters; Chris Bockstael;

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 AND ACTION ON APPLICATIONS

a. #2022-05 R/M/SP – Merritt Station Norwalk, LLC – 67, 69, 79, 87, 111, 117, 129, 135, 155, 156 and 201 Glover Avenue and 2 Oakwood Avenue (North 7) – Zone map amendment to change zones from AAA Residence and Business #2 to Executive Office, zoning regulation text amendment to create a definition for “Executive Office Development Park” and to permit the new use in the Executive Office Zone by special permit in conjunction with a special permit application for an Executive Office Development Park containing 1,303 dwelling units and approximately 28,000sf of retail within seven buildings ranging from five (5) to fifteen (15) stories – Continued review

Atty David Waters, the attorney for the applicant, introduced the architect on the project, Chris Bockstael. He then noted that a revised Master Plan had been submitted to the commissioners. They had also been in touch with **OSTA**, the state agency, which said what improvements would be required for turning lanes on Grist Mill and re-timing of lights in the area. He then showed them an aerial map of the existing conditions on Glover Avenue. He then showed them the renderings of the proposed Master Plan area. He noted that proposed parking spaces would now be labeled as required parking spaces. He discussed the parking requirements in great detail. Another rendering showed the number of stories on each of the proposed buildings.

Atty Waters said they would like to discuss the town square and the size of it, as well as the streetscape itself.

Chris Bockstael, the architect on the project, continued the presentation by showing them an aerial map of the town green in New Haven, CT because it was similar in size to the one being recommended in this project. He also showed them a picture of a plaza in New Haven. He noted that some plazas feel too big. It was a block away from the green. Atty Waters noted that the proposed buildings would also have amenities like pools and rooftop green spaces. He also showed them a picture of when the plaza was completely full, which doesn't happen often.

There was also a discussion about an arcade which would create shade for people during the hot summer days. There was also a discussion about enlarging Raccoon Park. There was a discussion about the density in New Haven, comparing it to the density that is proposed in this area of Norwalk. It was noted that on West Avenue, many people are not walking around the area. It was also noted that some of the plazas in Waypointe are very active in the summer. There was then a discussion about the pools available in each of the buildings. Atty Waters noted that they were activating programs that were compatible with each other. He said that they had hired someone who programmed activities for Bryant Park.

Mr. Bockstael showed them renderings which were complete streets. He talked about "moments" which included public art, markers such as foundations, etc. There would be enough space between each to give people pause. Mr. Kleppin asked if they had been noted on the designs but they were not.

There was a discussion about people walking on Grist Mill and having a pedestrian walkway. It was suggested that the state could re-stripe the Grist Mill to make smaller lanes and a wider shoulder so that people could walk on it. There was also a discussion about the Norwalk River Valley Trail in the area. It is now on the west side of the expressway. Atty Waters explained how the spurs would attach. There was a discussion about construction schedules in the area and where certain parts would be constructed.

Mr. Kleppin requested that Atty David Waters reach out to the condominiums that were on the hill before the public hearing. Atty Waters said that they have had informal discussions over the years but no formal meeting with neighbors since it had been a long development process. They would, however, reach out again. Mr. Schulman asked the commissioners to direct any concerns or questions to Mr. Kleppin.

b. #2022-09 R/M – Planning & Zoning Commission – Zoning regulation and map amendment for industrial uses and zones – Preliminary review

Mr. Schulman noted that typically the preliminary review preceded a public hearing. Mr. Kleppin began the presentation by showing the commissioners existing zoning in the 3 areas of Norwalk which were Perry Avenue, East Norwalk and the SoNo/MLK/Bouton areas. He described the different types of industrial zones in the city, from heavy manufacturing to light.

Mr. Kleppin discussed existing zoning and compared it to the proposed use clarifications in the existing 3 industrial zones. He pointed out the East Avenue Village District. He also discussed the proposed industrial uses. There was a discussion about the amount of industrial zone land in these areas. Mr. Kleppin said that there are some areas that will be further studied, including the waterfront area. It was noted that some of this area would be down zoned from Industrial 1 to Industrial 2. The roads were narrow in some of these areas. The next area he showed them for proposed rezoning was SoNo. He then showed them a spreadsheet of different types of uses and where they are allowed.

Mr. Kleppin then discussed various deletions and new terms that would be used in the revised zoning regulations. One that is a new term is commercial vehicle. There was a discussion of vertical farming which is allowed now.

Mr. Kleppin continued with the Industrial 1 zone revisions in connection with a site plan approval. There was a discussion about what would happen if a business's model changed from Industrial 2 to Industrial 1. Mr. Kleppin said that the business would probably have to come before the Planning and Zoning Commission for a special permit. There was a discussion about propane gas storage in this area and whether to keep this language in the regulations. There were also several other revisions that Mr. Kleppin discussed, including height requirements. There was a discussion about setback conditions in this zone and whether they would be changed. He discussed the height and bulk of buildings.

Mr. Kleppin then discussed the changes made to the Industrial 2 regulations. He explained the difference between Industrial 1 and 2. He then discussed changes to the Business 1 and Business 2 zones. He also discussed changes to the self-storage language including a conservation easement on the site.

There was a discussion about doing a rewrite of these zones while all of the zoning regulations are being re-written. Mr. Kleppin said that they had seen these drafts. There was a discussion about making as of right contractor's yards because Norwalk is restrictive. Mr. Mushak said he was a contractor who had to park his trucks in Stamford. There was a discussion about the definition for commercial vehicle storage yard, the earth processing yard and an indoor contractor facility. There was also a discussion about how many properties had been made non-conforming. Mr. Kleppin said he would provide a map for that.

IV. DISCUSSION OF 2022-23 CAPITAL BUDGET

a. Review & Action

Mr. Ferguson said that the subcommittee had worked together and wrote recommendations to be sent to the Mayor.

**Whereas the Planning & Zoning Commission Capital Budget Committee held meetings on January 20, 25 and 26 to review the capital budget requests;*

**Whereas the Planning & Zoning Commission held a public hearing on February 3;*

**Whereas the Planning & Zoning Commission reviewed the recommended budget report prepared by the Capital Budget Committee on March 3;*

**** MR. FERGUSON MOVED: THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission that the 2022-23 Capital Budget Report prepared by the Capital Budget Committee be **APPROVED**; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that notice of this action be forwarded to Mayor Rilling.

Mr. Williams seconded.

Mr. Mushak said that he would vote for it.

Louis Schulman; Galen Wells; Mike Mushak; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Nick Kantor; Tammy Langalis; Richard Roina; Darius Williams; Steve Ferguson approved.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

Mr. Schulman said he would sign the letter, so that it could be sent to the Mayor, when he stopped at the Planning and Zoning Department office the following day.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: February 16, 2022

**** MS. LANGALIS MOVED to approve the February 16, 2022 meeting minutes.**

Mr. Williams seconded.

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

No one opposed.

Richard Roina abstained.

VI. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR

Mr. Kleppin said that the consultants handling the zoning regulations re-write indicated that parking standards should be lowered in some areas of the city. He also suggested that they eliminated parking requirements on Washington Street and Wall Street which seems to be working. There was a discussion about also reviewing the front yard setbacks which would affect the parking.

VII. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

There were no comments from the commissioners.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Roina made a Motion to Adjourn.

Ms. Langalis seconded.

Louis Schulman; Galen Wells; Mike Mushak; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Nick Kantor; Tammy Langalis; Richard Roina; Darius Williams; Steve Ferguson approved.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero