CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
January 12, 2022

PRESENT: Louis Schulman, Chair; Galen Wells; Nick Kantor; Richard Roina; Darius Williams; Mike Mushak; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Steve Ferguson; Tammy Langalis; Hector Pachas

STAFF: Steve Kleppin; Bryan Baker

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 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. He welcomed the commissioners to the newly formed Planning & Zoning Commission. He said that this meeting was a way to get to know each other and what the tasks for the Commission would be. He said that the next few months would be busy due to Capital Budget hearings.

III. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

a. Staff introductions

Mr. Kleppin introduced the staff of the Planning and Zoning Department and explained their job descriptions. He also showed them the organizational chart of the department.

b. Commission member introductions

Mr. Kleppin asked the commissioners to introduce themselves which they all did.

c. Roles and responsibilities of the Planning & Zoning Commission; Review of current, on-going studies

Mr. Kleppin shared a slide presentation with the commissioners about their responsibilities and how to find the applications, new materials that the department has received, as well as what applications would be before the Planning & Zoning Commission in the next few months. He noted that sometimes they received materials at the last minute from applicants and the public.

Mr. Kleppin noted that there are 9 seated members and 3 alternates. Fran DiMeglio had recently decided not to remain as a seated member of the Planning & Zoning Commission so that alternates would now have a chance to vote on some applications until a new member was appointed.

Mr. Kleppin explained how the commissioners should recuse themselves if there were conflicts of interest. He told them to discuss it with him if there was ever a question.

He then showed them the different types of application that the previous Planning and Zoning Commissions had handled separately. He briefly explained 8-25 subdivision of land applications. Next he explained an 8-24 application. He explained the Capital Budget process to the commissioners. He discussed state regulations that would affect their roles. He showed them a chart which included the Zoning Commission roles and duties. He discussed their roles in connection with the coastal area as well as the standards for special permit applications and site plan review applications. He also discussed how traffic had an impact on these applications. He also discussed coastal site plan review.

He then discussed that the Zoning regulations were being rewritten to be easier to read and have more visual examples. He noted that there are several studies happening. He noted that there is a moratorium on additional contractor's yards which would be ending in May. There is a study for the waterfront that has begun. There would be a public meeting which he invited the commissioners to attend.

The Planning & Zoning Department is working on an Affordable Housing Plan which should be completed by July 1, 2022. They are also working on a coastal resiliency plan. He also discussed the projects by the redevelopment agency as well as a transportation plan.

There was a request for Mr. Kleppin to send his slide presentation to the commissioners as well as a list of the acronyms used by the Planning & Zoning Department.

d. Election of officers; Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary

Mr. Schulman said that the leaders of the Planning & Zoning Commission should have zoning experience for the first year. He noted that on some contentious applications there have been lawsuits.

Ms. Wells nominated Mr. Schulman for Chair which was a year long role. She thought that he would have good guidance for the rest of the commissioners in this first year as the combined Planning & Zoning Commission.

Mr. Ferguson asked how the Capital Budget process would be handled since the Zoning Department had no experience in the process. Mr. Kleppin said that there would be a separate Committee which would handle it. People could volunteer for this extra duty. For the applications, every commissioner would be treated the same. He hoped that his department would provide as much information as they could to make the application process as easy as possible for all the members.

Before the commissioners voted for the Chair, Mr. Kleppin asked if anyone else wanted to nominate another member for Chair. There were none. Mr. Mushak thought it was a good idea for Mr. Schulman to be Chair. Mr. Baxendale seconded the motion. All the commissioners voted in favor of Mr. Schulman becoming the Chair of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Mr. Schulman nominated Mr. Mushak as Vice Chair since he had recently served on the Planning Commission as well as having served on the Zoning Commission in the past. Mr. Mushak accepted. There were no other nominations. Mr. Ferguson seconded the nomination. All the commissioners voted in favor of Mr. Mushak becoming the Vice Chair of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Mr. Schulman nominated Ms. Wells as Secretary since she had recently been the Secretary of the Zoning Commission. There were no other nominations. Mr. Williams seconded the nomination. All the commissioners voted in favor of Ms. Wells becoming the Secretary of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

e. Appointment of Chair and members to the Capital Budget Committee

Mr. Schulman said he would sit on the Capital Budget Committee to become familiar with it. He suggested that there should be 5 members. He asked Mr. Ferguson to chair the Capital Budget committee which he accepted. Mr. Baxendale seconded the nomination. Mr. Ferguson recommended Mr. Baxendale for the committee since he had been on the Planning Commission. Ms. Wells asked if she could watch the meeting if she was not on the committee. Mr. Mushak explained how the Capital Budget process worked and said he would like to listen and not participate. Ms. Jordan-Byron said she would participate. Mr. Kleppin suggested that 4 members should be enough to report back to the Planning & Zoning Commission.

f. Appointment of members to Committee to review and recommend new by-laws and rules of procedure

Mr. Schulman asked Mr. Roina, Ms. Wells and Mr. Kleppin to rewrite the by-laws and rules of procedure for the Planning & Zoning Commission. Mr. Roina asked if he could think about it. Mr. Kleppin would send the bylaws to Mr. Roina and Ms. Wells.

g. Application types

Mr. Kleppin discussed ex parte communications. He said that once an application has been received by the city, the commissioners had to refrain from public comment. Mr. Kleppin would ask a commissioner to recuse themselves if he did find that they had talked about an application.

Mr. Schulman also explained that no more than 5 commissioners could meet together or it would be considered a meeting.

Mr. Mushak mentioned a brief story about how he had made mention of installing a crosswalk by Lowe's when he was on the Zoning Commission during that application process. He noted that the staff did get a letter from a member of the public and Mr. Mushak had recused himself.

IV. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR

Mr. Kleppin said that there was a meeting next Wednesday, January 19. Staff would send out the memos so that the commissioners could begin their work.

V. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

Mr. Schulman asked the commissioners to realize that there were some questions that were relevant and irrelevant during public hearings so that they did not go longer than they should. He noted that recently the Zoning Commission had a public hearing for 5 hours. He said in the future, meetings may not run that long and continue it at the next meeting.

Ms. Jordan-Byron said that she had been at the 5 hr. Zoning Commission public hearing and that Mr. Schulman had handled it well.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Mushak made a Motion to Adjourn.
Mr. Pachas seconded.
Louis Schulman; Galen Wells; Nick Kantor; Richard Roina; Darius Williams; Mike Mushak; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Steve Ferguson; Tammy Langalis; Hector Pachas approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero