CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MINUTES
January 8, 2025

PRESENT: Nick Kantor, Chair; Louis Schulman; Diana Lenkowsky; Ana Tabachneck; Tammy Langalis; Richard Roina; Galen Wells (arrived after roll call); Jacquen Jordan-Byron (arrived after roll call; left the meeting at 6:36 pm; returned at 7:05) Darius Williams

STAFF: Steve Kleppin; Bryan Baker

OTHERS: Alan Lo; Robert Stowers; Bryan Lutz; Atty Adam Blank; Atty Liz Suchy; Matthew Melucci; Aries Valenton; Angela Valenton; Jacqueline Lane; Amie Francis; Laura Magnussen; Steve Kirkess; Joe Sqammato; Geraldine Petrizzi;

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Kantor called the meeting to order at 6:02 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.

III. REVIEW AND ACTION ON APPLICATIONS

A. #2024-69 - 8-24 Referral - City of Norwalk - 25 Pogany Street - Proposed land swap between property owner of 25 Pogany Street and portion of Fodor Farm property owned by the City of Norwalk - Report & recommended action

Alan Lo, Building and Facilities Manager for the city, began the presentation with a brief history about the property which the city had acquired in the 1990s. The city had considered building a new school but then decided against it. He said that there were 3 houses on the property, two of which were eventually sold. He explained that the city had wanted to protect the architecture of some of the buildings. However they were in poor condition. They have gone to the historic commission for approval for the renovation which was completed. He then showed them the site plan and explained how the land would be swapped. He said that the application had been reviewed by the Land Use and Building Management Committee of the Common Council.

There was a discussion as to whether it was a buildable lot. Mr. Lo said it was not dividable.

Mr. Kantor said that Ms. Jordan-Byron and Ms. Wells had arrived after the roll call. All members of the Commission were seated.

**** MR. SCHULMAN MOVED: THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning and Zoning Commission, that application #2024-69 - 8-24 Referral - City of Norwalk - 25 Pogany Street - Proposed land swap between property owner of 25 Pogany Street and portion of Fodor Farm property owned by the City of Norwalk be **APPROVED**.

Ms. Langalis seconded.
Nick Kantor; Louis Schulman; Diana Lenkowsky; Ana Tabachneck; Tammy Langalis; Richard Roina; Galen Wells approved.
No one opposed.
Jacquen Jordan-Byron abstained.

B. #2024-70 Special Appropriation - City of Norwalk - 98 South Main Street - Special appropriation request in the amount of $2,450,000 for the construction of the Norwalk Community Recreation Center - Report & recommended action

Alan Lo,Building and Facilities Manager for the city, gave a brief presentation about the South Norwalk Community Center which the city has owned since 2014. They have been negotiating with the YMCA for the renovation of the building. However, the costs were too high and they decided not to move forward.

Mr. Lo said that they are now working with Robert Stowers, Director of Recreation and Parks to develop the building, part of which will be a gym. He explained the funding for this project from both the federal and state levels. He also explained that construction costs were higher than expected. Although the city is short of some of the funding for the project, Mr. Lo explained that they would still like to move forward with it. He said that the city had already signed an agreement with a contractor, and that was why they were requesting a special appropriation from funding that was available from a different project.

There was a discussion as to the management of the building. Mr. Schulman asked Mr. Stowers if there were operating funds in the Recreation and Parks budget for the building. Robert Stowers said that the facility would open in the spring of 2026. He explained the programming that would be provided there, as well as how the facility would be staffed. There was a discussion about the recording studio as well as the two kitchens within the facility. There was a discussion about the funding from the city. Mr. Lo said that the city will own the building. Mr. Lo explained the next steps for this special appropriation as well as the building process.

**** MR. SCHULMAN MOVED: THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning and Zoning Commission, that application #2024-70 Special Appropriation - City of Norwalk - 98 South Main Street - Special appropriation request in the amount of $2,450,000 for the construction of the Norwalk Community Recreation Center - be **APPROVED**.

Mr. Roina seconded.
Nick Kantor; Louis Schulman; Diana Lenkowsky; Ana Tabachneck; Tammy Langalis; Richard Roina; Galen Wells; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Darius Williams approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

C. #2024-71 - 8-24 Referral - City of Norwalk - 24 Monroe Street - Lease existing commercial space to SoNo Brewing Company - Report & recommended action

Bryan Lutz, Assistant Director of Parking for the city, gave a brief background about the Parking Authority and the South Norwalk Train station. He then explained the application which was a lease to the Sono Brewing Company. He also gave a background on the company.

There was a discussion about whether the Parking Authority had ever come before the Planning & Zoning Commission before. Mr. Lutz explained that it was a part of the state statues.

**** MR. SCHULMAN MOVED: THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning and Zoning Commission, that application #2024-71 - 8-24 Referral - City of Norwalk - 24 Monroe Street - Lease existing commercial space to SoNo Brewing Company be **APPROVED**.

Ms. Tabachnek seconded.
Nick Kantor; Louis Schulman; Diana Lenkowsky; Ana Tabachneck; Tammy Langalis; Richard Roina; Galen Wells; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Darius Williams approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

D. #5-20 SP - 204 Flax Hill, LLC - 204 Flax Hill Avenue - EXTENSION OF TIME REQUEST for special permit to rehabilitate existing 1890 historic structure; to demolish existing Carriage House and replace it with a new 3-story, 14-unit structure (46 units total) - Report & recommended action

Atty Adam Blank requested a one year extension of time on a special permit. He explained the application and noted that the extension would run through February of 2026. He said that there would be a modification of the application that the Commission would review in February, but they would like to have the extension if that modification was not approved.

Ms. Lenkowsky was having audio issues so she sent her questions to Mr. Baker. There was a discussion about restoration of the exterior of the building. Atty Blank showed them the exterior designs of the building.

**** MS. WELLS MOVED: THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning and Zoning Commission, that application #5-20 SP - 204 Flax Hill, LLC - 204 Flax Hill Avenue - EXTENSION OF TIME REQUEST for special permit to rehabilitate existing 1890 historic structure; to demolish existing Carriage House and replace it with a new 3-story, 14-unit structure (46 units total) be **APPROVED**.

Mr. Roina seconded.
Nick Kantor; Louis Schulman; Diana Lenkowsky; Ana Tabachneck; Tammy Langalis; Richard Roina; Galen Wells; Darius Williams approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

E. #1-18 SPR & #3-20 SPR - Stone Realty Associates, LLC - 15 Oakwood Avenue and 27 Seir Hill Road - BOND RELEASE REQUEST for two site plan review applications for the construction of an Innovation Center and a waiver of 50% of the required parking spaces - Report & recommended action

Atty Liz Suchy, the attorney for Stone Realty, gave a brief history of the previous application in 2018, as well as the 2020 application for an adjacent parking lot for Stone Realty Associates in the building. She said that they were requesting a release of the bond that was posted for the parking waiver. A traffic analysis was provided which showed that the additional parking was not necessary. If the analysis had shown that the parking spaces were necessary, a roofing deck would have been constructed above the current parking lot.

Mr. Schulman suggested that members visit this building because it is 100% sustainable. He asked Atty Suchy if it would be possible to schedule a visit.

**** MS. LANGALIS MOVED: THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning and Zoning Commission, that application #1-18 SPR & #3-20 SPR - Stone Realty Associates, LLC - 15 Oakwood Avenue and 27 Seir Hill Road - BOND RELEASE REQUEST for two site plan review applications for the construction of an Innovation Center and a waiver of 50% of the required parking spaces be **APPROVED**.

Mr. Williams seconded.
Nick Kantor; Louis Schulman; Diana Lenkowsky; Ana Tabachneck; Tammy Langalis; Richard Roina; Galen Wells; Darius Williams approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

F. #2023-68 SP/MV/CAM - 24 Van Zant, LLC - 24 Van Zant Street - EXTENSION OF TIME REQUEST for proposed motor vehicle repair use within existing one-story building - Report & recommended action

Atty Liz Suchy, the attorney for the applicant, explained the request for the extension of one year, since they are working through issues to secure the building permit.

**** MR. ROINA MOVED: THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning and Zoning Commission, that application #2023-68 SP/MV/CAM - 24 Van Zant, LLC - 24 Van Zant Street - EXTENSION OF TIME REQUEST for proposed motor vehicle repair use within existing one-story building be **APPROVED**.

Mr. Williams seconded.
Nick Kantor; Louis Schulman; Diana Lenkowsky; Ana Tabachneck; Tammy Langalis; Richard Roina; Galen Wells; Darius Williams approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

G. #2024-68 SPR - Matthew and Elizabeth Melucci - 128 Perry Avenue (District 5, Block 40, Lot 6) - Site plan review application to use a portion of an existing detached accessory structure as a detached accessory dwelling unit - Report & recommended action

Matthew Melucci, the homeowner, noted that there was a structure on the property and would like to add the accessory dwelling unit (ADU). There was a review of the site plan. The structure is being used for storage at this point. He said it was about half the size of the primary structure. The driveway would be shared. Mr. Baker said that the applicant had to section off a portion of the structure to meet the requirements for the ADU square footage. A storage area could have been a second bedroom.

**** MS. TABACHNECK MOVED: THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning and Zoning Commission, that application #2024-68 SPR – Matthew and Elizabeth Melucci – 128 Perry Avenue (District 5, Block 40, Lot 6) – Site plan review application to use a portion of an existing detached accessory structure as a detached accessory dwelling unit:

1. That the site shall be developed in accordance with the following plans:

a. Per the site plan for the project “Proposed Residence for Matt Melucci,” prepared by Douglas Cutler, AIA, dated 7/8/2024; and

b. Per floor plans for the project “Proposed Residence for Matt Melucci,” prepared by Douglas Cutler, AIA, dated 7/8/2024;

2. That the areas labeled as “storage” on the floor plans referenced above shall remain unfinished storage space or the storage areas shall be completely separated via a wall from the accessory dwelling unit; and

3. That prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Zoning Compliance, the Applicant shall submit a certificate in the form of an affidavit which verifies that the owner resides on the premises and that the minimum rental duration of the accessory dwelling unit is a minimum of six (6) continuous months; and

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

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

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this application complies with all applicable sections of the Norwalk Zoning Regulations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the effective date of this action shall be January 17, 2025.

Ms. Langalis seconded.

At this point the commissioners reviewed the resolution. There was a discussion about revisions to the regulations which could affect this ADU. Mr. Kleppin suggested that the applicant could ask for modifications if the regulations were changed.

Nick Kantor; Louis Schulman; Diana Lenkowsky; Ana Tabachneck; Tammy Langalis; Richard Roina; Galen Wells; Darius Williams approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

IV. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. #2024-32 SP – Angela Valenton – 5 Blackberry Lane (District 5, Block 45, Lot 134) – Special permit for a rest home use

Mr. Kantor opened the public hearing and explained how it would work.

Aries Valeton began the presentation with a brief overview of the project which would be a group home for the elderly and disabled. He addressed some of the neighbors' concerns including the fact that this is not a commercial business, but rather a residential group home. He also said that they had received an approval from the Department of Social Services. He noted what types of patients they will not accept. He explained that they were both registered nurses and that he was a physical therapist. He then explained how they were meeting the needs of patients that were lacking. He said that they had also done research to show that the value of neighboring properties would not decrease. He also explained the difference in the level of care between a nursing home and this facility. He said that there would only be three patients at one time. He also explained how he and his wife would be the primary caregivers, 24/7.

Angela Valenton continued the presentation by noting that they have an approval from the Department of Social Services, but not the Department of Health. However, she did note that they would not receive a license unless the rest home was approved. She also explained that it is not a healthcare facility as well as what a group home was. She addressed neighbors' concerns about ambulances arriving and departing from the group home.

There was a discussion about the upgrading of their septic system. Ms. Valenton said that they had other family members that were health professionals, as well as both of them being registered nurses. There was a discussion about the residence being open 24 hours. There was also a discussion about the number of residents at their home. There was a discussion about additional employees, as well as additional deliveries. There was also a discussion about the cognitive abilities of the patients. There was also a discussion about the level of care they would provide as well as the type of patients they would assist. There was a concern that the Valentons were both going to work 24/7. There was a discussion about patient turnover which could include staying until the end of life. These patients would not be capable of driving. They would provide transportation to doctors, etc. There was a review of the application, floor plan and other documentation on the city's website. There was also a discussion about meals and programming. There was a discussion about the work schedule of Mr. and Mrs. Valenton. There was also a discussion about parking on the lawn. There was a review of the floor plan as well as how many people would be living in the home. There was a discussion about the number of patients there could be in the group home, either three or six. Ms. Jordan-Byron believed that although they had room for six, they would only have three. Mr. Schulman asked if the commission had the authority to limit the group home to three patients.

There was a discussion about whether there would be children in the facility. Mr. Valenton said that they had 3 kids and would live in the ADU. He explained the separation between the residence and the ADU. There was a discussion about the parking in the area which may not allow emergency vehicles through. There was also a discussion about the number of bedrooms. The commissioners would not be voting on this item at this meeting. There was a discussion about the transportation used for the residents. There was a discussion about the ages of the applicants' children.

Mr. Kantor opened the hearing up to the public to make comments. He explained how it would work.

Jacqueline Lane, 3 Blackberry Lane, spoke about a letter that she had received from the Valentons. She said she had spoken with the Fairfield Regional Center that had enough capacity. She had concerns about this being a group home as well as the parking.

Amie Francis, 17 Blackberry Lane, had concerns about staffing at the facility as well as the septic system.

Laura Magnussen, 1 Blackberry Lane, said that she had emailed her concerns to the commission. She had some follow-up comments. She had concerns about those cooking the meals as well as how medical waste would be handled. She said she would have other concerns.

Steve Kirkess, ____ Blackberry Lane, noted that there were children in the home but had not previously been mentioned. There were concerns about the number of vehicles as they became older. He was also concerned about the work schedule of the Valentons. He also had concerns about the septic system.

Joe Sqammato, 7 Blackberry Lane, said that this was a commercial venture and not residential in nature, which was a primary concern for him. He also had concerns about the septic system. He said that he was opposed to the application.

Geraldine Petrizzi, 15 Blackberry Lane, said she shared the concerns of her neighbors. She said she had also sent letters to the commissions. She also noted that there had been construction on this property for over a year.

Mr. Kleppin discussed the actual classification of the use, and noted that group homes can be in residential zones. The applicant would have to coordinate with the Health Department about the septic system, so h e asked them to work with the department. He also said that he would have one of his staff inspect the premises to see if any work had been done without permits.

Mr. Kantor said that he would like the Valentons to prepare a statement due to the concerns from the commission and the public. Mr. Valenton addressed the comments about the permits. Mr. Kleppin said that they could set up the next meeting date once the septic has been approved.

At this point, Mr. Kantor said that the hearing would be continued until the Planning and Zoning Department had determined the best date.

V. REVIEW AND ACTION ON PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

A. #2024-32 SP – Angela Valenton – 5 Blackberry Lane (District 5, Block 45, Lot 134) – Special permit for a rest home use - Report & recommended action

This item was continued.

VI. DISCUSSION

A. Capital Budget Committee and Schedule

Mr. Knator said that Ms. Langalis said that she would chair this committee. There was a request for other commission members to be a part of the sub-committee. There would be one long day of meetings with the various departments at the end of

January. Mr. Baker said that they were still picking a date. Ms. Langalis asked whether there had been conversations about changing the outcome of the format of the department level meetings. Mr. Kleppin said that a change would be necessitated at the ordinance level. There was a discussion as to whether the Planning and Zoning Commission should have a role with the Capital Budget. Ms. Langalis discussed her experience when she was on the Planning Commission. There was also a discussion about the current role. Mr. Kleppin made a suggestion as to how they could influence the Capital Budget process. Mr. Baker said that the meetings with the departments are not required but that it is a requirement that they hold a public hearing. There was a discussion about whether the commission should hold the public hearing and whether the department heads should present just once to everyone. Mr. Kantor asked for volunteers for the subcommittee.

VII. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. December 4, 2024

**** MR. SCHULMAN MOVED to approve the December 4, 2024 minutes.**
Ms. Tabachneck seconded.
Nick Kantor; Louis Schulman; Diana Lenkowsky; Ana Tabachneck; Tammy Langalis; Richard Roina; Galen Wells; Darius Williams approved.
No one opposed.
Jacquen Jordan-Byron abstained.

VIII. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR

Mr. Kleppin said that a draft of the affordable housing plan would be ready and a joint meeting with the Common Council would be scheduled for January 30 at 7 pm. He then discussed next steps for the plan once it was approved.

Mr. Kleppin also discussed training with the Conservation Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals which he would be scheduling.

IX. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

There was a discussion about questions that Mr. Schulman had about the Sono Collection and the Pearl. Mr. Roina asked if they would see the Silvermine Tavern application again.

Mr. Schulman said that the Stone Realty building was very interesting due to its use of energy. He thought that they should visit and that they would not discuss it. Mr. Kantor asked Mr. Baker to coordinate with Atty Suchy.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Shculman made a Motion to Adjourn.
Ms. Jordan-Byron seconded.
Nicholas Kantor; Louis Schulman; Tammy Langalis; Diana Lenkowsky; Richard Roina; Darius Williams; Ana Tabachneck; Jacquen Jordan-Byron; Chapin Bryce approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero