CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MINUTES
February 19, 2025

PRESENT: Galen Wells, Chair; Diana Lenkowsky; Louis Schulman; Tammy Langalis; Chapin Bryce; Richard Roina; Jacquen Jordan-Byron

STAFF: Steve Kleppin; Bryan Baker

OTHERS: Wilber Giron; Atty Darin Callahan; Sarah Myers; Laura Magnussen; Angela Valenton

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Wells called the meeting to order at 6:05 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 and then Mr. Baker called the roll.

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS

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

Ms. Wells opened the continuation of the public hearing; however, Mr. Baker said that the applicant was not on the webinar. They moved to the next items on the agenda.

IV. REVIEW AND ACTION ON APPLICATIONS

A. #2025-10 8-24 Referral - City of Norwalk - 12 Lubrano Place - Stormwater easement - Report & recommended action

Wilber Giron, of the Department of Public Works, began the presentation by explaining the reason for the easement acceptance. The city's drainage was rerouted through 12 Lubrano Place so they were requesting the easement. Mr. Giron then showed them the new and existing easement on a site map. The easement was provided by the developer and then approved by the city's law counsel. He noted that the pipe was not as deep as before. There was a discussion about the development on Olean Street which had required the rerouting of the drainage pipe.

**** MR. SCHULMAN MOVED: THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission that application #2025-10 8-24 Referral – City of Norwalk – 12 Lubrano Place – Stormwater easement be **APPROVED.**

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the reasons for this action are to implement the following Plan of Conservation and Development goals, policies and actions:

1. To achieve the goal that "Norwalk's infrastructure and public facilities are resource-efficient, well-maintained, cost-effective, sustainable and resilient," through the strategy to "continue to update, modernize, and maintain Norwalk's infrastructure and city facilities."

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that notice of this action be forwarded to the Common Council.

> **Mr. Bryce seconded.**
> **Galen Wells; Diana Lenkowsky; Louis Schulman; Tammy Langalis; Chapin Bryce; Richard Roina; Jacquen Jordan-Byron approved.**
> **No one opposed.**
> **No one abstained.**

B. #2025-11 Special Appropriation - City of Norwalk - 6 Butler Street - Acquisition of property - Report & recommended action

Atty Darin Callahan, Corporation Counsel for the city, began the presentation about the acquisition of the property of 6 Butler Street. He explained how they were trying to prevent the loss of the grant funds from ARPA by purchasing the property by the end of 2024. However, this had not been possible. Funds were reallocated to paving roads in Norwalk so they would not be lost. He explained that now the city was requesting a special appropriation for the funds and it would be net zero.

**** MR. SCHULMAN MOVED: THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission that application #2025-11 Special Appropriation – City of Norwalk – 6 Butler Street – Acquisition of property be **APPROVED.**

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the reasons for this action are to implement the following Plan of Conservation and Development goals, policies and actions:

1. To achieve the goal that “Norwalk aims to have the best city park and recreation system in Connecticut;” and

2. To help further the policy to “Avoid development, encroachments or other activities that would affect opportunities for beneficial use and enjoyment of existing city parks and open space;” and

3. To utilize the strategy to “Support local centers of activity in neighborhoods;” and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that notice of this action be forwarded to the Common Council.

Ms. Langalis seconded.

There was a discussion about how this had been an affordable housing project when it was before the commission several months prior. Atty Callahan explained how the project was not going forward and that the developer was looking at different properties. Mr. Callahan said that he was handling this matter since Jessica Vonashek had left the department, but was not completely sure how this property would be used.

Ms. Langalis said that she thought open space would be more useful than a driveway, because Stepping Stones has a driveway. Atty Callahan noted that there are no design plans for this parcel.

Galen Wells; Diana Lenkowsky; Louis Schulman; Tammy Langalis; Chapin Bryce; Richard Roina; Jacquen Jordan-Byron approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

C. #2025-12 - Norwalk Hospital Association - 34 Maple Street - Modifications to the Norwalk Hospital Sign Manual for the Hottinger Garage - Report & recommended action

Sarah Myers began the presentation by explaining the change to the sign manual. The garage would be named for a donor. She then showed them pictures of what the garage would look like. She also showed them an aerial view of the garage. There was a discussion about why there is a sign manual, as long as the commissioners thought the change was appropriate.

**** MR. SCHULMAN MOVED: THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the request to revise the sign manual for Norwalk Hospital by the Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission for application #2025-12 – Norwalk Hospital Association – 34 Maple Street

– Modification to Norwalk Hospital Sign Manual for Hottinger Garage be APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

1. That all exterior signage will be installed in accordance with the following manual:

a. Per sign manual developed by Modulex for Norwalk Hospital at 34 Maple Street dated 2/17/25; and

2. That a zoning permit is obtained prior to installation; and

3. That any changes to the proposal are required to be reviewed by staff prior to implementation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the effective date of this action shall be February 28th, 2025.

Mr. Bryce seconded.
Galen Wells; Diana Lenkowsky; Louis Schulman; Tammy Langalis; Chapin Bryce; Richard Roina; Jacquen Jordan-Byron approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

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

Ms. Wells noted that the commission would continue the public hearing. Mr. Baker gave a brief overview from the last meeting. He said that the applicant has provided a septic plan to the Department of Health and revised floor plans to address their concerns. The Health Dept. would sign off on the septic plans according to Mr. Baker.

Mr. Bryce said he would not be seated for this application since he had not reviewed the video of the previous meeting.

Ms. Wells explained how members of the public could comment for this public hearing.

Laura Magnussen, who had spoken at the previous meeting, had comments on the revised floor plans. She wondered about the change to some of the rooms being used as recreation rooms. She thought they might be used as bedrooms for the family at a later time.

Angela Valenton was having technical difficulties before she could respond. Once she was on the webinar she addressed the comments from the public. Ms. Valenton said that the septic system was approved for 3 residents. Mr. Baker said it would comply with the health code.

There was a discussion about where the family would live. There was concern that there was only one bedroom. However, it seemed like there was a mistake about the number of recreation rooms shown on the plans. There was a clarification of the number of bedrooms that had been approved for the septic system.

There was a discussion about hiring another employee since the residents could not be left alone. Ms. Valenton confirmed that if this project was approved and they opened the rest home, she and her husband would work full-time for it. She also said that if need be, they could hire an employee. There was also a discussion about the number of parking spaces especially if they hired an employee. Since they are registered nurses, she and her husband could dispense medications. There was also a discussion about working with the dietary needs of the residents. Ms. Valenton said that there would be a 14 day menu in place.

There was a discussion about the septic system, the number of bedrooms and whether they would be turned into bedrooms for residents of the rest home. Ms. Valenton said they would not be adding additional rooms for residents. There was again concern about the number of patients that the Department of Social Services had allowed. Any additional employee would be the responsibility of the Valentons.

Mr. Roina had concerns about the financial viability of this application which showed that it would be feasible with 6 residents. His concerns were that there would only be 3 residents at this facility. Ms. Valenton said that she could take on private patients who they would receive more payments from. There was a discussion about the process. Ms. Valenton said that the State of Connecticut would give them a license to operate the rest home once they received approval from the city. There was a discussion about what the city was approving.

Ms. Wells closed the public hearing.

Mr. Schulman said that he would make a motion to reject the application on the basis of the facility not having access to public transportation. He also believed that they had received different answers from the applicant at different meetings.

**** MR. SCHULMAN MOVED: THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission that application #2024-32 SP – Angela Valenton – 5

Blackberry Lane (District 5, Block 45, Lot 134) – Proposed Rest Home use be **DENIED** for the following reasons:

1. That per Section 8.4.8 of the Norwalk Zoning Regulations, documentation has not been provided to the satisfaction of the Commission that the on-site septic system for the proposed use is compatible; and

2. That per Section 8.4.8 of the Norwalk Zoning Regulations, based on the size of the lot, that the yard, screening and buffering is not adequate for the use; and

a. Further, that the size and width of the road is not adequate for emergency vehicles; and

3. That per Section 8.4.8 of the Norwalk Zoning Regulations, the site is not in proximity to community facilities such as public transportation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the effective date of this action shall be ______.

Mr. Roina seconded.

Mr. Roina noted that since this rest home was on a half acre lot it would not provide adequate screening and buffering for the neighbors. He also had concerns about emergency vehicles being on this street.

Ms. Langalis said that she did not have concerns about the inadequacy of the public transportation in the area. She also believed that a garage was converted into living space so the applicant did meet some of the qualifications. However, she did not think that some of their questions had been answered.

Ms. Lenkowsky had concerns about the septic system and she was not quite sure what was approved by the Health Department.

Ms. Jordan-Byron said she believed the applicant had met the points that the commission required.

At this point, the commissioners reviewed a draft resolution to deny. Mr. Baker clarified how the process would work if the commissioners were to approve the application. He noted that the Health Department would review the septic plans again when the applicant was seeking a building permit. There was a discussion about the number of bedrooms.

At this point, Mr. Kleppin said that they could continue this application to the next meeting so they could get clarification from the Health Department about the septic system. He also suggested that the motion be withdrawn and start again at the next meeting. The staff would also get written clarification about the septic system. Mr. Schulman withdrew his motion at this point.

C. FY 2025-2026 Capital Budget - Report & Recommended Action

Ms. Wells explained the process for the next steps for the Capital Budget. Mr. Baker explained that they would review the letter to be sent to the Mayor and that they could add to it any requests that were important to the commission. Mr. Bryce asked to add a request for funding for a parking study.

**** MR. SCHULMAN MOVED:**

Honorable Mayor Rilling,

The Planning & Zoning Commission held a public hearing on the FY 2025-2026 Capital Budget at their February 8, 2025, regular meeting.

On February 19, 2025, the Planning & Zoning Commission made the following decision regarding the City of Norwalk's FY 2025-26 Capital Budget:

*Whereas the Planning & Zoning Commission (the Commission) recommends that the East Avenue Corridor Improvements project (C0678) as part of the Transportation, Mobility & Parking Department's budget be fully funded and prioritized as it is especially consistent with the 2019-2029 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD);

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission that the FY 2025-26 Capital Budget is consistent with the 2019-2029 Plan of Conservation and Development; and

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

Respectfully submitted,

Galen Wells, Chairwoman, Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission
Chapin Bryce, Vice-Chairman, Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission
Jacquen Jordan-Byron, Secretary, Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission
Louis Schulman, Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission
Tamsen Langalis, Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission
Richard Roina, Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission
Nicholas Kantor, Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission
Darius Williams, Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission

Ana Tabachneck, Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission
Diana Lenkowsky, Norwalk Planning & Zoning Commission

Mr. Bryce seconded.
Galen Wells; Diana Lenkowsky; Louis Schulman; Tammy Langalis; Chapin Bryce; Richard Roina; Jacquen Jordan-Byron approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

V. DISCUSSION

A. Capital Budget Role

Mr. Kleppin apologized that he had not sent the changes to the commission in advance of the meeting. He showed them the existing wording of the role of the Planning & Zoning Commission in the city's statutes as well as proposed changes that he was suggesting for their role in the Capital Budget. Ms. Wells said that they would move this to the next agenda so that the commission could review these changes.

B. Zoning Regulation Amendments

Mr. Kleppin started with changes for indoor motor vehicle storage. He also said that there would be another change which could allow for a larger storage area for high end vehicles. He also noted that the motor vehicle storage regulations were listed twice but seemed to be contradictory to one another. He said he would propose an amendment, which would modify the definition.

The next item was modifications to the regulations for vocational schools including allowing smaller schools. Some changes were to allow them in different zones. They were also looking at different ways to regulate such as the area size of a potential school in a commercial building.

There was a discussion about the outdoor storage of motor vehicles, allowed in the light industrial zones. Mr. Bryce asked for clarification so they could decide whether to remove this.

Mr. Kleppin said that they would prepare the proposed amendments in order to start the process of approval.

VI. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting: February 5, 2025

**** MR. BRYCE MOVED to approve the February 5, 2025 minutes, as amended.**

Ms. Langalis seconded.
Galen Wells; Diana Lenkowsky; Louis Schulman; Tammy Langalis; Chapin Bryce; Richard Roina; Jacquen Jordan-Byron approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

VII. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR

Mr. Kleppin noted that there will continue to be changes to the regulations from staff input, and resident inquiries.

VIII. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

Mr. Schulman said that he had some issues about the lighting feature at the Sono Mal and the waterfall feature at The Pearl which Mr. Kleppin had worked on to fix. He said that he appreciated Mr. Kleppin working on them.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Roina made a Motion to Adjourn.
Ms. Jordan-Byron seconded.
Galen Wells; Diana Lenkowsky; Louis Schulman; Tammy Langalis; Chapin Bryce; Richard Roina; Jacquen Jordan-Byron approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero