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# CITY OF NORWALK
# PLANNING COMMISSION
# July 21, 2020

**PRESENT:** Fran DiMeglio, Chair; Brian Baxendale; Mike Mushak; Tammy Langalis; Mary Peniston; Steven Ferguson; Tamara Shockley

**STAFF:** Steve Kleppin; Michelle Andrzejewski

**OTHERS:** Atty David Waters; Anthony Carr; Vanessa Valadares; Deborah Brancato; Atty Enrico Costantini; Brian Bidolli; Eric Rains

## I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. DiMeglio called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

## II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Kleppin called the roll. It should be noted that this meeting was held on Zoom.com with all participants calling in, separately.

Ms. DiMeglio offered condolences to Ms. Langalis on the loss of father. She also welcomed Ms. Shockley to the Planning Commission.

## III. DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION

**A. Zoning Commission referral - #1-20M - Merritt Station Norwalk, LLC et al - 67, 69, 79, 87, 111, 117, 129, 135, 155, 156 & 201 Glover Avenue and 2 Oakwood Ave - Proposed change to the zoning map from AAA Residence and Business #2 zone to entirely Executive Office zone – Report and recommendation**

**B Zoning Commission referral - #1-20M - Merritt Station Norwalk, LLC et al - 67, 69, 79, 87, 111, 117, 129, 135, 155, 156 & 201 Glover Avenue and 2 Oakwood Ave - Proposed change to the zoning map from AAA Residence and Business #2 zone to entirely Executive Office zone – Report and recommendation and**

**C. Zoning Commission referral - #2-20R - Merritt Station Norwalk, LLC et al - Proposed amendments to revise definition for Development Park; to revise the Executive Office zone to permit a new Master Plan approval process by Special Permit and to increase height and FAR, to revise parking requirements for multifamily developments and related technical amendments – Report and recommendation**

Ms. DiMeglio noted that these items would be discussed together. There was also a discussion as to whether they would be voted on this evening. It was decided that there were

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still many things to review and questions to be answered so that they would not. Mr. Kleppin noted that Atty Waters was available for further discussion and questions. He said that the public hearing for the Zoning Commission would most likely be in September.

There was a discussion about the economic analysis and the number of children forecasted to be in the public education system as well as whether there would be any pre-school(s) planned for the area. Mr. Kleppin said preschools were not planned at this time but could as the project began.

Atty Waters began the presentation with a discussion about the total population based upon a similar completed project that his client had on the same street.

Mr. Kleppin noted that the Planning Commission was receiving most of the same information that the Zoning Commission was receiving. It was discussed about having a joint meeting between both Commissions. Mr. Kleppin said he would research if that was permissible according to state regulations.  There was also a discussion about the timeframe. Mr. Kleppin noted that the Planning Commission should make a decision at their August meeting. There were concerns about this timeline.

Atty Waters continued the presentation with a discussion of the model for the project. There was then a discussion about the pros and cons for the Master Plan for the area. Actual development would be done in phases. Atty Waters noted that the entire project would be done in 7-10 years. There was also a discussion about a lower density which Atty Waters did not think would be beneficial. There was a discussion about whether Commissioner  Shockley could review prior meetings and then vote on these applications.

There was a discussion about whether there was a housing shortage, or would demand stabilize. Atty Waters noted that there was a significant demand but he was not sure if it was because of the pandemic. There was also a discussion about affordable housing as well as market rate units in the area. There was then a discussion of green space and open space to the public, and whether the units would be rentals or condominiums. The commissioners were asked to send their questions to Mr. Kleppin.

**D. 8-24 referral - Department of Public Works - Proposed Conveyance of land shown as  "Area A" (1,263± sf) and  "Area B" (237±sf ) from Norwalk Land Development, LLC to the City of Norwalk at no cost -  Report & recommendation**

Mr. Carr began the presentation about the 8-24 referral in connection with the construction of the SoNo Collection. It was noted on a survey that part of the road was on their private property. This was to convey it back to the City so that the city would continue to do work on the lanes and the pavement. It would be conveyed at no cost. Ms. Valadares explained that currently there was a lane of roadway on private property which happened when the lane was widened. Atty Callahan, an attorney for the city, also explained that it was a sliver of land that overlaps the roadway. They would like the boundaries of the land to match the boundaries of the roadway.

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There was a discussion about whether the city had given a part of the roadway to The SoNo Collection, earlier in the project. Atty Deborah Brancato, an attorney for the mall, said that she did not recall and no one seemed to know. There was also a discussion as to whether this would cost the city any money. Atty Costantini, attorney for the city, noted that there was no cost to the city.

***** MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED: BE IT RESOLVED** that the Norwalk Planning Commission in accordance with Section 8-24 of the Connecticut General Statutes, recommends that the referral from the Department of Public Works and Corporation Counsel for the Proposed Conveyance of land shown as "Area A" and "Area B" from Norwalk Land Development, LLC to the City of Norwalk be **APPROVED**, subject to the following reasons:

1. To implement the Plan of Conservation and Development policy to make "Support development of infrastructure and amenities attractive to businesses and workers" (Chapter 3, pg. 52); and
2. To implement the Plan of Conservation and Development goal to " B. Provide roads that serve the needs of Norwalk residents and commerce, and that facilitate safe and convenient access to transit, bicycle facilities, and pedestrian facilities." (Chapter 10, pg. 196); and

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

**Mr. Ferguson seconded.**

**Fran DiMeglio; Brian Baxendale; Mike Mushak; Tammy Langalis; Mary Peniston; Steven Ferguson; Tamara Shockley approved.**
**No one opposed.**
**No one abstained.**

**E. Subdivision #3596 - Lenhart - Scribner Ave/Coventry Place - Release of bond for required street trees - *Report & Recommended Action***

Mr. Kleppin noted that there was an outstanding item but that the trees had been planted. He showed them pictures that had been taken by a staff member.

***** MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED** to approve the release of the bond for the required street trees.

**Mr. Baxendale seconded.**

**Fran DiMeglio; Brian Baxendale; Mike Mushak; Tammy Langalis; Mary Peniston; Steven Ferguson; Tamara Shockley approved.**
**No one opposed.**
**No one abstained.**

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### F. Adoption of East Norwalk TOD Plan - *Report & Recommended Action*

Mr. Baxendale noted the concerns of the committee for this TOD Plan. He said that one of them was traffic congestion. There was also a discussion of the density and parking. He noted that there would be increased use of the train station as it gets expanded. Mr. Kleppin explained the end stages of this plan. He also noted that the density of the buildings in this area was increasing 1 story. He then discussed the plans and noted that it would not get built at once. Many parcels would have to be consolidated. He said that the process was appropriate.

There was then a discussion about the 230 East Avenue parcel and whether that project would be able to happen on another parcel in East Norwalk, especially as to what is proposed in the plan. There was also a discussion about the apartment buildings on West Avenue and the Norden campus. It was noted that the kind of gridlock that had been expected for other projects around the city had not materialized. There was a further discussion about high density areas in the city.

There was a discussion about flyers passed around the city which showed pictures of buildings which would not be allowed under the plan and whether these flyers were still being passed out.

The commissioners decided to move this application forward to a public hearing in August.

## IV. DISCUSSION OF OTHER ITEMS

### A. 50 Washington Street park

There was a discussion about the construction of the park as compared to the plans that the Planning Commission had seen. There was a concern about the design changing and that the Planning Commission had not seen those changes. It was lacking from what had been proposed.

Brian Bidolli, the Director of the Redevelopment Agency, began the presentation with an introduction of the project team. He noted that the budget was actually lower than originally thought. Eric Rains continued the presentation by explaining the changes to the plans which had been sent to Mr. Kleppin. There was also a discussion about the brickways and crosswalks. Ms. Valadares said that there would be more construction during the winter.

There was a discussion about instituting a process for when projects like this large one could come back to the Planning Commission. Mr. Kleppin noted that his department did not have much oversight but he would look further into this. There was then a discussion about the completion of the project. Mr. Rains said it was almost ready to turn it over to the city. There was also a discussion about the street lighting. There was a suggestion of having design guidelines. There was a discussion about seeing the final budget, as a courtesy. There was also a discussion about when the fountain would be turned on, but there are problems due to COVID-19.

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### B. Capital Budget schedule

Mr. Kleppin began a discussion about changes to the Planning Commission schedule. The special appropriations committee asked whether the Planning Commission could move their meeting to before the 3rd Tuesday of the month in 2021. It was suggested that it be changed to a 1st or 2nd Wednesday of the month. Mr. Kleppin would send the commissioners the proposed dates to check their calendars.

Mr. Kleppin discussed the POCD amendments. He discussed various dates in August for additional dates. Some proposed dates are August 3, August 5 and August 11. Everyone agreed on August 5 as the first date for a public hearing on the TOD plan. There was then a discussion about how long the presentation should be so that the public would understand what the TOD plan is about it. There was then a discussion about how long the meeting should last. Mr. Kleppin suggested August 11 for the 2nd hearing and then to cancel their August 18 meeting. The commissioners agreed to these dates.

### C. Industrial Zones Study update

Mr. Kleppin said that the contract had been signed and that he had a meeting with the consultant, who is ready to begin. Ms. Langalis would be the Planning Commission representative on this committee to begin the process.

## V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: June 16, 2020

Ms. DiMeglio noted that she had not reviewed the minutes so the commissioners decided to wait until the next meeting to approve them so she could review it.

## VI. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR

There were no comments from the director.

## VII. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

Ms. DiMeglio noted that there was an application for 93 Winfield Street. Mr. Kleppin said she could speak about it since it was not going to be referred to the Planning Commission. She asked the commissioners to look at it and let her know their thoughts. She was not happy. She also said that she had looked at the Norden property which also has an application for it. There was further discussion about the East Avenue TOD plan and whether the 93 Winfield Street application would be affected by it. There was also a discussion about the space on the Norden property and the truck traffic which would be coming in and out of the property.

There was a discussion about an application in Westport that did not go through. Mr. Kleppin said that there would be appeals on it.

## VIII. ADJOURNMENT

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**Ms. Langalis made a Motion to Adjourn.**
**Mr. Ferguson seconded.**
**Fran DiMeglio; Brian Baxendale; Mike Mushak; Tammy Langalis; Mary Peniston; Steven Ferguson; Tamara Shockley approved.**
**No one opposed.**
**No one abstained.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero