

**CITY OF NORWALK  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
June 9, 2021**

**PRESENT:** Fran DiMeglio, Chair; Tamara Shockley; Tammy Langalis; Brian Baxendale; Steve Ferguson

**STAFF:** Bryan Baker

**OTHERS:** Anthony Carr; Atty Liz Suchy; Manny Silva; Alan Lo; Lisa Yates; Phil Katz;

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. DiMeglio called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Mr. Baker called the roll. It should be noted that this meeting was held on Zoom.com with all participants calling in, separately. Ms. DiMeglio noted that she would make a few changes to the agenda.

**III. DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION ON APPLICATIONS**

**A. Special Appropriation – DPW – West Rocks Soccer Complex Drainage Improvements – Report & recommended action**

Anthony Carr said that he was happy to make a presentation but Ms. DiMeglio said it was not necessary since the paperwork explained the matter. There were no questions or comments from the commissioners.

**\*\* MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED: BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning Commission that Special Appropriation – DPW – West Rocks Soccer Drainage Improvements 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 “Enhance recreational programming to serve the changing needs of all types of households and individuals” (Chapter 7: Enhancing Open Space, Park, Trail & Recreation Systems); and
2. To “Implement the facilities improvement plan over time- support sustained maintenance and renovation of all schools” (Chapter 5: A Community Committed to Life-Long Education); and
3. To “Continue to update, modernize and maintain Norwalk’s infrastructure and city facilities” (Chapter 11: Public Facilities, Infrastructure and Services).

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

**Ms. Langalis seconded.**

**Fran DiMeglio; Tamara Shockley; Tammy Langalis; Mary Peniston; Brian Baxendale; Steve Ferguson approved.**

**No one opposed.**

**No one abstained.**

**B. Subdivision #3655 – A 1Z7 LLC & Bouton Development LLC – 174, 176 and 176 ½  
Bouton Street – Five (5) lot subdivision – Preliminary review**

Atty Suchy began the presentation for the applicant by explaining that the subdivisions comply with zoning requirements. She also explained that sidewalks and curbs as well as street trees would be installed. She explained the size and frontage of the lots. She also showed the commissioners the subdivision map. The application has been submitted to various city agencies for sign offs but were still waiting for some. The sewer line would be extended. Atty Suchy said that she did not know what the market rates for the single family homes would be. Neighbors were noted about this subdivision application prior to this meeting.

Manny Silva, the civil engineer on the project, continued the presentation by describing the storm water management system. He oriented the commissioners as to the location of the property on an aerial map. There would be individual stormwater controls for each lot. He also explained the soil erosion controls for the property. He described the landscaping plan. There was a discussion about whether the lots could be combined back and used for multi-family residences. Atty Suchy noted that in this B Residential Zone only allows single family homes.

At this point, there was a discussion about the date for the public hearing which would be on July 14, 2021.

**C. Zoning Commission Referral - #2021-16 R – Workforce Partners, LLC – 132 Flax Hill Road – Proposed text amendment to eliminate required area for historic preservation eligibility in the D Residence Zone**

This item had been taken off the agenda earlier that day and would be on the Planning Commission agenda on July 14, 2021.

**D. 8-24 Referral - #06-21 – Building Management - 12 Knowalot Lane – Construction of new Cranbury Elementary School – Report & recommended action**

Alan Lo began the presentation by noting that the whole project team was available for the presentation. He gave a brief history of the application and then oriented the commissioners as to the location of the property on an aerial map. He noted that much of the property is wetlands. He then discussed the project schedule and would open in September of 2023.

Lisa Yates noted that the project was in design. She then showed them the site plan and noted that it only showed the buildable area since it is a large site. The building would be all new. It is larger than the current building. She explained the new dropoff loop as well as the baseball field which could be used for soccer. She also

Phil Katz, the civil engineer on the project, continued the presentation by explaining that the site is not served by the city's sewer system. It has its own septic system and said that it is in good shape. The state had looked at and said the same.

Ms. Yates continued with a view of the floor plans of the new school. She explained the security system before going into the school. There would be a civic wing which would work for programming before going into the classroom areas. She then showed them the classrooms on both the first and second floors. She also explained that the building would be well-insulated and air conditioned. She showed them renderings of the outside of the building. There would be large windows in the cafeteria which would bring "the outside in." She described some of the materials that would be used on the outside of the building.

There was a discussion of some of the windows being used and whether they could be opened. It was suggested to have them be able to open in case there is ever a power outage. There would be solar panels on the roof. It was noted that children would not remain in school if there is a power outage. Mr. Lo explained that fresh air was taken in through the mechanicals. He further explained how energy efficiency and that it is a longer discussion.

There was a discussion of emergency exits in the building. It was noted that they discuss which doors would have entry capability. There was also a discussion about the solar panels which would be a power purchase agreement. It would not be a part of this project but would be completed. The system would not be purchased. He explained that there are programs that they can take advantage of. There was also a discussion about having a generator. Ms. Yates noted that there would be a backup generator for the sprinkler system. There was a discussion about the security system and how it protected the children in an emergency. There was also a further discussion about fresh air coming into the building if the windows could not be opened. There were suggestions for other types of windows.

There was a discussion about the financing of the project as well as the contingency fund. It seemed there were cost overruns and delays in the construction. Ms. Yates noted that they expect to find hazardous materials in the current building so this is one reason for the contingency funds. There was a discussion about having updates to the Planning and Zoning Commission for these large projects. Mr. Lo said that he could return to the Planning Commission to discuss the funding process with them.

**\*\* MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED: BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning Commission that 8-24 Referral #06-2021 – Building Management – 12 Knowalot Lane – Construction of new Cranbury Elementary School 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. That "The Norwalk public school system is the most successful city school system in Connecticut, with students exceeding state average achievement and high-need students having the smallest achievement gap" (Chapter 5: A Community Committed to Life-Long Education); and
2. That "The Modern Schools for a Growing City plan provides new and renovated schools to alleviate overcrowding and better serve students" (Chapter 5: A Community Committed to Life-Long Education); and

3. To “Continue to support the NPS Strategic Plan to improve system performance” (Chapter 5: A Community Committed to Life-Long Education).

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

**Mr. Baxendale seconded.**

**Fran DiMeglio; Tamara Shockley; Tammy Langalis; Mary Peniston; Brian Baxendale; Steve Ferguson approved.**

**No one opposed.**

**No one abstained.**

#### **IV. DISCUSSION ON OTHER ITEMS**

##### **A. Housing Bill 6107**

Ms. DiMeglio explained that on recent bills passed by the state legislature, there were some items the city could opt out of. She asked the commissioners to discuss the accessory apartment regulations. She suggested adopting the regulations that had been set forth on the state level. It was explained that Norwalk’s regulations could not go further than those set forth on the state level. Ms. DiMeglio said the state’s regulations were more flexible than the city’s regulations with some tweaking by the Zoning Commission. Mr. Baker shared a memo that he had provided to Ms. DiMeglio to be sent to the chairperson of the Zoning Commission. Ms. Shockley asked for more written information. Mr. Baker said that he had sent a comparison of the state’s law to the city’s regulations to the commissioners which he then screenshared. He also noted that Norwalk’s regulations were more liberal than other surrounding towns. Mr. Baker noted that the state regulations were a minimum.

There was a further discussion about Norwalk’s current accessory apartment regulations and what the new state regulations required. Ms. DiMeglio explained that the memo to the Zoning Commission was to ask them to start a process of reviewing the accessory unit regulations because it would be good for Norwalk. There was a discussion as to whether there were other items in the bill that should also be priorities. Ms. Peniston thought it was a good idea to send this to the Zoning Commission. Ms. Shockley said she had many questions about why accessory apartments were a higher issue than other items in the state regulations. She had concerns about affordability. Ms. Langalis noted that these accessory apartments could later change neighborhoods because they will be rented later on. Mr. Ferguson said that he agreed with other commissioners and that he would like the commissioners to work with the Zoning Commission.

There was also a discussion about the possible merger of the Planning and Zoning Commission. Ms. DiMeglio did not know what that would look like, however.

At this point, Ms. DiMeglio asked if the commissioners could vote on reaching out to the Zoning Commission with the memo that Ms. DiMeglio had set forth.

**\*\* MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED** to send a memo requesting the Zoning Commission to adopt the state's accessory apartment regulations into Norwalk's regulations.

**Ms. Langalis seconded.**

**Fran DiMeglio; Tammy Langalis; Mary Peniston; Brian Baxendale; Steve Ferguson approved.**

**No one opposed.**

**Tamara Shockley abstained.**

**V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: May 12, 2021**

It was decided to move these minutes to the next Planning Commission meeting as Mr. Baxendale had some questions about comments Mr. Kleppin had made at the last meeting regarding the East Norwalk TOD area.

**VI. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR**

Mr. Baker said there were no comments.

**VII. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS**

Ms. DiMeglio again noted that the ordinance committee of the Common Council would be reviewing language in the next week for merging the Planning and Zoning Commissions.

Ms. Shockley said that she had listened to the recording of the Zoning Commission meeting on May 19, 2021 where they talked about the Planning Commission and how they did not operate in a collegial manner. She said that she did not agree with those comments and that the Planning Commissioners were respectful to each other's opinions. Mr. Ferguson agreed with Ms. Shockley's comments. It was also noted that there was a comment about getting rid of "dead wood" on the Planning Commission. Ms. DiMeglio said she was shocked with Mr. Schulman's remarks and would have a conversation with Mr. Kleppin. She thanked Ms. Shockley for her comments.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Ferguson made a Motion to Adjourn.**

**Mr. Baxendale seconded.**

**Fran DiMeglio; Tamara Shockley; Mary Peniston; Tammy Langalis; Brian Baxendale; Steve Ferguson approved.**

**No one opposed.**

**No one abstained.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero