

**CITY OF NORWALK  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
May 12, 2021**

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

**STAFF:** Steve Kleppin; Bryan Baker

**OTHERS:** Alexis Cherichetti; Tammy Maldonado; Bryan Baker; Laura Kenny; John Hayducky; Greg Pacelli; Krystyna Hernandez; Patsy Brescia; John Wasilewski; Jasmine Peele; Atty Darin Callahan; Carly Kramer

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. DiMeglio called the meeting to order at 6:03 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.

Mr. Kleppin introduced the staff of the Planning and Zoning Department which had been restructured in 2020. He showed them the organizational chart for the department. Included on the call were the Assistant Director: Alexis Cherichetti, Tammy Maldonado, the Zoning Enforcement Officer, Bryan Baker, Laura Kenny: the City Planner, John Hayducky: Deputy Zoning Inspector; Greg Pacelli: Transportation Planning, which position is shared with Transportation, Mobility and Parking; and Krystyna Hernandez. There were several staff members that were unable to attend the meeting due to conflicts including Josh Parito and Michelle Andrzejewski as well as two temporary staff members.

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

**A. #04-2021 - 8-24 Referral – Historical Commission – Lockwood Mathews Mansion Museum renovations – Report & recommended action**

Patsy Brescia, chairperson of the Lockwood Mathews Mansion, began the presentation. She noted that she knew many of the commissioners and has been on the board of the museum for over 20 years. She discussed the Master Plan for restoration of the mansion and gave a brief history of the plan. She also explained what projects had been completed.

Ms. Brescia then explained the current project for upgrading mechanicals which was out to bid and start construction next year. The mansion would have to close for 2 years. Although they have not found all the funding for these upgrades, they were still continuing to plan. She also noted that with the upgrades to mechanicals it would allow the building to be used for programming year round.

John Wasilewski shared the plans which included the upgrades to electrical, mechanicals, plumbing, etc. He explained that there would be various uses for the renovated mansion. He also explained the uses for the basement and noted that there is a bowling alley in it which could one day be a

part of the tour. He discussed the archival spaces. He then described the first floor and showed them which rooms would still be used on the tours. There would also be upgrades to the kitchen. He then described the second floor which some spaces would be staff and executive offices. He then described the exterior which would include upgrades to the air conditioning as well as the terrace. He noted that they would like to keep equipment away from the building so as not to change the character of the building. He showed them on an aerial map where it could be located.

There was a discussion about whether there would be an increase in occupancy. Ms. Brescia noted that the Mansion was on the National Historic Register but could not be used for parties. She noted the types of events that could be held in the museum. There was a discussion about how electricity comes into the building. There was a discussion about keeping the shades open to allow people to look inside. However, the light causes damage to the building inside. There were some suggestions on how to change that but they are complying with federal and state standards. There was a discussion about how the mansion could help grow tourism in the city. There was a discussion about whether the air conditioning and trash containers would be hidden. There was a discussion about where the staff works in the building at the moment. There was then a discussion about the timeline for construction. There was also a discussion about improving the marketing of the mansion to tourists including products to sell in the gift shop.

**\*\* MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED: BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning Commission that 8-24 Referral #04-21 - Historical Commission – Lockwood Mathews Mansion Museum renovations 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 “Norwalk protects its most important historic resources and encourages adaptive reuse of historic sites to maintain and enrich the city’s character” (Chapter 6: Preserving & Promoting Our Historic Heritage, Arts & Culture); and
2. To “Continue the successful maintenance and management of city-owned historic properties” (Chapter 6: Preserving & Promoting Our Historic Heritage, Arts & Culture); and

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

**Mr. Mushak seconded.**

**Fran DiMeglio; Tamara Shockley; Tammy Langalis; Mike Mushak; Brian Baxendale; Steve Ferguson approved.**

**No one opposed.**

**No one abstained.**

At this point of the meeting, Jasmine Peele introduced herself to the commissioners. She would be working with the public at the front counter.

**B. #05-2021 – 8-24 Referral – Redevelopment Agency – 40 Cross Street – Easement agreement for Norwalk River Valley Trail/Harbor Loop – Report & recommended action**

Atty Darin Callahan noted that this application was to continue the trail at 40 Cross Street. The property owner allowed the city to expand their easement rights so that the trail could be increased to 6 ft.

Carly Kramer continued by explaining how the trail would be widened for more active uses, including biking. She showed them the piece of the trail that would be built on a map.

**\*\* MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED: BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning Commission that 8-24 Referral #05-2021 – 8-24 Referral – Redevelopment Agency – 40 Cross Street – Easement agreement for Norwalk River Valley Trail/Harbor Loop 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 “Norwalk aims to have the best city park and recreation system in Connecticut” (Chapter 7: Enhancing Open Space, Park, Trail & Recreation Systems); and
2. That “Norwalk’s recreation system and programs serve residents throughout the city while protecting and managing natural resources” (Chapter 7: Enhancing Open Space, Park, Trail & Recreation Systems); and
3. To “Give priority to completion of the Norwalk River Valley Trail” (Chapter 7: Enhancing Open Space, Park, Trail & Recreation Systems)

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

**Mr. Baxendale seconded.**

**Fran DiMeglio; Tamara Shockley; Tammy Langalis; Mike Mushak; Brian Baxendale; Steve Ferguson approved.**

**No one opposed.**

**No one abstained.**

Atty Callahan noted that more private property owners are seeing this as adding value to their property. There was also a discussion about the difficulties of adding pieces to the trail.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: January 13, 2021; January 19, 2021; January 26, 2021; January 27, 2021; February 3, 2021; February 16, 2021; March 10, 2021; April 14, 2021**

**\*\*\* MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED** to accept the **January 13, 2021** Planning Commission minutes.

**Mr. Mushak seconded.**

**Fran DiMeglio; Tamara Shockley; Mike Mushak; Brian Baxendale; Steve Ferguson approved.**

**No one opposed.**

**Tammy Langalis abstained.**

**\*\*\* MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED** to accept the **January 19, 2021** Planning Commission minutes.

**Mr. Baxendale seconded.**

**Fran DiMeglio; Tamara Shockley; Tammy Langalis; Mike Mushak; Brian Baxendale approved.**

**No one opposed.**

**Steve Ferguson abstained.**

**\*\*\* MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED** to accept the **January 26, 2021** Planning Commission minutes.  
**Mr. Baxendale seconded.**  
**Fran DiMeglio; Tamara Shockley; Tammy Langalis; Mike Mushak; Brian Baxendale; Steve Ferguson approved.**  
**No one opposed.**  
**No one abstained.**

**\*\*\* MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED** to accept the **January 27, 2021** Planning Commission minutes.  
**Mr. Mushak seconded.**  
**Fran DiMeglio; Tamara Shockley; Tammy Langalis; Mike Mushak; Brian Baxendale; Steve Ferguson approved.**  
**No one opposed.**  
**No one abstained.**

**\*\*\* MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED** to accept the **February 3, 2021** Planning Commission minutes.  
**Mr. Baxendale seconded.**  
**Fran DiMeglio; Tamara Shockley; Tammy Langalis; Mike Mushak; Brian Baxendale; Steve Ferguson approved.**  
**No one opposed.**  
**No one abstained.**

**\*\*\* MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED** to accept the **February 16, 2021** Planning Commission minutes.  
**Mr. Mushak seconded.**  
**Fran DiMeglio; Tamara Shockley; Tammy Langalis; Mike Mushak; Brian Baxendale; Steve Ferguson approved.**  
**No one opposed.**  
**No one abstained.**

At this point, there was a discussion about the March 10, 2021 Planning Commission minutes. Mr. Ferguson believed that his comments had not been put in the minutes accurately with regards to the photos used in the application on 3 Wall Street. However, he did not want to edit the minutes, although Ms. DiMeglio gave him the opportunity to do so. He also hoped that in the future staff will review images used in applications since this was his concern. Before Ms. DiMeglio put forth the minutes for approval, she asked Mr. Ferguson again if he wanted to make changes to the minutes but he declined. He felt that the commissioner's remarks should be in the minutes as stated.

**\*\*\* MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED** to accept the **March 10, 2021** Planning Commission minutes.  
**Mr. Baxendale seconded.**  
**Fran DiMeglio; Tamara Shockley; Tammy Langalis; Mike Mushak; Brian Baxendale; Steve Ferguson approved.**  
**No one opposed.**  
**No one abstained.**

**\*\*\* MS. DIMEGLIO** to accept the **April 14, 2021** Planning Commission minutes.

**Mr. Ferguson seconded.**

**Fran DiMeglio; Tamara Shockley; Tammy Langalis; Mike Mushak; Brian Baxendale; Steve Ferguson approved.**

**No one opposed.**

**No one abstained.**

## **V. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR**

There was a discussion about increasing the fee for workforce housing and whether there were other towns that had these fees as well. Mr. Kleppin said he had discussed the fee with some developers. There were concerns about the process and how it could affect these developers. He noted that the Zoning Commission passed the resolution as proposed with the increase in the fee. There was a discussion about where the monies were. Mr. Kleppin said there was a separate fund from the General Fund.

The Industrial Zones Study held a public meeting which was held on Zoom. The consultants are drafting a report. It would go back to the committee for comment and review and then go out for public comments. It would also have to be included in the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) which would be reviewed by the Planning Commission.

There was a discussion about proposed zoning bills in Hartford. Mr. Kleppin noted that some of these bills had items that had some issues. He was working with Senator Duff's office.

## **VI. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS**

Ms. Shockley had a question about the due process of proposed regulations. She had concerns that Mr. Kleppin was a part of the entire process and there was no other oversight. Mr. Kleppin explained that there were referrals to the Planning and Zoning Commissions and that one did not have to be a resident of the City to make an amendment. He did not think there were conflicts and explained that he was an agent of both the Planning and Zoning Commissions. He explained the process of implementing amendments and working under the POCD. Ms. Shockley was concerned about procedural due process. She also noted that she would like to hear the pros and cons of proposed Zoning regulations. Ms. DiMeglio explained how she saw Mr. Kleppin's role as the Director of Planning and Zoning. Ms. Shockley said she thinks that they should hear both sides to make a decision. Mr. Kleppin explained the role of the Planning Commission which was to review proposed zoning regulations and how they would affect the POCD. At a public hearing, the Zoning Commissioners would hear both sides from the public and then ultimately they would make the final decision, not Mr. Kleppin. Ms. Shockley was concerned about having one person have control of the entire process.

Mr. Baxendale had questions about whether the accessory dwelling units are permitted throughout Norwalk at this time. Mr. Kleppin said they are legal in the single family residence zones. He noted that they were not allowed in the East Norwalk TOD zone.

Ms. Shockley asked if she, as a commissioner, could ask for a legal opinion from Corporation Counsel but Ms. DiMeglio did not think so. She also addressed Ms. Shockley's previous issues with Mr. Kleppin as being a conflict of interest. Ms. Shockley noted it was procedural due process. Ms. DiMeglio did not think that individual commissioners could request opinions, only as a group of commissioners. Ms.

Shockley still requested the legal opinion of Corporation Counsel on the administrative procedural due process of zoning amendments by the Director of Planning and Zoning.

Ms. DiMeglio said that the Ordinance Committee of the Common Council is considering combining the Planning and Zoning Commissions. She said that the process has begun.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

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

**Mr. Baxendale seconded.**

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

**No one opposed.**

**No one abstained.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero