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CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMISSION
April 21, 2020

PRESENT: Nora King, acting as Chair; Mary Peniston; Steven Ferguson; Brian Baxendale; Mike Mushak; Tammy Langalis

STAFF: Steve Kleppin; Bryan Baker

OTHERS: Alan Lo

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. King called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Kleppin called the roll.

III. DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION

a) 8-24 Referral — Building Management — Sale of two small surplus properties on Bouton Street — Report & recommended action

Mr. Kleppin introduced Mr. Lo, who began the presentation by orienting the commissioners as to the location of 3 properties on Bouton St. Mr. Lo noted how the city acquired two of them. The city had tried to sell them in the 1990s but they did not sell. The city would like to sell them now.

There was a discussion about what the sale price would be as well as why they were being sold and who would be purchasing them. There was also a discussion about why a purchaser would like them since they abut Brien McMahon High School. It seemed that the owner of the other property would like to put them together and build residential units on it. There was a discussion about open space and whether the city should keep them. There was also a discussion of the zoning on Bouton St. There were concerns about the current use of the properties which students were using to cut through to get to the high school. There was also a discussion about whether the price was too low. There was a discussion about whether the properties should be developed to give the city tax revenue. Mr. Lo said that the properties had been advertised for sale in the 1990s as well as last November. Now they have an interested buyer. There was also a further discussion about whether students are using the property as a path to the high school. Some commissioners thought it would help the city with tax revenue and others did not agree with that.

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Mr. Kleppin reminded the commissioners that they were tasked with trying to determine if the sale was consistent with the Plan of Conservation and Development ("POCD"). There was also a discussion about revisiting the sale price for the property. Mr. Lo said that the application may have to go back to the Land Use Committee of the Common Council. There was a discussion about the land swap at Nathan Hale which could affect an application at the state level.

***** MS. KING MOVED: BE IT RESOLVED** by the Norwalk Planning Commission in accordance with Section 8-24 of the Connecticut General Statutes, the referral made by the City's Building Management Department for the sale of two small properties on Bouton Street be **APPROVED** subject to the following reasons:

1. To implement the 2019-2029 Plan of Conservation and Development goal to "maintain the predominantly single-family character of established single-family neighborhoods" (Chapter 4: Housing Choice and Healthy Lifestyles); and

2. To implement the 2019-2029 Plan of Conservation and Development goal to "support housing policies that provide housing for Norwalk's households across a range of preferences and household incomes" (Chapter 4: Housing Choice and Healthy Lifestyles)

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

Mr. Baxendale seconded.
Nora King; Mary Peniston; Steven Ferguson; Brian Baxendale; Mike Mushak approved.
No one opposed.
Tammy Langalis abstained.

b) Zoning Commission referral - #1-20R — Proposed amendments to establish a 12 month moratorium on certain uses in I#1 zone including building material and storage yards, contractor's storage yards and single and two family dwellings - Report & recommended action

Mr. Kleppin began the presentation by discussing the language that had been drafted and shown to the commissioners. There would be a moratorium for storage yards, contractor's storage yards and single and two family dwellings. He noted that there would be an Industrial Zones Study Report, which he would discuss further, later in the meeting.

There was a discussion about any pending applications which could be affected. Mr. Baker noted that there were 2 pending applications for contractor's storage yards. Mr. Kleppin said that one of them was for a special permit and had been in the pipeline for a while. They would be exempt since the applications had been submitted. There was a concern about any negative impacts the moratorium could have in the area.

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There was a discussion about the Industrial Zones Study Report. Mr. Kleppin said that the money was already in the budget. There was a discussion as to whether the Planning Commission could be a part of the process. There was also a discussion about how different properties could be affected. There was a history of contractor’s yards in Norwalk over the last 50 years.

***** MS. KING MOVED: BE IT RESOLVED** that #1-20R – Zoning Commission – Proposed amendments to the Building Zone Regulations to establish a 12 month moratorium on certain uses in Industrial #1 zone including building material and storage yards, contractor’s storage yards and single and two family dwellings, dated February 6, 2020, be **APPROVED**.
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the reasons for this action are to implement the Plan of Conservation and Development:

1. Chapter 3, Goal 2A.iii - *Study industrial zoning and update zoning and land use regulations to allow and encourage a wider set of uses in targeted industrial zones, focused on market opportunities in warehouse/logistics, brewing/distilling, artist/artisan uses, and other light industrial uses that do not have detrimental externalities on nearby areas*; and
2. Chapter 12, Goal 3A.ii - *Prepare a study to evaluate the industrial zoning districts against modern industrial requirements, market demand, future trends, and economic development goals. Create refined performance standards and update the use table (e.g., allow by-right warehouse and wholesale distribution facilities, boutique manufacturing, clean industry, etc.).*
3. Chapter 12, Page 239 - *No heavy industry or residential uses. Contractor yards for processing erodible material should be limited and held to strict performance standards if permitted.*

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that notice of this action be forwarded to the Norwalk Zoning Commission.

Ms. King read the resolution into the record.

Mr. Ferguson seconded.
Nora King; Mary Peniston; Steven Ferguson; Brian Baxendale; Mike Mushak; Tammy Langalis approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

IV. DISCUSSION OF OTHER ITEMS

a) Industrial Zones Study Report

There was a discussion about allowing contractors yards in Norwalk. Anything that is to be decided on a planning perspective should be to expand business opportunities, especially for contractors. Norwalk residents will always need these types of businesses. It would be detrimental to send them to Bridgeport. Norwalk should expand these opportunities

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and allow contractor’s yards and should be a part of the study. There should be accommodations for them in the city’s plans.

There was a discussion about modifying the definitions in the zoning regulations especially since some have a greater impact on a neighborhood than others. There were concerns about debris from some of the contractor’s yards while other yards are cleaner and look nicer.

The commissioners asked for updates as this study continued. Ms. Langalis would be on the committee and keep the Planning Commission apprised. Mr. Kleppin said that they had picked a consultant and would probably start work at the end of May.

b) East Norwalk TOD plan presentation

Mr. Kleppin began the presentation by showing a Power Point presentation to the commissioners which he had sent to them. He noted that this was a bigger picture update. The committee had received a draft and would review it for comments. It would be referenced in the POCD for changes in East Norwalk. He explained what was the main core of the plan. He also discussed the village district design standards and public realm requirements. The study would recommend residential units over commercial properties. There was also a discussion about commercial growth in the next few years, which could include bringing manufacturing back to the United States. Mr. Kleppin discussed road improvements around Gregory Street and re-zoning parcels around the cemetery. There was also a discussion about having 2 way traffic in this area which was thought to slow down the high speed that happens.

Mr. Kleppin then discussed the housing stock in the area and suggested having a façade improvement program there. It would help to keep the area affordable. Another point in the study was to move the DPW garage but they were not sure where it could move to. There was a discussion about changing some Neighborhood Business properties to C zone properties. It would make some of them non-conforming. He also discussed the Liberty Square area and the Cove area which could be changed to village districts to help protect them. He also noted that there could be a promenade area to connect South Norwalk and East Norwalk. They could work with the Parks and Recreation Department for that change.

There was a further discussion about the village districts and the Gregory Boulevard area which should be included in the study. It is dangerous near the gas stations because the driveways are so wide. The sidewalks are not wide enough. It was suggested that some of the gas stations should be transplanted to Martin Luther King Boulevard.

Mr. Kleppin noted the requirements for the village districts, including zoning. He noted what incentives had been suggested. He also noted the land use recommendations. He then discussed design guidelines from other towns In the Northeast which the group had liked. He said that there had been analysis about having the height on East Avenue at 3.5 stories.

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There was a concern about the lack of street activation at Waypointe. The commissioners did not want that to happen in East Norwalk. There was a discussion about street parking in the area.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: December 10, 2019; December 11, 2019; January 28, 2020; January 29, 2020; February 5, 2020; February 18, 2020 (Special & Regular Meeting)

***** MS. KING MOVED** to accept the **December 10, 2019** Planning Commission minutes.
Mr. Baxendale seconded.
Nora King; Mary Peniston; Steven Ferguson; Brian Baxendale; Mike Mushak; Tammy Langalis approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

***** MS. KING MOVED** to accept the **December 11, 2019** Joint Planning and Zoning Commission minutes.
Ms. Langalis seconded.
Nora King; Mary Peniston; Brian Baxendale; Mike Mushak; Tammy Langalis approved.
No one opposed.
Steven Ferguson abstained.

***** MS. KING MOVED** to accept the **January 29, 2020** Planning Commission minutes.
Ms. Langalis seconded.
Nora King; Mary Peniston; Steven Ferguson; Brian Baxendale; Mike Mushak; Tammy Langalis approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

***** MS. KING MOVED** to accept the **January 28, 2020** Special Meeting of the Planning Commission minutes.
Ms. Langalis seconded.
Nora King; Steven Ferguson; Brian Baxendale; Mike Mushak; Tammy Langalis approved.
No one opposed.
Mary Peniston abstained.

***** MS. KING MOVED** to accept the **January 28, 2020** Planning Commission minutes.
Mr. Ferguson seconded.
Nora King; Mary Peniston; Steven Ferguson; Brian Baxendale; Mike Mushak; Tammy Langalis approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

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***** MS. KING MOVED** to accept the **February 5, 2020** Planning Commission minutes.
Mr. Mushak seconded.
Nora King; Mary Peniston; Mike Mushak; approved.
No one opposed.
Tammy Langalis, **Steven Ferguson, Brian Baxendale abstained.**

***** MS. KING MOVED** to accept the **February 18, 2020** Planning Commission minutes.
Mr. Baxendale seconded.
Nora King; Steven Ferguson; Brian Baxendale; Mike Mushak; Tammy Langalis approved.
No one opposed.
Mary Peniston abstained.

VI. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR

There were no comments from the Director.

VII. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

There were no comments from the commissioners.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Ferguson made a Motion to Adjourn.
Ms. Langalis seconded.
Nora King; Mary Peniston; Steven Ferguson; Brian Baxendale; Mike Mushak; Tammy Langalis approved.
No one opposed.
No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero