

CITY OF NORWALK

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MINUTES

July 15, 2026

PRESENT: Chapin Bryce, Chair; Louis Schulman; John Hubers; Harvey Jones; Tammy Langalis; Diana Lenkowsky; Galen Wells; Ana Tabachneck; Doug Hempstead; Jacquen Jordan-Byron (arrived at 6:10 pm)

ABSENT: Nick Kantor

STAFF: Steve Kleppin; Bryan Baker

OTHERS: Atty Liz Suchy; Doug Adams; Daniel Sundlin; Gena Wirth; Jessica Vonashek; Michael Beattie; Amanda LaRosa; Mike Mushak; Danielle DeVito; Teresa Peterson; Mark Smith; Jan Schaefer; Matt Silber; Eric Dyes; Heather Dunn; Paul Fox; Beverly Krieger; Ken Krieger; Peter Lorelli; David Lindsey; Kevin Hobson; Tom Naiman; Doug Michaelman; Mark Watkins; Erica Hutchings; Laurie Mira; Alexandra Kimball; Laura Budd; Joann Smith-Dietz; Mary Lou Barber; Kimmie Krieger; Ben Turner; Katie Handsel; David McCarthy; Brendan Hutchings; Doug Stowe; Katya Kapasi

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Bryce called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. It should be noted that this meeting was held on Zoom.com with participants calling in, separately, as well as in the Community Room, 125 East Avenue, Norwalk, CT.

II. ROLL CALL & SEATING OF ALTERNATES

Mr. Baker called the roll and noted that there was a quorum. Mr. Bryce seated all of the alternates for this meeting.

III. REVIEW AND ACTION ON APPLICATIONS

A. #2026-41 R/M/SP - Manresa Osprey LLC - Longshore Avenue and 0 and 3 Manresa Island (District 5, Block 86, Lots 1 and 2) - Zoning regulation and map amendment to create the Special District - Manresa Wilds (SD-MW) zoning district and special permit application for a Development Park Master Plan - Public hearing

DISCUSSION

Mr. Bryce opened the public hearing and explained how it would continue from the previous meeting. He also explained that there would be a short break and that the meeting would adjourn at 10 pm. He said they had received written comments and would continue to do so. Staff would respond and pass them along to the commission and the applicant, as well as post them online. He said that the public could continue to send comments until the next meeting on July 29, 2026.

Atty Liz Suchy, the attorney for the applicant, continued the presentation with an introduction of the owners of the property as well as those on the project team. She also noted what had changed since the previous public hearing on June 22, 2026.

Doug Adams continued the presentation by addressing the commissioners' questions from the previous meeting.

Daniel Sundlin also addressed questions from the previous meeting which included what would happen if the existing power plant was demolished which could have an effect on the construction timeline.

Gena Wirth addressed the questions about the elevation of the island. They would address everyday and extreme flooding events by developing a layered approach. They recommended lifting the infrastructure out of the flood plain. There was also a discussion about the habitat and safe swimming areas, as well as whether the pier would be removed. Ms. Werth said that it would be rebuilt to allow ferries but also public access. They were attempting to reduce vehicles on site.

Mr. Adams said that a project timeline had been submitted. The northern forest has begun construction. He also discussed other phases.

Jessica Vonashek discussed the public feedback that they had received and addressed those issues, which included remediation, noise and light pollution and traffic. They would continue to receive public feedback. She explained how they were monitoring the site daily for ongoing remediation and future cleanup planning. They are legally required to meet the standards of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). She also discussed the birch forest, the flooding and providing a safe water system for wildlife. She discussed the funding for the remediation which would be a large part of the budget for this project. She then discussed how they would mitigate the noise and light pollution with buffers. She also described the amount of green space there would be at the site. She noted that there is a large distance between the active use areas and residential properties.

Michael Beattie, AKRF, the traffic engineer on the project, continued the presentation with a discussion about the traffic impact study and how it was done, the comments from city agencies, off-site improvements and event programming. He also discussed parking plans and the additional requests that had been made to the applicant.

Ms. Vonashek said that they understand the public's concern about traffic which is about managing traffic day to day. She said that a neighborhood traffic problem would also be a Manresa Wilds problem. She discussed a couple of options for managing day to day options. She said that they were speaking with the Sono Collection and Metro-North to use their parking spaces, as well as the Norwalk Transit System. There is a bus stop for the North Forest already. She said that they would like to get people to Norwalk and then get them to other stops including the Aquarium, as well as Manresa Wilds. She discussed how employees would park off-site and come to the site with a shuttle/bus. She also discussed the tools being used to manage the parking. They are committed to following the city's recommended process.

Atty Suchy explained the approval requirement definitions. Mr. Adams then discussed the district uses, by phase and type. He noted that in Phase 1 in 2027 what was already permitted. He then discussed Phase 2 from 2027 - 2031 which included permitted, permitted with limitations and special permit

uses. In Phase 3 from 2032- 2035, he again discussed the permitted uses, permitted with limitations and special use permit, and included commercial boat dock, marina and boat terminal as some of the permitted uses. Phase 4 does not have a current timeline but would start after 2032. A research and development facility would do work on site. A small auditorium for educational and civic uses was proposed as well. This phase could also include an additional restaurant and commercial recreation. He noted that some of the uses were not in the master plan, but could be special permit applications so that the commission and public would have an opportunity to discuss them. He said they were proposing surface parking.

There was a discussion about the application for a master plan and whether the commission could change what was permitted uses, permitted with limitations and those with a special use permit.

Ms. Vonashek noted that in 1950 many people wanted a park. She said that many people today did not want single family housing on the site. This project is for the city and that they would not take public funding.

At this point, Amanda LaRosa of Creighton Manning discussed the peer review of the applicant's traffic study. She said they were expecting a more robust traffic study from the applicant later. She then asked the commissioners for their questions. There was a discussion about what the applicant would study based on comments from the city's Transit, Mobility and Parking Department (TMP) and Planning & Zoning staff, including intersections, traffic generation and peak times. Ms. LaRosa said she had asked for additional information for the grand opening. There was also a discussion about vehicles driving into the private communities near Woodward Avenue. Suggestions were made about other parking lots that could be used in a traffic study as reference to the applicant's parking. There was a discussion about the limitation of parking and how that would affect demand for parking. There was a discussion about whether there were parking studies for Calf Pasture Beach, Taylor Farm and the Aquarium.

_____ Young, for the city's Traffic, Mobility and Parking department noted that the city should receive other traffic studies during each phase of the project. He said that the department would have to review the options for private vehicle entry.

There was a discussion about the use table and uses that were missing from it now. Mr. Adams said that they were accessory uses. There was a discussion about lighting at the shore and whether the parking lot was pervious or not. There was also a discussion about the civic space requirements.

There was a discussion about limiting parking and whether vehicles would then be parked in the surrounding residential areas. Ms. Vonashek said that they would work with TMP to determine what was their responsibility and what was the city's as well as coming up with a plan of working together. Ms. Vonashek said that there would be a roundabout at their site for turnarounds of buses.

There was a discussion about a study of Cranbury Park since it was in a neighborhood and there were events held there. There was also a discussion about an exemption from workforce housing requirements.

At this point, Mr. Bryce said that the commission would recess until 7:50 pm. When they returned to the meeting, he explained the process of how the public comment portion of the meeting would work. He also mentioned that residents could submit comments. He reiterated that the meeting would end at 10 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mike Mushak, 50 Elmwood Avenue, said that he had been on the Planning & Zoning Commission until 2023. He thanked the commission for the approval of the North Forest phase of Manresa Wilds. However, he did not believe that what was being proposed in this application was what many people wanted, a quiet, passive recreation area. He said that Phase 4 was nothing like the public had wanted. He discussed the traffic study and that the peer review consultant had presented a generic study. He noted that several of the exits of I-95 were not identified on the traffic study. He said that he had submitted photos to the Planning and Zoning Department and explained them to the commission. He had concerns about flood locations and noted that there were many items that the public was concerned with. He also discussed heating and cooling costs if they kept the power plant building. He also had concerns about raising the elevation and how that would be paid for. He said that he had helped write the Plan of Conservation

and Development which was for Norwalk residents. He said that Manresa Island was to be developed for those residents, not the region. He did not think it was in keeping with Norwalk regulations. He was not in support of the application. He then made suggestions for changes to it. He noted that none of the revenue was coming to Norwalk and would go to the applicant to pay for their infrastructure.

Danielle DeVito, 23 Bird Avenue, had concerns about the access to the property and the number of vehicles causing pollution as well as the effects on the health to the local pollution

Teresa Peterson, 32 Dock Road, had concerns about the special permit and the traffic coming to the site with the larger spaces on the property. She also had concerns about the parking for residents in the area.

Mark Smith, 7 Outer Road, had concerns about the reserved parking and when it could fail. He also had concerns that this would become an amusement park. He asked the commissioners to deny the application.

Jan Schaefer, the president of the Manresa Association, which represented 6 neighborhoods in the area. She explained how the association began in 2013. She noted their main concerns with the special permit application including the hotel use, the two level parking.

Matt Silber, 230 East Avenue, said that he was supportive of Manresa Wilds but had some concern about the traffic and parking in the neighborhood.

Eric Dyes, 19 Oakfield Road, said that he was strongly in favor of the project. He has gone to the public meetings for the neighborhoods.

Heather Dunn, 117 Perry Avenue, spoke in favor of the project. She was a Norwalk educator who wanted to see more kids get outside and off their screens. She believed it would be a project that the city could be proud of. She was a member of the city's Sustainability and Resiliency Task Force. She asked that the South Norwalk Resiliency Study be added to the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). She also asked that the South Norwalk Rail Trail be linked to the Norwalk River Valley Trail, as a way to get to Manresa Wilds.

Paul Fox, 11 Hanford Place, said that he supported the application. He thought that there were concerns about traffic and parking in the area but they could be addressed. He noted that there currently is bus service from the South Norwalk Train Station. People should be encouraged to use the alternatives, such as bicycling to the island.

Beverly Krieger, 9 Seabreeze Place, said that she had concerns that this property was held by a private company which could later be sold with all of the permits in place. She had concerns about the number of guests that could be at the property. She also had concerns about the benefits to the residents of the city and whether their taxes would be spent. She asked the commission not to approve this project.

Ken Krieger, 9 Seabreeze Place, noted that it was a quiet area but that would change with increased traffic. He had concerns about signal lights and widening the road.

Peter Lorelli, 1 Morningside Place, said that he supported the cleanup and restoration of Manresa Island but was concerned about the expanded uses, especially in connection with traffic. He made some suggestions as to how to reduce traffic.

David Lindsey, 10 Outer Road, had concerns that this was not a project for the residents of Norwalk, but rather, for the region. He would like to see it scaled back to a park. He said that there should be no parking on site which would be paired with residential parking regulations.

Kevin Hobson, 9 Outer Road, said that it should be denied because it did not meet the regulations. He explained how the regulations were not being met. He had concerns about the wildlife and flooding. He did not think it was a public project since the land had not been donated to the city, so the residents could decide what to do with it. He believed this was a private project.

Tom Naiman, VP for Education at the Maritime Aquarium, spoke in support of the application. He said there was excitement among teachers in the area who see potential in the project.

Doug Michaelman, 102 Old Saugatuck, spoke in support of the application. He believed it was a gift to the city. He knew there would be traffic issues.

Mark Watkins, 20 North Taylor Avenue, spoke in support of the special permit application. He read from a newspaper article from 1937.

Erica Hutchings, 68 Quintard Avenue, had concerns about the project especially in light of recent work being done in the area which was affecting Quintard Avenue. She believed the entire neighborhood would be impacted.

Laurie Mira, 25 Split Rock Road, spoke on behalf of the Norwalk River Watershed Association. She asked for an independent environmental impact assessment. They had concerns about the effects on water quality and wildlife.

Alexandra Kimball, 41 Harborview Avenue, said that they were excited about the project at first, but had concerns about the hotel. She described the area which had narrow roads. She also wondered how they could make the roads bigger to get buses through.

Laura Budd, 10 Oliver Street, spoke in support of the idea of Manresa Wild but had concerns about the project.

Joann Smith-Dietz, 64 Quintard Avenue, asked them to postpone their vote. She had hoped this would have been a wildlife preserve.

Mary Lou Barber, 6 Naramake Avenue, said that they should work together especially since the road is narrow. She did not think they could expand it. She wanted to see access to the shorefront.

Kimmie Krieger, 3 McAllister Avenue, spoke in support of the application. She hoped that there would be activities for teens in the evening. She said that she understood the concerns about the traffic.

Ben Turner, 3 Rialto Road, spoke in support of the application with some reservations about the special district. He said he believed that it was a regional attraction.

Katie Handsel, 4 Morningside Place, said that she was speaking as a resident as well as a member of the Harborview board. She had concerns about the uses being requested including the hotel. There were items that had not originally been in the Master Plan.

David McCarthy, 35 Fox Run Road, said that he supported the application, but had concerns about the zone change and text amendment. He also had concerns about the traffic report. He suggested prioritizing Norwalk residents' access to Manresa Wilds. He also had concerns about the height of the building without a site plan review.

Brendan Hutchings, 68 Quintard Avenue, had concerns about infrastructure improvements. He asked for a pause until they had more information.

Doug Stowe, Westmere Avenue, spoke on behalf of the Belle Island Improvement Association. He said that the association had submitted comments for the record but that his remarks, on their behalf, focused on the legal framework that will govern Manresa Wilds.

Katya Kapasi, 51 Neptune Avenue, said that she was concerned that a data center could be placed on the site. She asked if there could be no further power generation, including data centers, from the site.

The public comment portion ended at 9:45 pm. It would resume on July 29, 2026. Written testimony could be submitted before the next meeting.

IV. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting: July 1, 2026

**** MR. JONES MOVED to approve the July 1, 2026 minutes.**

Mr. Schulman seconded.

Chapin Bryce; Louis Schulman; John Hubers; Harvey Jones; Tammy Langalis; Diana Lenkowsky; Galen Wells; Ana Tabachneck; Doug Hempstead approved.

No one opposed.

Jacquen Jordan-Byron abstained.

V. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR

DISCUSSION

There were no comments from Mr. Kleppin.

VI. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

DISCUSSION

Mr. Bryce explained that the Planning & Zoning Commission minutes would revert back to the previous format beginning with this meeting and going forward.

There was a discussion about how the commission would move the process for this application forward. Mr. Kleppin reminded them to not discuss anything further than that.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Jones made a Motion to Adjourn.

Ms. Langalis seconded.

Chapin Bryce; Louis Schulman; John Hubers; Harvey Jones; Tammy Langalis; Diana Lenkowsky; Galen Wells; Ana Tabachneck; Doug Hempstead; Jacquen Jordan-Byron approved.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:48 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero