

INDUSTRIAL ZONES COMMITTEE ACTIONS

APRIL 21, 2005

ATTENDANCE: Walter Briggs, Chairman; Kathy Shea; Bob Keyes; Tom Failla; Paul Littell; Paul Kuehner; Mayor Alex Knopp.

STAFF: Michael Greene, Director of Planning & Zoning; Dori Wilson.

OTHERS: Beth Chappell; Betsey Selkowitz; Tom Devine; David Genovese; Tom O'Leary.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:45 a.m. by the Chairman.

REVIEW OF REPORTS PROVIDED BY INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY OWNERS

Mr. Greene reviewed the Industrial 1 zone and uses allowed as of right, site plan review or special permit.

Mayor Knopp asked if it was true that houses were not allowed in Industrial 1 and offices not accessory were not allowed in restricted; Mr. Greene responded affirmatively.

Mr. Greene said that the zones that allow manufacturing are spread throughout the city, but these are zones that only allow industrial. He then reviewed the types of review that take place and the time period for each review.

Mr. Greene said when housing is allowed in an industrial zone, they will lose any chance of getting industrial uses and there will be complaints from residents. Development parks warrant special consideration.

Mayor Knopp said this task force should not put its economic eggs in the basket of other industrial uses coming into the City.

Mayor Knopp asked about expanding restricted industrial uses as of right for an office that is not accessory to manufacturing. Mr. Greene said that is making sense because, for example, R&D and office uses are starting to work together.

Mr. Genovese inquired about service businesses. Mr. Greene said definition is the issue. There is a difference between a contractor's yard and a contractor's office.

Mr. Littell asked, aside from residential, what problems other suggested uses present. Mr. Greene said one question is whether you want to set up competition between uses.

Discussion took place on the Perkin Elmer site.

Mr. Littell asked if restricted industrial makes sense any more; Mr. Greene said it does, to some extent. He suggested restricted industrial with compatible uses, but not completely opening the door.

Mayor Knopp asked the zoning of the old NCC site on Wilson Avenue and Mr. Greene said it is Industrial 1. Mayor Knopp asked what kind of uses would be attractive for this site. Mr. Greene said some ideas are small scale manufacturing and the large building converted to an office or used for housing. That, however, would conflict with Industrial I, which does not allow housing. The Chairman said if they put housing in, they would want to encourage affordable housing. He asked if they could write an amendment that would require affordable housing; Mr. Greene said they could.

Mayor Knopp said for many years in cities like Norwalk, harbors were considered to be industrial waste disposal sites. He did not have a problem with saying that the west side of the river allows housing, given that the historical uses of this property are long gone.

Mr. Littell said they want to address losing special permit uses to other towns. Mr. Greene said they never thought of the idea of addressing “commercial recreation” zones.

Mr. Failla said standards of practice have changed, and he asked how to accommodate that in zoning regulations. Mr. Greene said they have to be flexible in terms of zone changes.

Mayor Knopp said they have to realize that it is no accident that some of the less attractive business that serve suburban needs end up being located in Norwalk, as does big box retail. They have to consider how much many of these unattractive uses they want to site in Norwalk.

Tom O’Leary asked about buying more open space. Mayor Knopp said Norwalk has a severe backlog of unmet infrastructure needs, and they have decided to focus their funds on schools, roads, etc. They don’t set aside huge amounts of money for open space.

At 9:35 a.m., Mr. Failla left the meeting.

Mayor Knopp said that unattractive, high impact uses are not allowed by surrounding communities. They are concentrated in Norwalk. He said he is not in favor of allowing businesses such as Fed Ex or UPS out of their zones. That is a policy choice, not a regulatory issue.

Mr. O’Leary said traffic is always going to be a challenge in Norwalk, no matter what. The river is important to the development of residential properties. Mayor Knopp said

that the siting of his company and the asphalt company across the river is the result of the transportation issue. Mr. O'Leary asked if the properties built along the river will be as valuable if they cannot be used because of the failure of the Army Corps to dredge the river. He said they should monitor the types of buildings that are constructed along the river.

Mr. Littell asked if there was a way to limit the percentage of residential usage. Mr. Greene said every property within a zone has to be created the same way. Mr. Littell asked if there could be micro zones. Mr. Greene said it could be done but zoning was not set up that way. He noted that spot zoning is illegal and this could be considered spot zoning.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: DEC 2004 & JAN, FEB & MARCH 2005

** MAYOR KNOPP MOVED TO APPROVE THE MEETINGS OF THE DECEMBER 2004, JANUARY 2005, FEBRUARY 2005 AND MARCH 2005 MEETINGS AS DISTRIBUTED.

** MR. KEYES SECONDED.

** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Littell brought up process issues. The Chairman said they would become more specific and put together a report for the Planning Commission for the Master Plan of Development. Mayor Knopp said at the next meeting, they should have a set of questions, issues and conclusions put together by himself, staff and the Chairman. This report outline will be circulated to members prior to the next meeting.

Ms. Chappell asked about the completion date. Mayor Knopp said that their target is to have this completed by June.

Mayor Knopp said municipalities are authorized to conduct economic development projects and eminent domain. One of the concerns of the Redevelopment Agency is that there is a trend in the courts against eminent domain for private projects. The City has more flexibility through the Urban Renewal Plan. This is different from the Master Plan, which is the city's master plan of land use.

SET FUTURE MEETING DATE

The next meeting will take place at the end of May.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Telesco
Telesco Secretarial Services

