



**CITY OF NORWALK  
PLANNING COMMISSION &  
POCD OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE  
August 14, 2017**

**AGENDA**

- I. CALL TO ORDER**
- II. INTRODUCTIONS AND COMMITTEE MEMBER PLAN ASPIRATIONS**
- III. POCD PURPOSE, IMPORTANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION IMPACTS**
- IV. STRUCTURE OF PLANNING PROCESS**
- V. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS**
- VI. STANTEC INITIAL THOUGHTS ON NORWALK**
- VII. SCHEDULE/NEXT STEPS**
- VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**PRESENT - PLANNING:** Frances Dimeglio, Chair; Tammy Langalis, David Davidson and Brian Baxendale

**PRESENT - OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE:** Mayor Rilling, Anthony Mobilia, Geoff Steadman, Diane Cece, Nancy Rosett, Allen Kolkowitz, John Igeneri, Diane Lauricella, Tami Strauss, Tom Closter, Tod Bryant, Eloise King, Steve Kleppin, Michael Wrinn, Alexis Cherichetti, Elizabeth Stocker, Erik Anderson, Brian Griffin

**Consultants Present:** Larissa Brown and Phil Schaeffing from Stantec and Dan Hodge from Hodge Economic Consulting

**The meeting was opened at 6:30 p.m.**

Mr. Kleppin called the meeting to order and provided an overview of the process to date and the rationale for combining the oversight committee previously established by the Mayor and the Planning Commission for purposes of guiding the POCD process.

**II. INTRODUCTIONS AND COMMITTEE MEMBER PLAN ASPIRATIONS**

Mr. Kleppin opened the meeting and provided a brief background on the process up to this point and the purpose of the night's meeting. He asked members to introduce themselves and provide a 1-2 sentence statement on why they were interested in participating and what they hoped to get out of the Plan.

Committee members each expressed their plans aspirations and goals and their reasons for participating. Many hoped the plan would provide a clear roadmap and vision for the community based on broad participation and outreach. There was also consensus that we need to plan forward and have clear goals.

### **III. POCD PURPOSE, IMPORTANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION IMPACTS and IV. STRUCTURE OF PLANNING PROCESS**

Ms. Brown provided an explanation of the process going forward. She indicated that they were currently in the data and information gathering process. She also explained that since the contract took a little while longer to sign than expected that the calendar was 5-6 weeks behind and stated that if we wanted to have a message or survey out for the Oyster Festival or other events we needed to act quickly. The next step after data gathering was to establish a vision and vision statement which leads to goals related to the vision and actions based on those goals.

Mr. Kulkowitz asked about the regional context of the Study.

Mr. Hodge responded that they are still determining how Norwalk fits into the broader region and will come up with recommendations on how that can better function in the future.

Ms. Cece asked whether the Plan would be referred to WestCog.

Mr. Kleppin indicated that the final plan must be referred to WestCog statutorily.

Mayor Rilling commented that Norwalk is part of a larger region and those bounds should be reviewed as part of this effort.

Mr. Anderson asked about whether the data they would gather at the Oyster Festival would be from residents or non-residents.

Ms. Brown indicated that both were valuable and perhaps there could be a mobile app ready.

Ms. Lauricella commented that as part of a planning effort she participated in Bridgeport that they conducted a "sim city" type exercise that was very useful.

## V. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Mr. Kleppin provided a summary of the planned outreach related to the city's planning efforts. He stated that in addition to the Manresa study the city was simultaneously conducting three (3) redevelopment plan updates as well as about to begin a city-wide parking study. He indicated that in speaking with Ms. Strauss they were concerned about meeting fatigue, duplication of effort by the different consultants and the fear of each study being conducted in a silo. In response to that they started looking at this as an opportunity to conduct a joint planning outreach effort to be coordinated between, Planning and Zoning, the Redevelopment Agency and the Parking Authority.

Ms. DiMeglio asked for further information on who participated in the formation of the direction to coordinate the planning outreach.

Mr. Kleppin replied that as the thinking developed, Kathy Hebert from the Parking Authority, Sabrina Church from the Redevelopment Agency and Laoise King developed a framework based on "Imagine Boston" that would provide a single platform to disseminate information related to these studies and hopefully future planning efforts in the City. Three companies were contacted and The Snyder Group was chosen to not only develop a planning web page but to serve as the social media coordinator and steer the outreach to be as effective and singular as possible.

Mr. Kleppin added the funds utilized for The Snyder Group were coming from existing funds within the Parking Authority and the Redevelopment Agency, so no additional fund were being requested. This allows the various consultants to spend less time and money on outreach and focus more on the studies.

Mr. Kulkowitz indicated that he was concerned that the plans were disparate and that there should be a presentation to the group on the other plans since the POCD is the umbrella document.

Ms. Strauss indicated that was the intent and that we were looking to avoid silos and ensure that all three studies and each consultant team was utilizing the same data. She further explained that it was much more than a web site that it would be a web-based platform that linked to social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and would contain blogs, surveys, a timeline as well as a calendar.

Mr. Kleppin discussed the Norwalk Tomorrow logo and indicated there some small tweaks needed to comply with the city's branding standard. He further indicated that numerous alternatives were provided by Stantec but that discussions between staff assigned to the three studies, the consultants for the study's and the Snyder Group that "Norwalk Tomorrow with the sun serving in the space occupied by the city dome was attractive and distinct from the city logo but was clearly connected to the city.

Mr. Kleppin indicated that the joint outreach had already begun with the tenant meeting which was held at Waypointe on July 25.

Ms. Strauss commented that they had nearly 40 participants that reside in Waypointe. The group was comprised of millennials and empty nesters from nearby communities drawn to an urban lifestyle, with many choosing the location based on employment and price. They shared a general liking to the development of the area but expressed concern about empty commercial space, the lack of a grocery store but overall, liked the direction the development was taking.

Mr. Kulkowitz indicated that the city could make its presence known at the Oyster Festival and make it “fun”.

Mayor Rilling indicated that gathering information what people outside of Norwalk think about the City can provide valuable insight, even if there is a 1-word reply.

Ms. Cece felt that it would be important to gather data from Norwalk residents at locations such as at the concerts on the green or beach.

## **VI. STANTEC INITIAL THOUGHTS ON NORWALK**

Ms. Brown indicated that there are a lot of plans but questioned how well they are integrated and felt that the POCD can coordinate them. During her interviews, she heard that decisions seemed ad-hoc or reactionary.

The POCD should guide how to make strategic choices regarding education and schools, neighborhoods, values and economic development.

Ms. King commented that utilizing demographic and enrollment projections would be important.

Mr. Anderson stated that the Board of Education has recent data and there is some overlap with this effort.

Mr. Hodge commented that for a small/mid-sized city that Norwalk has a lot of assets, solid population growth, considering the rest of the state and a good amount of development occurring. He further commented that there is a very high educational level and fairly high median income, a strong industrial and employment base, good access to mass-transit, but maybe some inter-connectivity issues within the city. They’ll be looking at where future business growth should be targeted and whether there may be pressure on the industrial zones. He will also be looking at economic opportunities for Norwalk residents such as entrepreneur and business start-ups.

## **VII. SCHEDULE/NEXT STEPS**

Mr. Kleppin and Ms. Brown discussed next steps for the group, with a target for a follow-up meeting date in October, toward the beginning to set up for a community visioning exercise in early November. This would also be coordinated with the other consultants.

Ms. Cece recommended building momentum now and work on getting the message out as soon as possible.

Mayor Rilling thanked the group and stated that he felt it was a diverse group of individuals with thoughtful ideas and requested that they reach out to their networks.

**The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by,

Steve Kleppin