

**DRAFT  
CITY OF NORWALK  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
January 16, 2018**

**PRESENT:** Fran DiMeglio; David Davidson; Brian Baxendale; Tammy Langalis;  
Steven Ferguson; Mike Mushak; Nora King (arrived late)

**STAFF:** Steven Kleppin; Mike Wrinn

**OTHERS:** Alan Lo; Atty Liz Suchy; Clayton Fowler; Seelen Pather

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. DiMeglio called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Mr. Kleppin called the roll.

**III. DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION**

- a) 8-24 Review – Building and Facilities Manager on behalf of the Board of Education and Recreation – Construction of two new tennis courts in Springwood Ely Park (Acct. #s CO321, C0364, C0585)

Ms. DiMeglio opened the item. Mr. Wrinn began the presentation by orienting the commissioners as to the location of the property on an aerial map. Mr. Lo continued the presentation by explaining the background of the project. He explained how the project would be funded. He also said that that the project was funded from the Capital Budget in the previous year. He showed them where the tennis courts would be placed. He then explained where the funds would be coming from after he told them what the bids were. He also explained what programs were running at these courts. There was a discussion about the access to this park as well as the parking. There was also a discussion about the restrictions on access to it. There was a discussion as to monies being used from the school projects in that area. There was a discussion as to the difference in the quotes from the bids. He noted that the project should be done by October of this year. There was a discussion about the utilities and facilities that are available on the property. Mr. Lo explained that there were several options which would include bathrooms. Mr. Mushak said that they should keep large boulders on the property instead of spending money to remove them. The boulders could be used for the site renovations for the school projects. Mr. Lo explained that there was a time frame to move the project forward quickly.

**\*\*\* MS. DIMEGLIO 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 Buildings and Facilities Manager on behalf of the Board of Education and Recreation & Parks – Construction of two new tennis courts in Springwood Ely Park be **APPROVED** with the following comments:

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the reasons for this action are:

1. To implement the Plan of Conservation and Development goal to "Protect property values." (A.1.1.5. p.10); and
2. To implement the Plan of Conservation and Development goal to "Provide and maintain an attractive open space system for the enjoyment of all residents. (C.1.3. p. 24); and
3. To implement the Plan of Conservation and Development goal to "Allow for the future needs of Norwalk to be met as identified in this plan (i.e. housing, economic growth, community facilities, etc.)." (F.1.1.6. p. 42); and

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

**Mr. Ferguson seconded.**

**Fran DiMeglio; David Davidson; Brian Baxendale; Tammy Langalis; Steven Ferguson; Mike Mushak; Nora King**

**No one opposed.**

**No one abstained.**

- b) Zoning Commission referral - #11-17R - 230 East Avenue, LLC – Proposed amendments to Section 118-700 to permit transit oriented development (TOD) in the Industrial No. 1 zone at the East Norwalk Railroad Station – Report and recommended action

Ms. DiMeglio opened the item. Mr. Kleppin opened the presentation by explaining that they had received a state grant to do a Transit Oriented Development study. However, this application had been received. He also explained that there were neighbors that suggested that the study be done first and then the commissioners review the application. He also noted that no action would be required at this meeting by the Planning Commissioners. Mr. Kleppin explained there was a recommendation to get help from planning consultants and a traffic consultant which would be done. The Zoning Commission would hold a public hearing on March 1.

Atty Suchy continued the presentation by introducing the project team and then went over the project. She gave a background of the property which had been called a hat factory at one point. She then described what is currently on the property which included parking and the Pooch Hotel. She explained that the hat factory building would be converted into residential, office, retail and restaurant uses. She explained the text amendment which would be necessary to allow this project to move forward. She also understood that there was a grant for a TOD study in this area but that the applicant was very eager to move forward on this project. There was a discussion about the parking and traffic currently in the area and concerns about how the parking would work. Ms. DiMeglio noted that all of the commissioners should ask whatever questions they wanted in order to be clear about the project. Atty Suchy did explain that their traffic consultant, Mike Galanty, was in touch with the state Department of Transportation (“DOT”) especially with relation to projects that were happening in this area as well as other areas of Norwalk.

Clayton Fowler explained that he was in contact with the State about the Walk Bridge project. He also explained that he knew that there were 4 railroad tracks and 2 would be taken out at a time in order to complete the project. He did acknowledge that he wasn't completely sure about plans because construction would not happen for a few years. He also acknowledged that there was traffic in the area.

Seelen Pather Leed, of Beinfeld Architecture, the architect on the project, continued the presentation by explaining on the site plans what the applicant would be changing and what would not be changed. There was a discussion as to which buildings the applicant owned as well as which parking spaces were part of 230 East Avenue and which were not. Mr. Fowler said that they were working with the Station House to reach an amicable solution to parking and that it was an asset to the area. Mr. Leed explained the new parking garages that would be joined with the current one. There was a discussion about the parking for commuters. Mr. Leed explained what the buildings would look like inside which included commercial, because that was what worked best there. Mr. Fowler continued as well about what types of commercial would be there. They had had several meetings with neighbors. They explained that there are plans for a rooftop restaurant and they were seeking restaurateurs in the area. There were plans for a rooftop pool. There was a discussion about staging for the Walk Bridge which may affect the project. They had thought the project would be started sooner. Mr. Fowler hoped that these buildings would be used by people seeking work/live spaces. There was another discussion about parking and the counts. There was a discussion about the text amendment and the height of the building. Mr. Mushak suggested that the heights be lower than South Norwalk. He felt confident that a TOD study would recommend this project. He made reference to the Plan of Conservation and Development (“POCD”), a TOD study in 2012, and the Western Connecticut Economic Development Plan of December 2017. All recommended high density near train stations. Ms. DiMeglio asked that Mr. Kleppin send links to all the plans that Mr. Mushak referenced.

There was a discussion about the density and FAR for several projects around the city which have been completed and/or being constructed. Mr. Davidson noted that he had voted against the Highpointe project because of the density. Mr. Kleppin would have a table prepared that would be put on the city's website for the public to review. There was also a discussion about neighborhood meetings, green space and affordable housing. Ms. Langalis was concerned about the logistics of constructing their building with the construction of the new train tracks. Mr. Fowler and Atty Suchy explained how they were reaching out to the neighbors. There was a discussion about how long the construction would be. Mr. Fowler noted it could take 15 months. They would start it in first quarter of 2019. There was then a discussion of the time table for the POCD and the study for the East Avenue TOD. Mr. Kleppin explained that the TOD study could be completed by September 2019 and the POCD would be completed in late 2018.

There was a discussion about the courtyard and how it would be used. There was also a discussion about the number of various size units in the buildings. There was then a discussion about the property taxes that would be generated from these buildings once completed. Atty Suchy said that these multiple unit buildings do not have many children in them which would not affect the public schools. Mr. Mushak said that he had received numbers from Dori Wilson about how many children were approximately in these buildings. There were a few more kids than what the developers were showing. He then discussed research that he found from the Bureau of Land Statistics about how much money Norwalk could receive from the economic activity that the buildings could generate. He also noted that this area has not really thrived but that it may thrive now with an increase in density. Mr. Mushak asked whether the hat factory would be restored. Mr. Fowler said that they would make it look better than it currently looked.

Ms. DiMeglio noted that she would like to see more descriptive renderings which Mr. Leed said would be delivered the following day. There was a discussion about the materials to be used.

Mr. Kleppin said he liked the project because it was TOD at the train station. He asked the commissioners not to approve more than the applicant needed. He thought traffic was a problem but it was too early to discuss. He had concerns about the mix of residential and commercial. He also noted that the staff was welcoming outside help from consultants. Mr. Mushak noted the differences between having a factory in this space and the residential proposed. He felt that factory would cause more traffic than residential.

Mr. Leed discussed the available parking spaces, especially during the day. He said they were working with the Parking Authority on this, including the wait lists at the various train stations in the city. There was a suggestion to maximize the commuter parking at the train station. There was also a discussion about the affordable housing rate possibly going up to 20%. It was mentioned how developers had said they would

not build in Norwalk, if the affordable housing number increased to 20%. Ms. DiMeglio noted that this application would be on the Planning Commission's agenda in February.

#### **IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: November 14, 2017**

**\*\* MS. DIMEGLIO MOVED** to approve the Planning Commission minutes of November 14, 2017, as amended.

**Ms. King seconded.**

**Fran DiMeglio; David Davidson; Brian Baxendale; Tammy Langalis; Steven Ferguson; Mike Mushak; Nora King**

**No one opposed.**

**No one abstained.**

#### **V. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR**

a) Redevelopment Plan Updates – Wall Street, West Avenue, and Washington Street

Mr. Kleppin said he would email the draft of these plans soon. They would be on the agenda in February.

b) Citywide Plan (POCD) – Mr. Kleppin said that the neighborhood meetings were being scheduled, but that there had been difficulties. There are 9 neighborhood groups. He hopes to have them scheduled for February and March very soon. There would be another meeting on January 31. There was a discussion about the vision statement and whether it was ready. Ms. DiMeglio had asked Mr. Kleppin to let them know whether they were getting too far off schedule. Mr. Kleppin noted that since they had received a grant from the state for a TOD study, the mini TOD study of East Ave. would free up monies to do other things with.

c) East Avenue Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Grant – Part of the study would have been on a Wall St. train station but it was taken out because there were no plans to build one. There was a discussion about why this study was being pushed out to September. Mr. Kleppin explained that there are several studies being done now so that it would be hard to add another to the staff. It was suggested to add this to the POCD study as an addendum. The state had requested several things that they would like the city to have in the study. Mr. Kleppin explained that they would send out an RFP for this study. There was then a discussion about staffing issues in the Planning and Zoning Department. Mr. Mushak suggested that this study should be included in the new POCD. It would have to be amended later.

#### **VI. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS**

Mr. Davidson asked that the Department of Public Works rank their projects, overall for their whole department, not on a project basis, as had been done. He also asked that all departments be advised that all open appropriations for prior years would be questioned as to why the monies had not been spent. They would also be asked, during their department meetings with the Planning Commission, to have that information available. It would save time in reviewing their request.

There was a discussion about whether to ask Department of Public Works ("DPW") to provide the project ranking information as Mr. Davidson requested or whether it should remain the way it had been done. Ms. King and Ms. DiMeglio did not think it was relevant for DPW to do it as Mr. Davidson suggested. Mr. Davidson asked that the final Capital Budget for 2017-2018 also be in the Capital Budget book.

Ms. DiMeglio asked about information requested at the joint Planning and Zoning Commission in December. She said that she had asked Karen DelVecchio of the IT Department to add the weekly agendas of all commission meetings on the front page of the City's website. She also wanted to set up a review process with the Art Commission so that the Planning Commission would be informed of what they were doing around the city. She did not want to read about it in the newspaper. For the benefit of those commissioners who had never been through the Capital Budget process, she then discussed how it worked with the department heads. She told them to review the Capital Budget books and ask questions. There would be a public hearing for the Capital Budget on Wednesday, February 7. The last meeting for this would be on February 20 to review the overall budget, line by line.

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

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

**Ms. King seconded.**

**Fran DiMeglio; David Davidson; Brian Baxendale; Tammy Langalis;  
Steven Ferguson; Mike Mushak; Nora King**

**No one opposed.**

**No one abstained.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero