

CITY OF NORWALK
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
February 21, 2019

PRESENT: Frances DiMeglio, Chair; David Davidson; Mike Mushak; Tammy Langalis; Nora King; Mary Peniston; Steve Ferguson

STAFF: Steve Kleppin; Mike Wrinn

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. DiMeglio called the meeting to order at 12:17 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Kleppin called the roll.

III. DISCUSSION OF PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT (POCD)

a) Review/action on 2019 - 2029 POCD

Mr. Kleppin asked for a schedule. He suggested that they could end this at the Planning Commission meeting on March 19. They realized they would need further meetings which could be another daytime meeting as well as an evening meeting. He also suggested that they go over the commissioners' comments as well as the public's comments. He also noted that he, along with Ms. DiMeglio, had met with the Harbor Commission to discuss with their concerns and recommendations. They had not received these comments yet. There was a discussion about the concerns. Mr. Kleppin said that some were about state statues and their authority. There was a discussion about the Harbor Commission's jurisdiction and whether an application was in compliance. They are an advisory and not regulatory board.

Ms. DiMeglio asked Mr. Davidson to begin with comments but he wanted to make this remarks last.

Mr. Ferguson noted that he had been part of the previous Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) and that this was more in depth. He would have liked to have seen more about transportation. He noted that the median age had remained the same as the last. He wanted there to be more about weaknesses and not strengths. He focused on the transportation piece especially the TOD. He wanted more information on that in the POCD.

Ms. DiMeglio said that she had wanted everyone to go through the draft plan and make their comments. Ms. Langalis said that she noted that many of the comments that the public had made in the POCD, according to the Stantec. She was concerned that they might not be reflected in the POCD. Mr. Baxendale made a suggestion that they not nitpick. Ms. King thought that they should comment on the Executive Summary which most people would read. Ms. DiMeglio said that she wanted everyone to have comments. Mr. Davidson said that there were no true goals and the mechanism to get there. There were no criteria to reach those goals. The POCD seems aspirational. Mr. Mushak believed that the public thought the POCD would tell them exactly what had to be done but that it would not be able to do all of that. He thought planning should guide growth. Ms. Peniston thought that the Executive Summary should highlight what are the priorities and what are the benefits of growth. She also discussed

having periodic reviews of the plan and how can the public participate. At this point, Ms. DiMeglio noted that the POCD could not be everything to everyone. She didn't want it to have constraints. There were discussions about whether it should be specific or not and whether the draft did contain these specifics. Ms. King did not think that the Executive Summary was completely done. Mr. Kleppin thought that it was something that the public could read if they were moving to Norwalk to find out what the city's values and mission were. Mr. Mushak noted that Zoning applications now referenced the POCD and were reviewed by the Zoning Department staff.

Chapter 3, page 37 – Mr. Ferguson asked for it to reflect how the people that lived in Norwalk. He also noted that in South Norwalk there are no gas stations, supermarkets. He wondered how they could retain the minority population in this area and better serve them. It is highly dense and they have more needs rather than other areas in the city. Mr. Kleppin noted that Zoning regulations allowed some of this but that no one was doing it. Mr. Ferguson did not think that there were parcels in this area that would allow this because he had looked for them. Mr. Baxendale thought that there should be neighborhood plans to do this work. Mr. Ferguson thought that for people to prosper they had basic needs that should be addressed. There was a discussion about the Top Priorities for the Ten Year Plan which was in the Executive Summary. There was a discussion that there is not a focus on neighborhoods in the POCD. Mr. Kleppin did not agree with that. He said that there are recommendations in the POCD that he does follow but that focusing on neighborhoods would be too specific. There are TOD plans that would be prepared and would focus on the land issues in that area.

The commissioners then reviewed page 216 about walkability and bringing relevant businesses to the area. Mr. Wrinn suggested language for page 37 which could be added to the page (review 56:56) Mr. Kleppin suggested adding language on page 64-66 or 67, #2 Community Health. They also discussed adding it to page 217. There was a discussion about South Main St. zoning which included neighborhood business and residential. There was also a discussion about Washington Village and how there would be more people living there who would need basic services. Then there was a discussion of mixed use development. There was also a discussion about industrial zones and there were

Ms. DiMeglio did not believe that a specific reference to adding a gas station in the POCD was appropriate. A gas station had been talked about for 4-5 years. There was a discussion about Dr. Martin Luther King Drive and whether the zoning should be changed in this area. Mr. Mushak suggested the area should be re-zoned so that contractor's yards could be moved there and out of South Norwalk. Mr. Ferguson noted that people in the South Norwalk area run out of gas but people in other areas may not have that problem because gas stations were more numerous in those areas. There were discussions about the specifics of the plan.

Mr. Kleppin asked the commissioners to read Chapter 12, page 207. Ms. King noted that having too many restrictions could cause a town to become stagnant such as New Canaan. She also noted that Norwalk was being strategic and that would keep it vibrant. Norwalk's strengths are its neighborhoods, according to Ms. King. Ms. Peniston asked that there be criteria for driving decisions made by the city. There was a discussion about financial impact of projects on the city. There was also a discussion about gentrification.

Ms. DiMeglio then referred back to the Executive Summary and the Top Priorities for This Ten Year Plan. She made comments some items that should be removed including about the website. Mr. Kleppin suggested it being re-written that city government should be more consumer friendly. There were also suggestions about changing the Top Priorities bullet points about climate change and the education system. They thought some were too limiting. There

was also a discussion about The Big Picture paragraph on the Executive Summary. Then they reviewed the 10 Priority Concepts and Strategies for Quality of Life, Economic Prosperity and Sustainability. Ms. Peniston made suggestions about guiding principles to be added to it so that when the public wanted to read more they would go into the POCD. Ms. DiMeglio said she expected that the website should be organized, etc. so it should not be a priority on the Executive Summary.

Mr. Mushak noted that there were comments made at the public hearing which were already in the draft POCD. His minor change was to add a Complete Streets policy to be the Common Council. The chair of the Bike/Walks had requested this. It should be added to page 271. There was then a discussion about the bike lanes on Strawberry Hill. Ms. DiMeglio thought that the lanes on Strawberry Hill had shrunk. Mr. Mushak noted that these lanes were implemented by engineers. Ms. Peniston was asked to re-write the 10 Priority Concepts and Strategies for Quality of Life, Economic Prosperity and Sustainability.

There were comments on when the commissioners could work. It was suggested to meet between 10-12. The commissioner agreed to meet on March 6 at 10-12 but Mr. Davidson would check his calendar.

IV. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR

There were no comments from the Director.

V. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

There were no comments from the commissioners.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Mushak made a Motion to Adjourn.

Ms. King seconded.

Frances DiMeglio; David Davidson; Mike Mushak; Tammy Langalis; Steve Ferguson;

Nora King; Mary Peniston voted in favor.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero