

**MINUTES**  
**COMMISSION ON THE CITY PLAN**  
**Tuesday May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016-7:00 P.M.**  
**23 UNION STREET NORWICH CONNECTICUT**  
**LOWER LEVEL MEETING ROOM**  
**REGULAR MEETING**

**AGENDA ITEMS A, B & C-CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, DETERMINATION OF QUORUM:**

Art Sharron, Vice-Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

**Commission Members Present:** Art Sharron, Michael Lahan, Frank Manfredi, Les King, Kathy Warzecha and Swarnjit Singh Bhatia. A quorum was present.

**Absent:** Dan Daniska

**Also Present:** Don Poland, Consulting City Planner and Debra Delaporta, recording secretary

**D. APPROVAL OF April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016 Regular Meeting minutes**

Art Sharron made a motion to accept the minutes from April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016\*, noting a correction to the agenda that read April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Kathy Warzecha made a motion to accept the minutes, Swarnjit Singh Bhatia seconded the motion, with all members in favor.

**E: COMMUNICATIONS:** Recommendations from City Engineer Pat McLaughlin and Consulting City Planner Don Poland for **SDP #1034**

Vice-Chairman Art Sharron stated that Pat McLaughlin was not present, but Don Poland was and asked Mr. Poland if he would like to discuss his recommendations for **SDP #1034**. Mr. Poland said his recommendations would be addressed during the presentation of the plan. Michael Lahan made a motion to accept the communications, seconded by Frank Manfredi. All members were in favor.

**F: PUBLIC HEARINGS: None**

**G: OLD BUSINESS: None**

**H: NEW BUSINESS:**

**SDP #1034-27**, 51 & 59 Norwich Ave-Demolition of existing building and construction of an 8320 sq. ft. retail building with 42 parking spaces, loading zone and associated utilities.

Art Sharron stated that while the application was submitted with 42 parking spaces, it had been changed to 36. Mr. Sharron asked Don Poland if he would like to comment at this time. Consultant Don Poland began by saying that he initially reviewed Wetlands Plan #16-01, and then rechecked it against the zoning regulations and felt that the revised plan submitted addressed all of his concerns, except for the buffer reduction request, which would be discussed during the presentation. Art Sharron asked if there was a spokesperson for the project, at which time the meeting was turned over to Attorney Bill Sweeney, representing the applicant Norwich NE Development LLC, an affiliate of NE Retail Leasing and Management Co. Mr. Sweeney introduced Mike Sarasin, principal member of Northeast Retail and Ben Wheeler, project engineer with Design Professionals.

Bill Sweeney stated the company has submitted a Site Development Plan to construct an 8320 sq. ft. retail building with associated parking along Norwich Avenue in the Taftville area of Norwich. The site is owned by the Guarnaccia family, who will retain a multi-family residence to the south of the site, and the existing BC Auto repair facility will be demolished and the vacant lot next to it will be consolidated for construction of the project. The parcel is located across from Starrwood Market in an area of older commercial and residential properties, many in poor, sub-standard condition. Mr. Sweeney then proceeded to hand out pictures of the proposed site and surrounding area to Commission members. He stated that this area has seen very little development in the past several years, the last being XTRA Mart, which was many years ago. The area has long been targeted for redevelopment and new businesses, and earlier in the spring the City Council approved a zone change to make the entire parcel one zone, instead of a split zone that had existed prior. The Wetlands Commission also reviewed and approved the project May 5, 2016.

Mr. Sweeney explained the company is very eager to begin construction on the 2 acre parcel which would be owned by his clients and leased by Family Dollar. This store will be the second store located in Norwich, and Mr. Sweeney gave a brief overview of the company which was accompanied by a handout describing the store, its products and the typical layout. Bill Sweeney explained all stores are company owned, and typically employ 10-12 employees. He stated that under the new zoning regulations adopted last fall, the building fell under the 10,000 sq. ft. requirement that required CCP approval, but they needed the approval of the Commission because there were more than 21 parking spaces needed to service the retail building, which then triggers site plan review. Mr. Sweeney stated his clients were there for Site Plan review only, not Special Permit, so therefore a public hearing was not required and if the Site Plan meets CCP requirements, his clients would be entitled to an approval.

Bill Sweeney explained his the client had met or exceeded the minimum requirements for the GC zone, and that they were asking for a reduction in the landscape buffer, which he pointed out on the revised plan. He showed where the zone change had been approved by the City Council, and at this time Don Poland asked for a correction on the final plans, because the zoning line was incorrect on the revised plan that was being referred to by Mr. Sweeney. It was stated by Mr. Sweeney that a 50 ft. landscape buffer was required where a commercial zone meets a residential zone, and the back loading dock area did not meet the buffer requirement. Kathy Warzecha stated that upon review of the plans in the Planning Department, she felt there needed to be clarification of the zone change line. Bill Sweeney addressed this issue, pointing out the actual zone change lines, explaining that there was also going to be a lot line adjustment to go along with the change and that the multi-family house would not be part of the development.

Kathy Warzecha also asked about the streets alongside and behind the subject property. Referring to the photos presented, Mr. Sweeney explained the existing vegetation was being retained, and due to the elevation of the property in relation to the area being discussed, the reduction of the 50 ft. buffer would be acceptable because the development would be up above both Kent St and Yorkshire St and the buffer would be supplemented with 6 ft. high arborvitaes.

At this point, Ben Wheeler, licensed landscape architect/project engineer with Design Professionals presented the Site Plan. Mr. Wheeler stated the zone line will be corrected on the final plans when submitted, and went on to say that the building meets all zoning setbacks and that while 34 spaces were required, the plan calls for 36, with a 26 ft. wide drive aisle in all locations. He explained there would be two islands with pole lighting, planted with perennials and low growing evergreens to meet landscaping requirements, along with the same in the front of the building which requires an 8 ft. landscaping buffer. There would be one controlled in and out access location, helping with traffic control and a proposed 5 ft. wide sidewalk and curbing along the entire front of the property. The loading zone will be located on the south side of the property, and Family Dollar stores usually get one delivery a week. A concrete dumpster pad would be installed at the south end of the loading area, surrounded by a fence and arborvitaes.

Mr. Wheeler explained the storm drainage system, and how the water flow would be handled. The new building will be connected to the public sewer system. All utility services run along Norwich Avenue, and will run underground to the building. He explain the lighting and signage, and the adjustments to the lighting made based on suggestions by Don Poland. Ben Wheeler gave an explanation of the building type and description, which is made of a fiber cement material, with the back loading dock side made out of metal, which is not visible to the public. Kathy Warzecha then asked questions about improving the façade of the building, and perhaps adding more windows. Mr. Wheeler addressed these questions, stating the building design is standard to Family Dollar, and more windows in the front would interfere with the store layout. Ms. Warzecha asked about additional tree plantings, and Mr. Wheeler stated they could add a few to the front of the store, but that trees would interfere on the islands where the light poles are, and additional trees also could interfere with the sight line of a leased bill board at the end of the property, but agreed with Bill Sweeney that flowering shrubs could be added to the landscaping. Swarnjit Singh Bhatia asked about lighting at the entrance, and Mr. Wheeler stated there was existing street lighting which would help with this issue. Mr. Sweeney stated the City of Norwich has no design review standards, and that his client would be willing to address some of the concerns through landscaping, rather than building design changes.

Bill Sweeney wrapped up the presentation, saying that the clients had demonstrated compliance with the regulations, and would be willing to modify and correct any errors submitted on the cover sheet of the plan, and would be amenable to adding additional landscaping to the project. He also reminded the Commission that the reduction of the 50 ft. buffer to 22 ft. would be needed in the approval. He stated that this project may spur other development in this area. Ms. Warzecha asked about future development on the property south of the proposed project, which Mr. Sweeney explained was not included, and that the property depth factored in on any future development. Ben Wheeler then pointed out for clarification that the reduction they were asking for was to 22 ft.

Art Sharron made a motion to accept **SDP #1034**, with the conditions that there be acceptance of the reduced buffer, and that it be discussed with staff the plantings and landscaping as discussed during the presentation, seconded by Frank Manfredi. Michael Lahan added that the property line correction be included in the conditions. Mr. Lahan stated that he had no issues with the reduction in the buffer based on the elevation of the subject property. The Commission voted 5-1 (Kathy Warzecha opposed) to **APPROVE SPD #1034 W/Conditions.**

**I: EXTENSIONS: None**

**J: BOND RELEASES: None**

**K. ZONING MATTERS: None**

**L. OTHER BUSINESS: Elections of Officers**

Art Sharron stated that an election of officers was needed for Chairman, Vice Chairman for the CCP, and that a regular member and an alternate needed to be appointed to the IWWCC (Inland Wetlands, Water Courses and Conservation Commission) to represent CCP. Mr. Sharron said he received a letter from City Manager John Salomone asking him to accept the position for a regular member as representative to the IWWCC, and he presented the letter to the Commission. Since there were no other nominations for Chairman, Frank Manfredi made a motion to nominate Art Sharron as Chairman to the CCP, seconded by Les King, with all members in favor. Michael Lahan made a motion to nominate Frank Manfredi as Vice Chairman, seconded by Kathy Warzecha. With no additional nominations for Vice Chairman, all members were in favor to appoint Frank Manfredi. Kathy Warzecha made a motion to amend the agenda to include appointments to the IWWCC, seconded by Frank Manfredi. All members were in favor to amend the agenda. Frank Manfredi made a motion to appoint Art Sharron as regular member of IWWCC, seconded by Les King, with all members in favor. Frank Manfredi nominated Michael Lahan as an alternate member to the IWWCC, seconded by Kathy Warzecha, with all members again all in favor.

Frank Manfredi made a suggestion that the City Manager or Mayor should recognize Ralph Page for all of his years of service on the Commission on the City Plan. Mr. Manfredi made a motion for CCP to ask the Mayor to send a letter of appreciation to Mr. Page for his years of service to the City and Commission on the City Plan, seconded by Les King, with all members in favor.

**M. ADJOURNMENT:** Upon motion by Frank Manfredi, seconded by Les King, all members voted in favor to adjourn at 7:53 PM.