

COMMISSION ON THE CITY PLAN
Tuesday, March 16, 2021, 7:00 PM
Virtual/Remote Meeting
NORWICH, CT
REGULAR MEETING

Assistant City Planner Daniel Daniska read information pertaining to virtual meetings and clearly stated that the meeting, including video, would be recorded.

A. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Frank Manfredi called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

B. ROLL CALL AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES:

Present: Chairman Frank Manfredi, Vice Chairman Les King, Swarnjit Singh Bhatia, Jason Courter and Kathy Warzecha

Absent: Michael Lahan

Swarnjit Singh Bhatia was seated as a regular.

Others Present: City Planner Deanna Rhodes, Assistant City Planner Dan Daniska and Recording Secretary Melinda Wilson

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Commission on the City Plan (CCP) February 23, 2021 Meeting Minutes

On a motion by Jason Courter, seconded by Les King, the minutes of the February 23, 2021 CCP meeting were approved. Kathy Warzecha abstained due to non-attendance.

D. COMMUNICATIONS: City Planner Deanna Rhodes noted there were no communications for this meeting.

E. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Referral from the City Council: MERGER OF THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 23-25 LAKE STREET WITH THE LAKE STREET PLAYGROUND PROPERTY AND BE ADEQUATELY SECURED FOR PLAYGROUND USE

City Planner Deanna Rhodes reported that the site is already owned by city. Currently it is being used for neighborhood parking which is an unpermitted use. The site abuts the playground. The proposal would unite the parcel with the park and fence it in with the park. An abutter wanted to buy it. The city's Parks & Recreation Department wants to add it to park. The site went to the Department of Public Works Capital Committee and on to the City Council. The CCP is being asked to refer the item back to the City Council with a referral one way or the other. Discussion ensued.

Les King made a motion to forward a favorable referral to the City Council regarding the merger of the property located at 23-25 Lake Street with the Lake Street Playground property and be adequately secured for playground use. Swarnjit Singh Bhatia seconded the motion.

Reason: The proposal is consistent with the POCD to facilitate recreational opportunities.

The CCP unanimously approved the motion.

F. OLD BUSINESS:

1. Referral from the City Council: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 13 SPECIAL DISTRICTS BY ADDING SECTION 3.11 BUSINESS MASTER PLAN DISTRICT (BMPD) TO THE NORWICH ZONING REGULATIONS

Chair Manfredi noted that the ordinance was being proposed by the Norwich Community Development Corporation (NCDC). He recused himself from discussion due to his position as an NCDC Board of Directors member. Swarnjit Singh Bhatia also recused himself due to his position on the NCDC Board of Directors. Chair Manfredi turned the item over to Vice Chair Les King.

The topic had been tabled at the last CCP meeting in order to give members time to review the proposed ordinance. City Planner Deanna Rhodes reported that she reviewed the proposed ordinance multiple times during its development. She has recommended changes. She asked if the three seated members had questions regarding the proposed ordinance.

Kathy Warzecha addressed multiple items. Extensive discussion ensued on her concerns and suggestions.

Ms. Rhodes made additional suggestions. Discussion ensued on each item.

Kathy Warzecha made a motion to forward a favorable recommendation to the Council, pursuant to Chapter XV, Section 4 of the City Charter with the following stated changes:

3.11.2.3 District Expiration. That the section be revisited to include additional language requiring completion of at least one approved site plan to ensure that the master plan zone is developed and not just held in perpetuity.

3.11.5.1(i) Minimum district size: That the minimum be changed to 100 acres.

3.11.5.1(iv),(v)&(vi) That these items be combined as (iv) and changed to: Minimum front, side and rear yards: such yards as approved on the Master Plan

3.11.5.1(vii) That this item be renumbered as (v)

3.11.5.2 Architectural Design. That a second sentence be added: The Commission on the City Plan shall approve architecture during the site plan process.

3.11.5.4 Parking. That the beginning of the second sentence be modified as follows: The Master Plan shall establish parking which adheres to industry standards as determined acceptable to the Zoning Commission, with ...

3.11.5.6. Permitted Uses. That a second sentence be added: This is a non-inclusive list and may include other uses as deemed appropriate by the Zoning Commission at the time of the application submission.

3.11.5.6.6 Laboratories: That the text "no onsite patient visits permitted" be removed

3.11.5.7.6 Prohibited Uses. That "Retail sales except associated with permitted use Truck Stop" be removed and that the subsequent prohibited uses be renumbered 6, 7 & 8.

3.11.5.8 Buffers: That the comma in the second sentence after the word "enhanced" be removed.

That a new section be added for Consultant Review stating: In the event that the Zoning Commission needs to hire a consultant to review any aspect of the Master Plan proposal, the applicant shall pay for the City's consultant expense.

The reasons for the favorable recommendation are as follows:

The addition of a Business Master Plan District to the City of Norwich Zoning regulations will enhance the general welfare of the City of Norwich. As stated in the POCD, under "Support Economic Development": Economic development is important to the overall development and economic health of the City and its residents. This includes retaining and supporting the businesses in Norwich today and attracting new business development in the future. It also includes attracting land uses and activities which provide meaningful employment and which provide more in municipal revenue than they require in municipal services. Furthermore, the ordinance, with the recommended changes, will allow the master plan to be flexible while allowing the Zoning Commission and Commission the City Plan to protect the quality and character of our community while promoting economic development.

Jason Courter seconded the motion. The CCP approved the motion.

2. 612 West Thames Street – Tree Cutting in the Conservation Easement – Update

Ms. Rhodes gave an update to the CCP. A week ago the markers were placed around the conservation easement. The forester will be going out within a week or two. The forester is being paid by the Cove View Manor Condominium Association. She hopes to present the full resolution to the issue at the next CCP meeting.

On a motion by Les King, seconded by Jason Courter, the item was tabled to the April CCP meeting.

G. EXTENSION REQUESTS: None

H. BOND REDUCTION / RELEASE REQUESTS: None

I. OTHER BUSINESS: Discuss amending subdivision regulations to increase the fee required for open space to correlate with CT General Statutes

Ms. Rhodes relayed options to use a percentage of value of land or a set amount for the fee. For this fee, an appraisal is done on the land before the subdivision is completed. Discussion ensued. It was decided that Ms. Rhodes and Kathy Warzecha would work together to write a proposed ordinance for the City Council to consider. It was decided that the discussion would continue at next month's CCP meeting.

J. POCD Plan Implementation Committee (PIC) MEETING UPDATE + REMINDER: April 14, 2021 Virtual Meeting

Chair Manfredi reminded the CCP members of the April 14, 2021 POCD-PIC meeting. He will not be able to make that meeting. Following a brief discussion, it was decided to cancel the April 14, 2021 POCD PIC meeting. The next meeting will be July 14, 2021.

K. STAFF REPORT: Ms. Rhodes updated the CCP on a few projects.

Hale Mill is moving forward. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) changed the architectural design so the developers need to bring these significant changes to the CCP for consideration. This may possibly occur at next month's CCP meeting. The developers will request an assessment deferral due to mill enhancement. The plans must be approved first. The developers are looking at the property behind them as a second phase for the hotel.

Ms. Rhodes has been working with Regan Miner, President of the Norwich Historical Society, on a project to identify a list of historical properties in either the floodway to be approved by council. This would exempt the properties from FEMA's substantial improvement rule. Properties on Hollyhock Island, Terminal Way, Shipping Street and New Wharf Road are being considered. The project was initiated by former NDCD President Jason

Vincent. He met with FEMA regarding the planned historical inventory. The hope is to spur water dependent economic development.

The CCP generally agreed to have Ms. Rhodes and Kathy Warzecha propose language to change the size of review on all zones to below 10,000 ft² and discuss this at the next CCP meeting.

L: ADJOURNMENT: On a motion by Jason Courter, seconded by Kathy Warzecha, the CCP unanimously adjourned at 8:18 PM.

*Respectfully submitted,
Melinda Wilson
Recording Secretary*