

COMMISSION ON THE CITY PLAN
Tuesday, July 20, 2021, 7:00 PM
Hybrid Meeting
City Hall Room 319 and Zoom
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.

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Frank Manfredi called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

ROLL CALL AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES:

Present: Chairman Frank Manfredi, Swarnjit Singh Bhatia and Kathy Warzecha

Absent: Vice Chairman Les King and Michael Lahan

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Commission on the City Plan (CCP) May 18, 2021, June 15, 2021 and July 1, 2021 Meeting Minutes

On a motion by Kathy Warzecha, seconded by Swarnjit Singh Bhatia, the CCP unanimously approved the meeting minutes of May 18, 2021, June 15, 2021 and July 1, 2021 as presented.

COMMUNICATIONS: City Planner Deanna Rhodes reported on three communications.

The Town of Montville notice will have no effects on Norwich.

The Town of Franklin notice references New Park Avenue. This affects an application to be discussed later in the meeting.

The Town of Bozrah will have a moratorium on cannabis establishments.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. PUBLIC HEARING AND POTENTIAL ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING APPLICATION:

SP#21-02: 457 Laurel Hill Road. Request for a Special Permit to change from an existing non-conforming club use (American Legion) to a similar non-conforming restaurant/bar and assembly hall use. Application of Mel Wiese. Property of LEGION 457 LLC. Assessor's Map 125, Block 1, Lot 12. Zone MF (CAM Overlay)

On a motion to open a public hearing by Swarnjit Singh Bhatia, seconded by Kathy Warzecha, the hearing was unanimously approved to open at 7:08 pm.

Mel Wiese, applicant, explained that he and a partner bought the American Legion site. He plans to have a community space similar to how it was used as the American Legion. The facility is sound but needs a little TLC. The parking lot needs repaving. He and his partners plan a for-profit restaurant with a bar and event venue. They plan to demolish the smaller buildings except the cooking hut. He plans to add a patio in the back and remove the Quonset hut. They plan 82 parking spots, with 4 handicap spots. The veterans memorial is now gone except for one cannon which he has offered to veterans organizations. He noted that he is a veteran.

City Planner Deanna Rhodes reviewed the correspondence from city departments relating to the application. She displayed her memo and raised discussion on several items, including landscaping, exterior lighting and parking.

No members of the public, neither in person nor via Zoom, spoke in favor of, or in opposition to, the application.

On a motion by Kathy Warzecha, seconded by Swarnjit Singh Bhatia, the CCP unanimously closed the public hearing at 7:35 pm.

Kathy Warzecha made a motion to approve the waiver of the engineered site plan provided that the Existing Conditions Plan be updated.

REASON: The engineered site plan is not necessary for approval of this application due to the limited site disturbance.

Swarnjit Singh Bhatia seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Kathy Warzecha made a motion to approve the application with the following conditions:

1. That final revised plan be submitted and reviewed by City Staff. The plan shall be updated to include: A note that should any item that appears historical or cultural in nature be uncovered during the improvement of the site, notification shall be made to the City of Norwich Planning Department for further instruction and evaluation; THE dumpster and recycling locations with aesthetically pleasing fenced enclosure(S), and handicap spaces parking in accordance with the City Engineer's email dated 07/15/2021.
2. That the plan be updated to include the parking calculations as per Item #8 of the Planner's memo dated 07/15/2021. Should additional (overflow) parking be required, it shall be located on-site and non-paved.
3. That the plan be updated to include proposed landscaping along the roadway that is reviewed and determined to be acceptable to the Planner.
4. That the proposed signage for the property be submitted to the Planner to evaluate and determine whether it is acceptable.
5. That the lighting on the site be evaluated to determine whether it is acceptable for the use. Should any new lighting be proposed, a photometric plan and details shall be submitted for review and approval of the Planner.
6. That the site plan for the special permit will expire in 5 years unless an extension has been granted by the Commission.
7. That the City's required signature block and letter of approval be placed on the final revised plan.
8. That 4 paper copies of the final revised plan be submitted to the Planning Department for endorsement by an officer of the Commission.
9. That the certification of approval for the Special Permit use be filed with the City Clerk's office before becoming effective. This certification will be provided to the applicant by the City Planning Department post approval after the appeal period has ended.
10. That after filing of the special permit, a zoning permit shall be issued prior to any activities commencing on the site.
11. That prior to receiving a zoning permit, an engineered plan must be submitted and approved by NPU for the connection to sanitary sewer. The sewer must be connected prior to receiving zoning compliance for the Certificate of Occupancy.
12. That any modifications to the approved proposal shall be reviewed by the Zoning Enforcement Officer prior to occurring and may require additional review and approval by the Commission.

13. That an erosion and sediment control bond may be required for any land disturbance activities that may accompany this proposal. The amount of the bond is to be determined by the City Engineer and shall be in the form of a check or letter of credit.
14. That all proposed improvements associated with this application are to be completed according to the approved plan prior to the issuance of the required Certificate of Zoning Compliance or a performance bond will be required in accordance with Sections 7.5.7.3 and 8.9 of the Zoning Regulations.

REASON: The proposal conforms to ZR Section 4.8.4, Chapter 5 and 7.7 of the Zoning Regulations.

Swarnjit Singh Bhatia seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

SDP#273M: 40 Wisconsin Avenue. Modification to a Site Plan (previously known as SDP #273) for an existing manufacturing & warehousing facility. Proposed improvements include restriping of existing parking lot and utilizing existing ingress/egress driveways for a proposed 182 tractor trailer parking area to be installed on a portion of the property located in Franklin, CT. Application of The Grossman Companies. Property of Norwich 40 TGCI, LLC. Assessor's Map 27, Block 1, Lot 13, Zone BP (Business Park). Tabled from 6/15/21

Dave Ziaks, with the engineering firm F. A. Hesketh & Associates in East Granby, spoke on behalf of the applicant. He noted that the Town of Franklin was near a decision on approval with their meeting concurrent with the CCP meeting. He shared a screen to display the plans. There are two driveways on the Norwich side of the property. The parking lot would be added on the Franklin side of the building. The entire site is 25 acres, 14.5 acres in Norwich and 11.3 acres in Franklin. It is all zoned for industrial type uses. The building is 221,000 ft². The applicant plans to properly re-stripe the existing parking lot in the Norwich portion. They are asking Franklin to approve 182 tractor trailer spots on a to-be-constructed lot for re-use of the vacant building. With the importance of distribution (logistics), new tenants are looking to be able to park trucks. Adding this parking is important to re-tenant the building. They have complied with requests for traffic reports by the city engineer. They studied the impact of vehicle going south to Routes 32, 2 and 395, including intersections. There is a good level of service and no safety concerns. The sight lines are good. Given the size of the project, OTA traffic administration state certification is needed with the Department of Transportation. They plan on using the north driveway only for trucks. There will be no truck traffic on the south side of building. They will add signage to direct traffic. The truck parking would be purely for tenant driven trucks.

Ms. Rhodes reviewed staff comments on the permit request. Frank made a comment for the record, he lives on Plain Hill Road and is now hearing of the staff's suggestion that traffic not use Plain Hill Road. He was unaware until now of the proposed restriction. He asked if anyone wanted him to recuse himself. Ms. Rhodes stated that she was unaware that the Chair lived on Plain Hill Road. All those present were comfortable with the Chair continuing without recusing himself. Ms. Rhodes prepared a memo of recommendations dated June 4, 2021 with nine conditions that are standard. She would like copy of the bond in Franklin.

Kathy Warzecha made a motion to approve the application with the following requirements:

1. That the approval will expire in 5 years unless an extension has been granted by the Commission in accordance with ZR Section 7.5.10.2.
2. That final revised plans be submitted and reviewed by City Staff.
3. That the tractor trailer parking is only permitted associated and accessory to the tenant of the building. The lot shall not be operated as a separate use.

4. That the plan be updated to include the striped and signed circulation pattern for on-site traffic which states that all truck traffic will utilize the north driveway with access to and from the south along Wisconsin Avenue, only.
5. As per the traffic report provided by FAH dated June 29, 2021, the property owner/developer shall inform truck drivers that they are not to use Stott Avenue and Plain Hill Road to access the site.
6. That the applicant submit proof of submission of an erosion and sediment control bond to the Town of Franklin and a zoning permit issued by the Town of Franklin prior to initiating any work in the rear portion of the lot.
7. That the City's letter of approval be placed on the final revised plan set (cover page preferred), the required signature block be placed on all plan sheets, and that all plan sheets include the stamped seal and signature of the licensed professional.
8. That 6 signed and embossed sealed paper copies and 2 mylars of the final revised set of plans be submitted to the Planning Department for endorsement by an officer of the Commission. The mylars must include the red indelible ink certification which includes the name of producer and process used.
9. That the endorsed mylar set shall be filed on the Land Records by the applicant.
10. That after the filing of the mylars, a zoning permit shall be issued prior to any activities associated with this application commencing on the Norwich portion of the site.
11. That any modifications to the approved proposal shall be reviewed by the Zoning Enforcement Officer prior to occurring and may require additional review and approval by the Commission.
12. That all proposed improvements associated with this application are to be completed according to the approved plan prior to the issuance of the required Certificate of Zoning Compliance or a performance bond will be required in accordance with Sections 7.5.7.3 and 8.9 of the Zoning Regulations.

REASON: The proposal conforms to Chapter 2.10 and 7.5 of the Zoning Regulations

Swarnjit Singh Bhatia seconded the motion. The CCP unanimously approved the motion.

OTHER BUSINESS:

1. City Council Referral June 21, 2021 – AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ZONING REGULATIONS SECTION 2.2-SUMMARY OF USES BY DISTRICT; AND ZONING REGULATIONS SECTION 2.5, PLANNED COMMERCIAL DISTRICT, PC, PRINCIPAL USES AND ACTIVITIES IN THE PC ZONE; OF THE NORWICH CODE OF ORDINANCES TO ADD THE FOLLOWING: Section 2.2 (Table) Under USE category "Storage rental facility," – Add as Principal Use in the Planned Commercial District; Section 2.5.3 Under "Requires Site Plan Review" – Add .3 - storage rental facility

Ms. Rhodes explained that the referral dealt with allowing storage units in the PC zone. The request was not initiated by the city. Owunnegunset, Inc. of Westbrook, CT, had noted that storage units businesses are currently not allowed in that zone which is often contiguous of commercial areas which to allow the units. So many uses do overlap so they think it is an appropriate request. Assistant City Planner Daniel Daniska displayed a map of the city's zoning. The PC zone areas were reviewed. Mr. Daniska reviewed the locations. A discussion then ensued about existing buildings/uses in the zone.

Swarnjit Singh Bhatia made a motion to give favorable recommendation. Kathy Warzecha seconded. Discussion ensued. Singh amended his motion to forward a favorable recommendation to the City Council, pursuant to Chapter XV, Section 4 of the City Charter with the following modification: That the approval process be changed

to Special Permit instead of Site Plan because it allows the Commission on the City Plan discretion relative to specific site location(s).

REASON: The Planned Commercial District is intended to be more comprehensive and cohesive than the General Commercial, so the approval process should be more stringent in the PC Zone. The proposed use is acceptable with the higher level of consideration by the CCP.

Kathy Warzecha agreed with the modified motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2. City Council Referral July 6, 2021 – AN ORDINANCE APPROPRIATING \$740,000 FOR THE PLANNING, PERMITTING AND ENGINEERING OF INFRASTRUCTURE ACCESS IN THE OCCUM SECTION OF THE CITY AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUE OF \$740,000 BONDS OF THE CITY TO MEET SAID APPROPRIATION AND PENDING THE ISSUANCE THEREOF THE MAKING OF TEMPORARY BORROWINGS FOR SUCH PURPOSE

Kathy Warzecha asked Ms. Rhodes the purpose of the ordinance and wanted background. Ms. Rhodes noted that the Norwich Community Development Corporation (NCDC) may have some involvement in the ordinance proposal but they are not mentioned in the ordinance. Chair Manfredi noted that he did not need to recuse himself due to his involvement on the NCDC board.

The CCP took a recess to allow Kathy Warzecha an opportunity to read the text of the proposed ordinance. (The recording stopped and the in-person portion of the meeting was muted).

Upon return from the short recess, Kathy discussed her concerns about not knowing specific uses for the funds. Ms. Rhodes then asked members if they wanted to table action on the referral and hold a special meeting in the next week or so to provide the information being requested. The Chairman stated that he was likely not going to be available for a special meeting.

Kathy Warzecha made a motion to table the referral until the next regular meeting in August so that more detailed information can be provided to the Commission regarding the purposes of the bond. Swarnjit Singh Bhatia seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

3. DRAFT - Open Space Fee Language – Subdivision Regulations

Ms. Rhodes requested to table.

4. DRAFT - Building Square Footage to trigger CCP Review Language – Zoning Regulations: City Attorney Reviewing - No Action Required

Ms. Rhodes noted this item is on the agenda for informational purposes only.

EXTENSION REQUESTS: None

BOND REDUCTION / RELEASE REQUESTS: SDP#838A – 214 Vergason (aka Forestview Dr.)

Ms. Rhodes had a memo which was displayed and read. There is no more work being done and the permit has expired.

Kathy Warzecha made a motion to approve the Release of Bond for SDP#838A:

Reasons: The City Engineer and Zoning Enforcement Officer reviewed the request and have visited the site. It is their recommendation to release of the bond as stated in a memo from Richard Shuck, dated July 12, 2021.

Swarnjit Singh Bhatia seconded the motion. Discussion ensued. The motion passed unanimously.

SDP#1043 – 26&30 Salem Tpke – Chipotle E&S Bond

This item was tabled.

POCD Plan Implementation Committee (PIC) MEETING UPDATE + REMINDER: October 13, 2021

Ms. Rhodes reminded the CCP members of the October 13, 2021 POCD-PIC meeting.

STAFF REPORT: Ms. Rhodes reported the following:

Ms. Rhodes read the resignation of CCP member Jason Courter. He has taken a position out-of-state. In the short time he served on the CCP, he had a positive impact. Members of the CCP expressed their sincere appreciation to Jason and wish him well.

Ms. Rhodes noted that Hale Mill construction drawings will be reviewed by a consultant.

The P&NS Department has a summer intern doing field work using GIS to inspect and assess the conditions of all the sidewalks in the City. The Connecticut Chapter of the APA has provided the city a scholarship for this work. Dan Barret, the intern, is doing a phenomenal job.

Mr. Daniska reported on the success of the Greenville bump out project. He has received requests to do it in other spots within the city. The project was featured in both local papers. He had fun planning the project. Ms. Rhodes thanked Mr. Daniska for leading the very popular project.

ADJOURNMENT: On a motion by Kathy Warzecha, seconded by Swarnjit Singh Bhatia, the CCP unanimously adjourned at 8:36 PM.

*Respectfully submitted,
Melinda Wilson,
Recording Secretary*