

COMMISSION ON THE CITY PLAN
Tuesday, August 15, 2023, 7:00 PM
Hybrid Meeting/Public Hearing
100 Broadway, Room 335, Norwich, CT

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

ROLL CALL AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES:

Present: Chairman Frank Manfredi, Deane Nason, Kathy Warzecha and James Quarto

Absent: Ella Myles and Jason Courter (alternate)

Staff Present: City Planner Dan Daniska and Director of Planning Deanna Rhodes

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: July 18, 2023

On a motion by Kathy Warzecha, Seconded by Deane Nason, the CCP approved the minutes. James Quarto abstained.

Frank Manfredi spoke briefly and thanked Deanna Rhodes, Dan Daniska, members of the CCP and the POCD Committee regarding their involvement in the preparation of the plan. He also shared his appreciation for the members Les King and Michael Lahan who both recently passed. He also welcomed James Quarto as a new member to the CCP.

NEW BUSINESS:

Public Hearing and Anticipated Approval of the Following Item: DRAFT 2023 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) – Envision06360. In accordance with State of Connecticut General Statutes, Chapter 126, Section 8-23.

A motion by Kathy Warzecha, seconded by James Quarto was made to open the public hearing. The motion passed unanimously.

Dan Daniska shared a PowerPoint presentation and gave a thorough overview, which included an explanation of what is a POCD, the planning process, membership of the POCD committee, information about the community survey, outreach and key partner meetings, and the POCD timeline. Dan Daniska then went page by page of an updated version of the POCD document (Version 2.0) dated August 7, 2023 and highlighted the 238 changes made in the document. These included the color of the cover and rear pages, modified formatting and updated numbers, captions for photographs, replacements of text, insertions of maps, new text relative to housing and the history of Norwich, new photos and graphics, and deletions. This version was available on the Remote meetings folder on the website. He also shared that the City received comments from CT DEEP and SCCOG in response to referrals. A short discussion ensued.

Frank Manfredi then opened the floor to receive comments from the public.

Samuel Browning distributed information relative to P.3.4 in the Draft POCD relative to Dodd Stadium. He spoke about the history of the baseball use of the stadium and negative financial

impacts of the existing use. He advocated for redevelopment of the property for commercial use as to increase the grand list for the City.

Joanne Philbrick thanked City Staff for preparing the POCD. She then shared her thoughts about the deteriorating condition of the city, failure of the Downtown NRZ, and displeasure with the current overall quality of living in Norwich.

Linda Theodoru was supportive of the Plan and enthusiastic about the inclusion for a recommendation for a Complete Streets plan. She spoke about transportation, especially biking in the city. She noted her pleasure with the quality of the SEAT bus transportation and noted that there should be increased bus frequency to more than every two hours in Occum.

Frederick Browning spoke about balancing conservation and development. He noted concern about development of rural areas and suggested that the POCD was not consistent with the State's Plan and was lacking in comparison to the 2013 POCD. He stated that he felt the plan was deficient in requiring conservation of key undeveloped land. He inquired and then suggested that the City establish a Conservation Commission after Deanna Rhodes answered him that the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Conservation Commission is the Conservation Commission for the City.

Deanna Rhodes then read in emails received to enter as testimony for the public hearing. These were from Bill Kenny and William Champagne. Bill Kenny stated his support of the POCD, while William Champagne made suggestions relative to improving sidewalks in Norwichtown, seeking funding for historic surveys and inventories of neighborhoods, including the "heritage triangle" in the plan and supporting solar energy initiatives.

Deanna Rhodes then asked that the Commission waive the reading of the Exhibit List as it is available in the remote meetings folder on the webpage and was being displayed on the monitor. Deane Nason made a motion to wave the reading of the exhibit list. Kathy Warzecha seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

James Quarto then spoke and noted concern relative to the comments made by Frederick Browning about a potential lack of conservation planning in the Draft POCD. A brief discussion then ensued where Deanna Rhodes clarified and contradicted some assertions made by Frederick Browning. Dan Daniska highlighted large areas of the city on the Envision 06360 Map that are to be preserved.

Kathy Warzecha then spoke and suggested incorporating DEEP recommendations into the POCD, establishing a separate conservation commission, recognizing historic resources as an economic development component and driver, and stated that downtown parking and signage should be more sensitive and consistent with the historic nature of downtown. A discussion then ensued to clarify the comments by Ms. Warzecha as to help Deanna Rhodes and Dan Daniska better understand her thoughts and ensure that they are correctly captured in anticipation of potential inclusion in a motion to approve the POCD.

Kathy Warzecha then made a motion to close the public hearing. Deane Nason seconded the motion. Jim Quarto abstained. The motion passed.

Deane Nason made a Motion to Adopt the August 7, 2023 version the POCD with an Effective Date of September 15, 2023 with the amendments as discussed:

- Incorporation the CT DEEP recommendations;
- Establish a separate Conservation Commission of the City with the timeline as a short-term goal with the City Council as the responsible Entity and Planning & Neighborhood Services Dept. as the support entity
- Add text in "Play Norwich" section, to recognize historic resources as an economic development component and driver.
- Add the following text to the end of sentence in the second bullet in G.1.4. relative to parking garages: so, that they are more sensitive to the historic nature of downtown.
- Add the following text to the end of the first bullet in G.1.3. relative to restarting the façade program: with a specific focus on signage that is more consistent with historic character.

Kathy Warzecha seconded the motion.

In Favor: Deana Nason, Kathy Warzecha & Frank Manfredi

Opposed: None

Abstained: James Quarto

ADJOURNMENT: On a motion by Kathy Warzecha, seconded by James Quarto, the CCP unanimously adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Deanna L. Rhodes, AICP*