

**COMMUNITY PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING
DECEMBER 7, 2021, 6:30 P.M.
MINUTES**

1. Call to Order

A. Meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chairman Davidoff.

B. Attendees – Mayor Shari Cantor, Deputy Mayor Leon Davidoff, Councilor Mary Fay, Councilor Ben Wenograd, Councilor Mark Zydanowicz, Town Manager Matt Hart, Interim Community Development Director Duane Martin, Economic Development Coordinator Kristen Gorski, Atty. Gina Varano, Ms. Addrienne Billings-Smith, Town Planner Todd Dumais.

2. Business Items

A. New Park Transit Oriented District Discussion – Mr. Hart reported the Town and Town Council had been working on the Transit-Oriented Development of the New Park Avenue Corridor. Over the last 18 months, the zoning ordinances have been reviewed to see if any modifications are needed to promote transit-oriented development in that area. There is a moratorium in place impacting certain new uses within certain geographic areas along the corridor. There is a request to extend the moratorium to allow for additional time to complete this effort. Mr. Hart also introduced the Community Engagement Summary Report and the proposed Transit-Oriented District Ordinance.

Mr. Dumais provided a brief history of the Transit-Oriented project. The Town had received a grant and completed the New Park Avenue Transit Area Complete Streets study. Subsequently, grants for several million dollars were secured to implement the study. The Complete Streets designs are currently underway. In 2020, the Town adopted the Conservation and Development plan and some changes will need to be made in zoning to support the Transit-Oriented District (TOD). Mr. Dumais briefly went over a map depicting the New Park Avenue Corridor. Mr. Dumais stated the purpose of the existing moratorium was to allow for the conduction of the study work, community engagement and to solicit input from the West Hartford boards, commissions, neighborhoods and business associates. A request has been made to extend the moratorium through March 31, 2022, to complete the study requirements. Mr. Dumais then briefly went over the Community Engagement Summary report, including a community-wide survey about characteristics of preferences and focus groups. The focus groups included meetings with two business associations and a community-wide meeting. The way this ordinance is structured, it would allow for possibly rezoning of qualifying properties in the corridor within a quarter-mile of the two fast track stations. The next section of the ordinance would end up being incorporated into a table. For residential density, an increase in residential density to about 750 square feet for dwelling units and that's a land area or dwelling unit. This would be a moderate increase translating to about 56 units an acre.

Regarding the building height, 5 stories, 55 feet with a step back required above the 4th floor. There would be no required side yard. The front yard setbacks would be the building line. There's a series of special development standards to consider akin to focusing on foreign-based issues and counseling. The critical objectives are to ensure new buildings are placed within a reasonable distance of the building line, so this standard would suggest that any new buildings be constructed not less than 15 feet behind the established building line. Secondary entrances could be off the rear or parking areas but the main entrance should be off of the front of the building, a ground floor building penetration. Fenestration is essentially the amount of windows or glazing or doors on a facade of a building. There is a suggestion for non-residential uses having a minimum of 40% of fenestration along a street-facing façade with residential uses having a minimum of 25% along the street-facing facade at the ground floor level. There is a suggestion of having an architecturally distinct, horizontal facade division between the ground floor and the upper stories of any building. Service or loading areas and utility connections should be located to the back of the building along with any refuse receptacles. The ground floor should have habitable or active floor space within the first 20 feet of the building depth of the frontage. For properties that apply, no lot should have more than one curb cut to a public right of way or street for every 500 feet of frontage.

Onsite parking should be located to the side of the rear of the buildings. If it's on the side of the rear, it should be behind the front facade of the building. There is a suggestion to reduce the parking stall dimensional standards to 9 x 18. The current standard is 9 x 20. Tandem or stacked parking should be permitted for residential uses. Restaurants are calculated on a per-seat basis. There is a suggestion of one space per four seats in lieu of the current one space for three seats. As part of this option, we should consider introducing a new standard allowing for mixed-use parking, which would allow for sharing of spaces at different times of the day. Lastly, off-street parking within the corridor should be able to be counted toward the on-street demand. There's a suggestion to introduce a new standard for minimum bicycle parking requirements as there is no standard at this time. If there is a specific reason that any property or developer could not comply with any of the special development standards, they could apply to the Planning and Zoning Commission for a special use permit. A bonus standard could be set up allowing anyone (property or business owner or developer) to achieve an additional floor area ratio, additional building coverage and additional reductions in parking requirements. The first category would be access or curb cut management. For affordable housing units, the more units provided the more points offered. The deeper the affordability levels of those units, the higher the point levels.

Lastly, points for sustainability, either enhancing energy efficiency, renewable energy, or onsite stormwater. Different strategies are worth different points. A question was raised regarding EV charging stations and WiFi. Mr. Hart stated with respect to charging stations for both cars and bikes, there is a proposed project to build out that infrastructure across town and they could look more specifically at what would be included in this area, including broadband. The challenge is not the fiber industry but access and affordability for customers in that area

3. Communications

4. Staff Reports

A. Community Development – Mr. Martin stated he was going to consolidate and do the building division, engineering division and then the planning division. Despite the pandemic, the numbers for building permits, inspections and other activities are still very high level, so a new building inspector was hired. This will help out with some of the inspections and plan reviews. There is also a part-time staff person acting as a staff assistant to enter the permit applications. Measures are also in place to address the high activity level in the building division. A city-view upgrade is coming up and there will be more information at an upcoming meeting; however, training for the building and planning division staff for the city-view upgrade is scheduled for the middle of this month. Hopefully, the upgrade will be launched by the beginning of the year, which will help facilitate a lot of activities, especially related to the building division. Mr. Martin mentioned the lingering issue regarding sump pump permit applications has been resolved. The MDC will be assisting residents that qualify with the installation of a backwater valve to stop brown water from flowing into the sanitary sewer system and install a sump pump to gather that water and discharge it on the exterior of the home. The MDC has information on its backwater valve program and residents are being notified as well as anybody interested in getting this notification. The MDC is providing a contractor for people. Engineering has a new staff person, who is also a civil engineer. He will be filling the void left by a retirement. The Tropper Trail Phase Five section is under construction. The contractor will be paving the base course of the trail, which will be open to the public in the spring. The section encompassing Fern Street to Duffield Street is planned to go into construction in the spring, pending commitment grant funding.

Regarding the North Main Street survey, a vast majority were favorable so far. The consultant is preparing later on this winter to issue recommendations to the Town Council. The North Main Street Bridge project is approximately 90% to 95% complete. Contractors will be installing some guide rails next week and a little bit of landscaping but will return in the spring to finish the project. The Rayburn Road Culvert Rehabilitation has an executed contract amendment. They plan on having a crew come out either this Thursday or Friday. The contractor is coming out to clean up the site and remove the tree that came down, which damaged some of the material in the watercourse area. It is anticipated to be completed in the summer of 2022. Lastly, the semi-diverters on the Boulevard intersections of Four Mile Newport at Sedgwick are complete and the contractor is working on the semi-diverter on Newport at Ellsworth with plans of finishing that before winter sets in. There will be temporary semi-diverters at the intersection of Boulevard and Riggs. We continue to do traffic and speed measurements and evaluate the crashes that occur in the area.

B. Economic Development – Ms. Gorski provided an update on new developments. There are two new medical office tenants in Bishop's Corner and they should be open in early January. Pink Flamingo opened at 1001 Farmington Avenue. El Santo is building out the space on Farmington Avenue. Sparrow is wrapping up their build-out on Farmington Avenue with plans to open in early 2022. The Russell is wrapping up their build-out and hopes to open in early 2022. Rosa Mexicano is moving into Blue Back Square. The 15 Such Sedgwick Best Cleaners celebrated their grand opening. On Park Road at the Prospect Plaza, the Floor

and Décor lease has been fully executed. New Park Avenue AutoZone's buildout is well underway and anticipates opening in spring of 2022. Lastly, Storage Solutions opened a couple of weeks ago on Newport Avenue. Three active build-outs are occurring in Corbin's Corner; the Chick Shack, Hot Table and Ivy Rehab. Multifamily developments underway include 540 New Park and the Residences at Berkshire Road. They are trying to get the exterior of their buildings weather-tight for winter and then will focus on the interiors. Hartford Healthcare has much of the exterior completed, so they will be working on the interior with some minor landscaping improvements happening over the course of the winter. Lastly, a new special development district application was received from Farmington Avenue Acquisitions, LLC, for 920 Farmington Avenue, which will be received by the Council at the next meeting next Tuesday. This will be a 48-unit mixed-use development.

C. Planning and Zoning – Mr. Martin stated the planning division was working on the stormwater low-impact development zoning standards. This was not listed but a meeting that occurred and it went well. It's an initiative that will continue to be explored with the planning division taking the lead.

D. Building – Combined with Community Development report.

E. Town Manager – Mr. Hart stated there had been a couple of very successful holiday events, the Fire and Ice and Holiday Stroll in particular. Mr. Hart also reported the Ideaomics property disposition is being followed very closely. The property may close by the end of the calendar year but if not, in early in 2022.

5. Future Agenda Items

A. Outdoor Dining Ordinance Amendment Discussion – Mr. Hart stated that the Council had asked for an amendment to facilitate outdoor dining to build on what has been in place for many years. An ordinance regarding outdoor dining will be presented at an upcoming meeting.

B. Cannabis Zoning Ordinance Discussion – Mr. Hart stated earlier this year the Council requested a review of potential dispensary uses as well as recreational cannabis. A draft ordinance is being worked on, which will be presented at an upcoming meeting.

A. Zoning Ordinance Discussion (Residential Parking and Accessory Dwelling Unit Standards related to PA 21-29) – Mr. Hart stated that due to some recent state legislation, a few changes and updates would be needed to zoning ordinances for residential parking standards and accessory dwelling units (ADU). The Council had made upgrades to the ADU ordinance in the past year; however, the state law contains additional changes, which will need to be added to the Town's ADU ordinance.

6. Adjournment – The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.
