

MINUTES

PLANNING & ZONING PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DESIGN SUBCOMMITTEE, WEDNESDAY, 1 FEB. 2023, 7:00 P.M.

A. **Call to Order** was at 7:00 pm.

B. **Attendees:** J. Castignoli, J. Kader, J. Mortimer, J. Quish / **CONSULTANT:** A. TECZA / **STAFF:** D. Sulkis, M. Greene

Chairman Quish opened the meeting. He said meeting goal was to continue discussing the results of a survey FHI ran prior to the last meeting. He asked Mr. Tecza to continue his review.

C. **Topic for discussion: Part 2: Results of the survey distributed to the POCD subcommittee.**

Mr. Tecza asked Mr. Sulkis to share the remaining topic slides with the group.

Housing: Promote proximity to mass transit: Chairman Quish said he favors denser developments near public transit. The group felt the regulation might apply to all zones but could remain open to future interpretation. Mr. Mortimer suggested an emphasis on increasing density in mixed-use commercial zones, which the group agreed with. Mr. Sulkis said that infrastructure to handle higher density housing and the presence of nearby amenities already exist in such zones and that modification to current regulations could ease density limits. He noted the existence today of plazas featuring non-obvious housing above stores. Mr. Tecza said he would add language to identify building typologies and densities near transit nodes to support those recommendations.

Preserving residential neighborhoods: Mr. Sulkis discussed current rules on creating rear lots and said that disallowing rear lots altogether could restrict encroachment into green spaces. He noted that this is only an issue in the northern part of the city. The group thought the section could be removed. They also thought it was worth considering the removal from subdivision calculations of conforming lots all wetlands, watercourses, or steep slopes to calculate conforming square footage. Mr. Sulkis pointed out that cluster developments accommodate this possibility now by taking conforming subdividable areas, sectioning off wetlands or other open space, then applying a lower square-footage lot requirement to each new dwelling parcel. Discussion ensued on making all new lots, regardless of zone, exclude wetlands, watercourses, or other designated Open Spaces. There was some agreement on the value of doing so.

Historic preservation: Language regarding placement of the Simon Lake submarine was removed.

Commercial Corridor: Discussion of requiring bike lanes and EV charging led to an acknowledgment that these changes are already well underway informally without regulation changes. The group thought the topic should be moved to sustainability and consolidated with similar topics.

Streetscape and Mobility: The group agreed that progress has been made in the last 10 years on wayfinding and gateways to areas of interest such as downtown and beaches. Wayfinding signage has also been added along Bridgeport and New Haven Avenues. Chairman Quish suggested moving language into a mission statement and that it be made a referral to the Regulation Subcommittee.

Devon Center—This item is to be removed as the city has created parking lots to enhance access to businesses.

Naugatuck Avenue—The group noted that the city has improved the streetscape here with attractive lampposts, and restriping of parking near Walnut Beach. Chairman Quish felt a problem still exists in the area between Milford Point Road and Simon Lake School. Mr. Tecza said language for continuing to improve design standards could be used. Mr. Sulkis reviewed the goal in creating the CDD zones and what they incorporated. He noted that prior to its mixed-use designation, Naugatuck Avenue had grittier uses such as automotive-related businesses.

Walnut Beach—The group agreed that the connection between Walnut Beach and local businesses has been significantly strengthened in recent years, bolstered by the nearby, state-constructed boardwalk, so this item will be removed. Mr. Mortimer felt that East Broadway was not as pedestrian-friendly as desired. The Walnut Beach streetscape had been greatly improved and can be taken off the list. Discussion ensued about the possibility of a bike

land between Naugatuck Avenue and the Walnut Beach parking lot, but an obstacle exists in the form of a large condo complex. Chairman Quish thought a bike line could link the Audubon Center to Walnut Beach and West Shore beach accesses should be better identified for wayfinding.

Bridgeport Avenue Corridor CDD-3—Chairman Quish said the area from the Stop and Shop to Milford Hospital is a wide, underutilized gateway to the green that should retain the goal of design standards.

Boston Post Road western corridor (Cherry Street)—The group agreed that this area (a transitional area to downtown) would still benefit from the use of best practices for “complete streets” featuring more housing—including affordable housing and allowing developers to increase density and that this standard could be applied to all CDD zones. Mr. Sulkis recalled a suggestion to reverse the position of existing buildings in the Cherry Street shopping center (bringing them closer to the street) and the current parking lots. Mr. Sulkis caught an error and said to change “western” to eastern.

Post Road Regional Commercial Area—This topic was to be combined with other headings.

New Haven Commercial Corridor—CCD-4 zone stretching from the Stonebridge to the Pond Point Avenue/Old Gate Lane area. Mr. Mortimer expressed concern that enhancing development and protecting water are inherently conflicting. Chairman Quish suggested that the Inland Wetlands Agency and Building Inspection safety considerations would limit water degradation. The section is to be removed.

Public Infrastructure and Buildings. The group agreed that many of the stated goals are self-evident (hydrants) or have already been upgraded (wastewater treatment facilities). Chairman Quish wondered if the board could use functional levels of infrastructure and sustainability when deciding about expanding development. Mr. Sulkis advised that nothing in the state statutes lets Planning and Zoning Boards approve or deny applications or mandate treatment of public waste, but the board can require projects to explain how they’ll manage recycling and reducing waste. This item was to be moved to a sustainability section.

Water Quality—Green infrastructure and retrofitting developed areas to address impervious surfaces. Mr. Castignoli remarked that it’s impractical to take curbs and sidewalks away. Mr. Sulkis said impervious areas require infiltrators to manage water in a built environment. This item was removed.

Other—Mr. Kader said he would like to retain a goal of free or reduced fare to beaches, downtown and Devon, but the group thought the topic would fit better under transportation.

Transportation and Circulation

Accommodate all users; Mr. Sulkis noted that the city has been working on improving and extending sidewalks, but a goal to promote road sharing with bikes and walkers is desirable. Chairman Quish favors considering a program to educate the community about wayfinding and accessing beaches, including the use of transit busses and electric busses. The group wanted to leave this item in with a goal of achieving more “complete streets,” i.e. retrofitted street that provide safe travel for all users. Mr. Sulkis thinks that Community Development may also be working on this goal.

Sustainability

Mr. Tecza noted many recommendations for safe walking and biking and wondered if enough information was already covered. Chairman Quish thought sustainable requirements are a topic for public input.

Schedule Discussion: Mr. Sulkis said draft document should be available at the end of February, that can be brought to the full board for public hearings and focused on certain sections. He said the board may or may not provide feedback. If some areas evoke more interest, special meetings could be heard while the board continues its regular business. Chairman Quish thought that delivering it to the alders by June might be too optimistic a goal. Mr. Sulkis stressed that this committee did a lot of work on a generally good starting document, gathered public input, and made adjustments. Chairman Quish said he felt the timetable for aldermanic review might be closer to October. Mr. Sulkis said that until doc is made public, it will be hard to gauge how much time will be needed. He said the draft would provide a good foundation and recommends getting it to the full board, taking a temperature about how much comment is

forthcoming, and organize public meetings as necessary. Different methods for collecting feedback were discussed. Some people may only want to submit comments, not appear in person. Chairman Quish asked that staff provide list of stakeholders and interested parties such as the groups that appeared during discussions about ADUs, Walnut Beach, and downtown. He said he wants a robust communication effort with an emphasis on inclusivity to drive importance of document. Mr. Tecza suggested that not all of engagement must be part of big public meeting. He suggested setting up "office hours:" blocks of time where people can book half hour and talk to board members more informally. Aggregated input would then be summarized at a public meeting. Chairman Quish said he is open to the idea and asked staff for an outline of proposed outreach. Mr. Sulkis was also supportive but noted that the key to all outreach is a completed draft. Mr. Tecza said he has enough to work with for a completed draft. Chairman Quish asked for a review prior to end of February, but Mr. Tecza suggested that a subcommittee review of draft, be scheduled for mid-March, followed by a presentation to the full board in April. Chairman Quish agreed, stressing that he wants to provide transparency to the community. He asked staff to create plan of outreach. A date of Wednesday, 3/1, was chosen.

D. Committee member suggestions/comments –None

E. Minutes from 1/24/23 were approved unanimously.

F. Adjournment was at 8:29.