

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING AND ZONING POCD SUBCOMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING HELD

Tuesday, January 26, 2021 AT 6:30 P.M.

Call to Order was at 6:34 pm.

Roll Call: J. Castignoli, J. Kader, P. Kearney, J. Mortimer, J. Quish, D. Sulkis, M. Greene

Discussion of Commercial Corridor/Areas section of the existing POCD

Mr. Sulkis provided an overview of the various development districts set up in 2004 to address the major commercial corridors in the city. The zones are all slightly different because the existing commercial activity near them was different. He allowed that the presentation of the corridors is somewhat confusing in the current POCD. **Ms. Kearney** advised Mr. Sulkis that at the previous POCD meeting there had been discussion of CDD-2 and the Cherry St “gateway to downtown”. The group focused on CDD-2 again, which consists of Bridgeport Avenue from near I-95’s Exit 34 to the fork with Boston Post Road, plus Naugatuck Avenue. **Mr. Sulkis** said CDD zones are typically one parcel deep, except for CDD-2. He said CDD-2 transitions to CDD-3 near the Silver Sands Stop and Shop. He said CDD-2 features many small parcels, plus a few large parcels like the one developed into Beach Shore Village and the old St. Gabriel’s property recently approved by the board for acquisition by the city. The group had already started to discuss how retail uses were no longer the dominant force they were in 2012, and if the world has changed—shouldn’t uses change? They considered the case of Kmart plaza. The HDD zone was designated as the only one to permit self-storage because like cemeteries, self-storage uses provide few jobs and virtually no economic activity. When that use change was made, all subsequent inquiries for Kmart plaza became residential. The group asked if making CDD3 residential-friendly would be beneficial now. **Chairman Quish** said he likes the concept of mixed-use, village-like entities along the corridor where it makes sense. The group noted that CCD-3 is heavy on car dealerships because a previous board wanted to concentrate most of the city’s car dealerships in one location rather than have them proliferate along the Post Road. **Ms. Kearney** thought the mostly empty plaza near Exit 34 where Kindercare is located presented an opportunity for possible mixed use with apartments above. **Mr. Sulkis** noted that CDD-3 currently prohibits residential uses of any type and that if a developer is interested in that use, a Zone Change would be needed. He further observed that developers prefer to know up front that the city is favorably inclined toward the type of development they wish to fund. **Chairman Quish** noted that CDD-3 runs along Bridgeport Hospital up to the hospital and presents another potential gateway to Milford Center, which is just beyond the hospital campus. Likewise, he noted, New Haven Avenue is another gateway to Milford Center, and he observed that neither approach had much charm. There was discussion of a fenced-off, former dry cleaner site with possible contamination because from the present Stop and Shop plaza to Mr. Mac’s restaurant once housed industries, which can result in potential contamination. **Chairman Quish** spoke of historically interesting factories successfully repurposed for housing. **Mr. Kader** thought that both the Cherry Street gateway area and Bridgeport Avenue gateway area should be broken out as new districts or incorporated into the MCDD to encourage development that is better looking and more welcoming. He said he doubted the city wants massive apartment complexes on the Post Road. **Chairman Quish** said certain apartments on the Post Road in Devon looked appropriate but reiterated his support for a village-like community for developments on larger properties. He noted that Bridgeport Avenue could promote mixed use on a larger site, but it would not work on smaller lots. **Mr. Kader** wondered if review boards could support village style mixed uses, but **Mr. Sulkis** pointed out that the point of the regulations is to spell out clearly what is allowed. **Mr. Kader** said Milford was once equated with the Post Road, with nothing of interest downtown, but now the center is coming back. **Mr. Sulkis** said the only way to control how something looks is by creating a village district or if the area happens to be in a historic district. **Ms. Kearney** voiced support for looking at some of the big old buildings on Bridgeport Avenue to consider conversion to apartments that are convenient to the train and downtown. **Mr. Mortimer** also thought villages should be encouraged, recalling a sail factory converted to offices and apartments behind Archie Moore’s restaurant. **Chairman Quish** asked if the Regulation Subcommittee could propose larger scale changes in an area and said one goal of the POCD was to reimagine highest and best use for areas. **Ms. Kearney** thought that it’s one thing to want to change what’s there, but there are many uses, including old uses grandfathered in. **Mr. Sulkis** said he will speak with the city’s GIS analyst and ask for a map of city uses. **Mr. Kader** said he also supports repurposing of old buildings. **Chairman Quish** also noted that guidance can be provided for 8-30g development after the current moratorium ends. **Mr. Mortimer** thought light industrial uses should be made to comply with new regulations if the uses are changed in the future. **Mr. Sulkis** said that one way to foster change is by making it easier for owners to develop, offering economically feasible affordability, where possible. Discussion resumed of changing the zone from the Stop and Shop plaza-to-center of town area, breaking it off with a different set of guidelines. The group agreed that the existing concentration of the car dealerships is working. **Chairman Quish** said that extending the MCDD into Gateway areas would be simpler, namely: Cherry Street, New Haven Avenue and the part of Gulf Street that connects them. **Mr. Kader** wanted to avoid plans with parking in front of a development as is there now, making a site look too much like a vacant lot. **Mr. Sulkis** shared information on the New Urbanist model from the Yale study done several years ago, which notes the potential for more intensive development of properties along Cherry Street. The group agreed that a consultant will have perspective from other places to help organize priorities. **Mr. Sulkis** said he would have information on the search for a consultant by the next meeting.

Approval of Minutes of 1-13-21 approved unanimously.

Member suggestions-None.

Adjournment was at 8:04.