

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING AND ZONING PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (POCD) SUBCOMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING HELD Wednesday, February 24, 2021 AT 7:30 P.M.

Call to Order was at 7:33 pm.

Roll Call: J. Castignoli, J. Kader, P. Kearney, J. Mortimer, J. Quish/(staff) J. Griffith, D. Sulkis, M. Greene

Also present: W. Silver, M. Kramer, A. Maher

Letter received from Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) requesting redraw of the MCDD Zone to exclude certain properties

MHPC Chairman Bill Silver reviewed his letter to the Planning and Zoning Board regarding inclusion of certain structures in the Milford Center Design District (MCDD). In it, he urged that the board members working on the new POCD balance such goals as Transit-Oriented Districts and a walkable downtown with strong protections for historic downtown properties—Prospect Street in particular. He asked that consideration be made of in-fill-the scale and density of neighborhoods—rather than focusing only on the historic value of individual buildings. In particular, he pointed to the overlap of the MCDD with the River Park Historic District (RPHD), which encompasses the current debate about 67 Prospect. **Mr. Quish** said the POCD subcommittee had been looking at the city’s design districts in general with the goal of encouraging sensible development while protecting the character of Milford. He described how the POCD review meetings have a broader focus than the regulations subcommittee meetings and noted that if a problem is identified that requires immediate action, it can be passed to the Regulations Subcommittee. **Mr. Griffith** noted that recent public comment shows opposition to the MCDD zoning of Prospect Street and might be more appropriately made part of a residential district. He stated that size and scale can also be regulated through land use boards, separate from historic district commission. **Mr. Sulkis** shared a new use-based map prepared by the City’s GIS analyst, which the group found very helpful to the discussion. **Mr. Griffith** continued, using the example of Prospect St, that the regulations can control use, height, density, with respect to the architectural fabric of an area, whether the area is in historic district or not. **Mr. Silver** emphasized that he is not referring to an architectural review board, which he called bureaucratic. He advised that the purview of the current Milford historic commissions is to protect the imagery of houses as viewed from the street and that purview does not extend to context but is limited to buildings. **Mr. Quish** said the POCD subcommittee’s goal is to look at all the design districts and evaluate their success or failure and it is apparent that the MCDD designation is causing problems. He suggested that if, in any district, a property is on a historic list, increased review be required. **Mr. Griffith** asked if this could be handled via an overlay district. **Mr. Sulkis** said the board could create an overlay district, based on its own criteria, which would not necessarily be limited to historic listing, but which could require more stringent setbacks, for example. He and **Mr. Griffith** agreed that the purpose of the regulations is to give developers design guidelines. Discussion ensued about the size of the RPHD and the MCDD. **Ms. Kramer** said the MCDD includes 188 properties designated in 1975. **Mr. Quish** suggested a district border map be added to show said the “theme” of the RPHD. **Ms. Kramer** said the RPHD is essentially the Wepawaug Greenway. **Mr. Silver** said this district is overseen by the MHPC; that it extended from the George Washington Bridge in Devon through Woodmont and consists of distinct buildings and occasional structures like bridges. **Mr. Griffith** asked for clarification about demolishing buildings within this historic district. **Mr. Silver** said the commission’s charge is to try to preserve, that is, to prevent demolition by proposing alternatives such as willing buyers. **Ms. Kramer** agreed that the mission is to find a reasonable and prudent alternative to demolition; if the building is demolished, zoning regulations subsequently take effect. She and **Mr. Quish** discussed how that the ordinance refers to “historic buildings and sites,” but she noted that the way the ordinance pertains to sites is more nebulous. She said there have been attempts to make it more specific. **Mr. Silver** used the example of 67 Prospect Street, where the building was regulated, but the site was not due to an application oversight. He noted that Milford Green is a protected site, but the 67 Prospect application was missing that site-specific language. **Mr. Sulkis** asked most of the protected entities in the RPHD are just the buildings; **Mr. Silver** said it is usually only buildings. **Mr. Quish** wondered if all properties in the RPHD could be polled to revisit their applications and include the site; **Mr. Silver** stated that this would pretty much constitute a re-application; they cannot be amended. He further stated that most people do not realize that they’re in River Park, application process takes some effort, and the State Commission will not necessarily endorse adding the site to the application—there must be evidence of something significant on the site. **Mr. Quish** opened to board for questions or comments. **Ms. Kramer** said John Wicko’s proposal for 58 Prospect presents a a good example of a reasonable use. **Mr. Mortimer** asked how much enforcement is possible. **Mr. Griffith** said his concern was how Milford Historic District influence and Milford Zoning Regulation enforcement were not working well in this instance. He gave an example of how John Wicko’s well preserved building could have been made to share the site with another permitted use that was not appropriate, but if the second project met the regulations, nothing would prevent him from building it. **Mr. Quish** reminded the group that the Regulation Subcommittee can act directly in a case like this. **Ms. Kearney** liked the idea of using an overlay zone and discussion ensued on overlay zones, which are based on geographic parameters. **Mr. Sulkis** said the if border of the RPHD invoked an overlay, the conflict caused by applications made for large Prospect lots in the MCDD could be reined in overlay setbacks. Another candidate might involve certain large parcels on Governors Avenue. **Mr. Kader** wondered about potential benefits of an architectural review panel (ARP). **Mr. Sulkis** said that type of board is comprised of architects, not lay people. **Mr. Silver**, an architect, himself, doubted that 10 Milford architects would want to spend the time it would take to conduct such reviews and that they tend to be contentious meetings. **Mr. Griffith** said lot coverage, size, scale, and density are still functions of land use whereas ARPs are dealing with aesthetics. **Mr. Sulkis** agreed with Mr. Griffith that this reduces potential for bureaucracy.

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING AND ZONING PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (POCD) SUBCOMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING HELD Wednesday, February 24, 2021 AT 7:30 P.M.

Mr. Quish asked about the status of hiring a consultant. **Mr. Sulkis** said he got 4 Request For Proposal templates and will ask for a recommendation from city's purchasing agent. He said the goal was to have the RFP out for responses in about a month.

Mr. Sulkis reviewed features of the new use map created by Geographic Information Systems analyst John Hangen for use in the POCD. Assessor classifications of 150 land use categories were grouped into larger, color-coded buckets like retail, warehousing, industrial, automotive, condominiums, etc. **Mr. Quish** suggested the group study the map and/or drive around to think of uses for CDD-3. The group agreed to use the map to set up discussion on that zone.

Ms. Kramer revisited the idea of a new historical resources survey, which is done by the state with mostly "drive by" review. She said it could be funded by a grant and would be relatively easy to set up. **Mr. Quish** encouraged her to do this. **Mr. Silver** said historical places are not automatically placed onto the survey. He clarified that despite POCD overlays, state historic preservation lists outside historic districts 1 and 2, only reflect single properties dotted around Milford and that they are not expected to automatically get special protection—they will work with staff.

Mr. Quish thanked all attendees for their time and effort and reminded everyone that the POCD is now scheduled for 2 meetings a month on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays.

Continuing discussion of corridor design districts: To be resumed at a future meeting.

Approval of Minutes of 1-25-21 was unanimous.

Member suggestions: None.

Adjournment was at 8:36.