

STAMFORD PLANNING BOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES # 3725
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2011
7TH FLOOR LAND USE CONFERENCE AREA
888 WASHINGTON BLVD., STAMFORD, CT

Stamford Planning Board Members present were: Theresa Dell, Chairperson, Roger Quick, Claire Fishman, Michael Totilo, Jay Tepper and Zbigniew Naumowicz. Present for staff was Todd Dumais.

Mrs. Dell opened the meeting at 7:30pm. She announced that Jay Tepper would be seated as a voting member due to regular member Dudley Williams not being in attendance.

Zoning Board Referrals:

ZB Appl. 211-36 – Text Change, Goldstein (DSSD) to Amend Article III, Section 7-Q and Article IV Section 12-D-1 to add language regarding changes to open space and parking requirement in the C-G and CC-N districts.

Mr. Richard Redniss submitted a letter to speak on behalf of the DSSD and introduced the application. He stated that he would try to run through some information quickly, but knows that the Board will look at this in the Master Plan.

Mr. Redniss discussed the dynamics of why we're here tonight and used the population growth of Connecticut versus U.S. growth. He referenced that Stamford outpaced Connecticut and U.S. in population growth from 1900's through today. Using charts he highlighted the Depression, 1950's, 1960's. Mr. Redniss noted that it was in 1955, Post-WWII, that Cities began surrendering to the car. He noted that in 1980 we saw first drop in Stamford's population and that it was about this time we started studying what we can do to get housing in downtown. In 1991, the DSSD started and began a concerted effort to turn things around in Downtown Stamford. It hasn't been easy to get housing in this area. Mr. Redniss provided a chart of 10 housing initiatives that were proposed/approved but didn't get built, parking was a major contributing factor to them not going forward. He commented that to maximize housing downtown we need to reduce parking requirements and that the reason they are here tonight is to ask for a 1:1 parking ratio in the CC-N and C-G zones. For the 3,275 housing that didn't get built it equals over 800 spaces that could have been forgiven. Mr. Redniss noted that looking at the Master Plan, this CC-N and C-G corridor is an area described as most intense and then described zoning history; 1926-1951 no requirement for parking for housing; 1951 no minimum but allowed shared parking within 500'; 1952 – 1962 minimum of 1 space per unit and 0.6 per unit for studios; 1962 it was 1.5 spaces/unit.; 1967-1999 increased to 1.67 spaces/unit but in 1984 reduced to 1.25/unit for P-D, R-H, CC-N zones and that from 2006 to today however 2.0 spaces required in CC-N.

Mr. Redniss described the variation by understanding demand. He explained that there were 7 developments of significant housing units but all in areas not zoned CC-N. All ratios are below 1.0/unit based on occupied units and total demand. He noted that he looked last week at BLVD because it's said there's not enough parking and it contained 29 vacant spaces at 10:30 PM, which yields a ratio of 96%. Park Square West came out to 93%. Mr. Redniss stated that based on their survey work, there appears to be no demand for parking ratios above 1 space per unit and that there is a vast potential for offsite parking supply. He looked at over 20,000 spaces available in downtown and eliminated some and got to over 12,000 spaces available for renting. Mr. Redniss noted that anyone wanting to use this application needs to have a Parking Management Plan.

Mr. Redniss closed his presentation by saying he'd outlined the history and need for the regulation currently before the Board and the Parking and Open Space requirements. It's a suburban mentality to an urban issue.

Mrs. Fishman had a question about the costs associated with the parking.

Mrs. Dell said we're doing parking at 1.25 spaces per unit and asked if this was a big expense. Mr. Redniss said yes, it's a big cost but we have thousands and thousands of vacant spaces at night.

Mrs. Dell asked if the City would allow garages to be used at night.

Mr. Tepper said does this mean you would get extra units. Mr. Redniss said yes.

Mrs. Fishman asked about empty spaces in office buildings at night.

Mrs. Dell noted they'd have to be within walking distance of buildings at night.

Mr. Redniss said let's look at the private garages and noted that there are many buildings in downtown without any parking.

Mrs. Fishman noted that parking is incredibly bad in London and she doesn't want to see that sort of thing happen here in Stamford as a result of a regulation like this.

Mrs. Dell said the information presented was a lot to digest and a lot of information. She'd like to get copies of everything presented and have the Board Members discuss this at the next meeting. She'd like the Board members to think about any questions they may have and get together on a final vote in January.

Mr. Totilo asked for the map to be modified to make it more user-friendly and would be more comfortable if garages used were adjacent to units.

Mr. Redniss said the 1:1 ratio demand shows us there are unneeded and unused parking spaces available.

Sandy Goldstein, President DSSD, stated she wouldn't support anything that would hurt the downtown. It's most hurtful to think downtown isn't getting housing and that the developers know a 1:1 ratio will work to get the housing.

Mrs. Dell had a question related to the City as a whole because this change sets a precedent for other sections of the City and other areas will also ask for this. How do we justify this?

Mr. Redniss said we begin by looking at the Master Plan, there a zone downtown with higher intensity than other areas. There are lots of good planning, zoning and historical reasons for this change.

Mrs. Dell asked that all materials be given to the Board Members for review and she took a 10 minute recess.

Capital Budget FY 2012/13 & Capital Plan 2014-2019:

Board Discussion of the Capital Budget / Board Discussion of Partial Close Out of Capital Projects List

Mrs. Dell said for record, they met with the Mayor, Peter Privetera, Al Barbarato and Ernie Orgera regarding the Capital Budget and tonight the Planning Board members have

new Capital Budget sheets. Everything on Capital Budget closeouts under Schedule B are shown. She noted that none of the \$5 million in Closeouts are in this year's budget and that the 10th Floor is okay with coming in at \$40-\$45M and have decided that the \$30 million in unbonded projects will be done in increments of \$10 million. Mrs. Dell stated that Todd will make a new spreadsheet and update the Board. The administration wants the Planning Board to prioritize items, do our rating and put specifics in our transmittal report to them.

Planning Board Meeting Minutes:

Meeting Minutes of 6/28/11, 6/14/11 and 5/24/11

Mr. Tepper moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Mr. Naumowicz seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Naumowicz, Fishman, Tepper and Quick).

New Business

Mrs. Dell announced that next week's meeting would start at 7:00pm.

There being no further business to discuss Mrs. Dell adjourned the meeting at 10:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Claire Fishman, Secretary
Stamford Planning Board