

STAMFORD PLANNING BOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES #3555
TUESDAY, AUGUST 4th, 2009
7TH FLOOR CONFERENCE AREA
888 WASHINGTON BLVD., STAMFORD, CT

Stamford Planning Board Members present were: Theresa Dell, Rose Marie Grosso, Claire Fishman and Jay Tepper. Present for staff were Robin Stein and Todd Dumais.

Regular Meeting

The acting chairman, Mrs. Theresa Dell, called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. She announced that a portion of this meeting would be conducted as a joint meeting with the Zoning Board.

***Joint Meeting with the Zoning Board:
Presentation on a Downtown Zoning Study to be given by David Kooris of the
Regional Plan Association, consultant for DSSD and URC.***

Sandy Goldstein, President Downtown Special Services District (DSSD), introduced David Kooris, a consultant with Regional Plan Association (RPA), and other members of DSSD Steering Committee. She explained that about a year ago, she had realized that after attending several Planning Board and Zoning Board meeting that there were more special exceptions and special approvals to build developments in the downtown. Mrs. Goldstein stated that she believes that developers, property owners, and citizens are at a loss for what zoning is in the downtown. As a result, she said that DSSD wanted to hire a consultant to review Master Plan and the Zoning Regulations and all of the applications that came before the boards. She explained that it was her hope to make zoning simpler in Downtown Stamford.

Mrs. Goldstein added that the DSSD, partnering with the Stamford Urban redevelopment Commission (URC) decided to hire a consultant to work with stakeholders, review everything to come up with Zoning Regulations that work for downtown that are geographically specific.

David Kooris, Vice President of RPA, introduced himself to the Boards and described a brief history of RPA and its mission. He explained that the RPA very much believes in the public process and hopes to replicate a smaller version of Stamford's 2002 Master Plan, a plan in which RPA worked as a led consultant for the City.

Mr. Kooris distributed a brief summary memo outlining the Downtown Stamford Vision and Zoning. He explained that the project would be conducted in three steps:

First, the analysis phase. In this phase, Mr. Kooris described how he would review the existing Master Plan's items related to downtown, looking at geographic scope, and new concepts. Next, along with Phillips, Price and Shappiro a review of the applications approved /not approved in downtown over the past 6 years and synthesize the common trends. Lastly, he explained that they would review best practices and research projects from comparable cities across country like Arlington, VA, and Bellevue, WA.

Second, the workshop, the workshop phase. Mr. Kooris described how several roundtable discussion series have been held, the first, end of July, focused on parking.

He said that the second will be September 1st and will focus on design and amenity issues, and the trade-offs involved with a quality built environment. Mr. Kooris added that he hoped to hold a larger workshop in late September which would be more of an interactive design workshop.

Third, the new vision for the downtown. Mr. Kooris explained that the results for the first to phases of the project would result in a white paper on and not result in actual zoning text but that could be easily translated into zoning text.

Mrs. Dell asked if there any questions from the Board members. Mr. David Stein of the Zoning Board asked if the goal would be zoning regulations for downtown, which conform to a Master Plan how the Board's involvement in the process would work. Mr. Kooris explained that they wanted each Board's feedback on where we've gone to date before any final zoning text is drawn. He added that the earlier and more frequently Board is engaged, the more the process will improve.

Mrs. Dell of the Planning Board asked why the DSSD decided to do this project? Were developers / property owners upset? Mrs. Goldstein responded that many developers when planning projects don't know what they can do with their property and don't know where to go to. Her hope is for new zoning which is clear and informs developers and property owners alike what they can do.

Mrs. Audrey Cosentini of the Zoning Board stated that she remembered when 2002 Master Plan came out and wondered if the DSSD wants to have more as-of-right zoning or clearer standards? Mrs. Goldstein explained that they don't want to take away any of the Zoning Board's duties but want developers to understand zoning regulations. She wants the Zoning Regulations to conform to the Master Plan Goals and recommendations.

Mr. Jay Tepper of the Planning Board said that he was puzzled by the process. Mrs. Goldstein explained that they want the Board's input and that they think they will propose regulations that are good for Downtown and the City.

Mrs. Cosentini commented that fast tracking the parking issues shouldn't be done. She explained that this is the major issue in the Downtown and you don't put the cart before the horse.

Mr. Kooris explained the importance of parking an issue which was immediately raised when they were hired. He said that the roundtable which took place in late July, discussed a lot about ratios and factors that affect demand, bulk of discussion more effective and efficient utilization of existing public facilities. He added that the perceived parking problems are more a product of the existing conditions.

Mrs. Dell commented that Robin Stein wished to explain why staff is allowing this presentation.

Robin Stein, Land Use Bureau Chief, explained that in the 1980s after updates to the Master Plan, the Zoning Board, did comprehensive rezoning of the City, however, denied its own Downtown Zoning. He stated that to his knowledge there has never been a comprehensive rezoning of Downtown and that we have seen piecemeal amending of Downtown regulations and it is time to do a project like this. Mr. Stein added that it's long overdue and hopes will result in a useful product. He explained that during this first phase white papers both Boards can be involved but in the next phase in which the actual zoning text applications are presented that Boards need to be hands off.

Mrs. Cosentini stated that they should pull out all references to CNN and put them in a single location in the regulations and asked when the Board's would we hear from the DSSD / RPA again. Mrs. Goldstein stated by early Fall will likely have something to show.

Mr. Harry Parson of the Zoning Board commented that the names listed on the Board of the RPA showed a lack of diversity. Mr. Kooris and Mrs. Goldstein addressed the questions and explained that the RPA's Board is not relevant to this project and that in this project the groups involved will be inclusive and representative of entire community.

Mrs. Dell concluded the joint meeting of the Planning Board and Zoning board and explained they would resume with the regular meeting of the Planning Board.

Lease Agreement Requests:

Lease Agreement between Yerwood Center and the City of Stamford (Board of Education) for operation of an alternative high school.

The Yerwood Center lease agreement was explained to the Board and described as a good deal for neighborhood kids.

Mrs. Fishman moved to recommend approval of lease agreement request. Mr. Tepper seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 4-0. (Dell, Grosso, Fishman, and Tepper)

Lease Agreement between State of Connecticut and the City of Stamford for property to be used for pedestrian access to the Environmental Magnet School.

Mr. Lou Casolo, City Engineer described the request. He explained that the State requires that new environmental Magnet School have walking access to it and that he has worked with DOT to get lease agreement. Mrs. Dell asked if landscaping would limit access. Mr. Casolo said yes and that additional bollards and fencing will limit access along I-95.

Mr. Tepper moved to recommend approval of lease agreement request. Mrs. Grosso seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 4-0. (Dell, Grosso, Fishman, and Tepper)

Supplemental Capital Project Appropriation Request:

Master Plans – Land Use / Transportation /Pedestrian Studies, \$50,000.

Mr. Robin Stein briefly described the request. He said that this is the third time before the Board to accept funding and comes from the Zoning Board's approval of the Metro, Yale & Towne and Harbor Point projects, adding that is must be formally accepted.

Mrs. Grosso moved to recommend approval of supplemental capital appropriation request. Mr. Tepper seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 4-0. (Dell, Grosso, Fishman, and Tepper)

Photovoltaic System Installation, Engineering Bureau, \$937,262**

Mrs. Dell called for a vote to take to place this matter on the agenda. Mrs. Fishman moved to add the item to the agenda. Mrs. Grosso seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 4-0. (Dell, Grosso, Fishman, and Tepper)

Mr. Ben Barnes, Director of Operations, described the request. He explained that it was a long running project to install photovoltaic panels on the roofs of a City garage and on the Rippowam School. Mr. Barnes stated that the photovoltaic panels were from the grant money from the CT Clean Energy Fund. He further explained that the panels would be owned by the City but operated by Sun Edison. Mr. Tepper asked what the total electricity saving would be over a year. Mr. Barnes answered approximately \$30K per year.

Mr. Tepper moved to recommend approval of supplemental capital appropriation request. Mrs. Fishman seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 4-0. (Dell, Grosso, Fishman, and Tepper)

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

May 26th, 2009

Mrs. Fishman moved approval of the meeting minutes. Mr. Tepper seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 4-0. (Dell, Grosso Fishman & Tepper)

June 9th, 2009

Mrs. Dell moved approval of the meeting minutes. Mr. Grosso seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 3-0. (Hill, Dell, Fishman, Grosso)

June 30th, 2009

Mrs. Fishman moved approval of the meeting minutes. Mr. Tepper seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 4-0. (Dell, Grosso Fishman & Tepper)

July 21st, 2009

Mrs. Fishman moved approval of the meeting minutes. Mr. Tepper seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 4-0. (Dell, Grosso Fishman & Tepper)

Old Business

Subdivision #3982, 51 Pakenmer Road, Request for a modification of condition #11. Discussion on this item was tabled to a future date.

Subdivision #3959, 37 Cowan Avenue, Request for a 90-day extension to file the final map.

Mr. Tepper moved approval of the request. Mrs. Grosso seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 4-0. (Dell, Grosso Fishman & Tepper)

There being no further business to discuss, Mrs. Dell adjourned the meeting at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rose Marie Grosso, Secretary

Note: These proceedings were recorded on tape and are available for review in the Land Use Bureau located on the 7th floor of Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard, during regular business hours.