

**COMMISSION ON THE CITY PLAN**  
**Tuesday, May 18, 2021, 7:00 PM**  
**Virtual/Remote Meeting**  
**NORWICH, CT**  
**REGULAR MEETING**

Assistant City Planner Daniel Daniska read information pertaining to virtual meetings and clearly stated that the meeting, including video, would be recorded.

A. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Frank Manfredi called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

B. ROLL CALL AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES:

Present: Chairman Frank Manfredi, Vice Chairman Les King, Swarnjit Singh Bhatia and Kathy Warzecha

Absent: Jason Courter and Michael Lahan

Swarnjit Singh Bhatia was seated as a participating member.

Others Present: City Planner Deanna Rhodes, Assistant City Planner Dan Daniska, William Eyberse, Mark Block, Alexander Gebbie, Brandon Handfield of Yantic River Consulting, Peter Smith of Crosskey Architects, Joseph Theroux and Recording Secretary Melinda Wilson

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Commission on the City Plan (CCP) April 20, 2021 Meeting Minutes

On a motion by Swarnjit Singh Bhatia, seconded by Les King, the minutes of the April 20, 2021 CCP meeting were approved as presented. Kathy Warzecha abstained due to non-attendance.

D. COMMUNICATIONS: City Planner Deanna Rhodes reported on three communications.

The Connecticut Federation of Planning & Zoning Agencies sent three award Letters for Length of Service – Frank Manfredi, Les King and Michael Lahan have all have served for 12 years or more on a planning & zoning board. She has the letters in her office.

The Town of Sprague sent a notice that they plan to amend their regulations for campgrounds and permitted uses. Going forward, campgrounds will be a prohibited use. Staff has no problem with this change.

Ms. Rhodes reminded any members who have not yet done so to renew their application for CCP membership on the City's website.

E. NEW BUSINESS:

1) **SP#18-08A: 140 Yantic Road.** Modification to a Special Permit (previously known as #18-08 & #18-08M) to convert an existing mill building to a hotel, with associated improvements and amenities, within a designated Special Flood Hazard Area. Proposed modifications are in response to comments from the State Historic Preservation Office and National Park Service and include the following: reduction in the number of rooms from 151 to 146; boiler building use change from restaurant to recreational/pool amenity; elimination of an addition to the boiler building, reduction in size of connection from boiler building to hotel; Porte Cochere eliminated and replaced with canopy; rear entrance plaza reduced and landscaping increased. Application and property of Mill Development CT, LLC. Assessor's Map 49, Block 1, Lot 45, Zone PMR (Mill Re-Use Overlay Zone)

On a motion by Les King, seconded by Kathy Warzecha, the CCP unanimously opened a public hearing for SP#18-08A.

Brandon Handfield of Yantic River Consulting spoke on behalf of the applicant, Mill Development CT, LLC. He reviewed topography, FEMA flood map designations and other information previously supplied to the CCP. The mill buildings are in the 100 year flood zone. After review by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the National Park Service (NPS), the applicant proposes to lower the size of the building by 4,400 ft<sup>2</sup>, replacing this space with landscaping, pavers and a fire pit. There will be smaller walkways and entryway. The boiler room will be kept as a separate building as NPS did not want interconnection between the main mill building and the boiler room. The site is on the National Historic Register and the applicant is seeking tax credits. Peter Smith of Crosskey Architects spoke for the applicant to explain that the plans were reviewed by the NPS due to the potential of historic tax credits. The pool will now be located in the boiler building. It was originally designed to be included in the connection between the buildings. The boiler room was originally designed as a restaurant but the restaurant has been removed from the plan.

Other changes to the plan include a lower number of rooms, down to 146 from 151. A small canopy will be hung over the southerly entrance and a glass corridor will connect to boiler building. He noted the importance of the stack. He confirmed it will be rehabilitated and remain. Also the race will be preserved as much as possible. Also under consideration is a monument to honor those that built and worked at the mill. Mr. Smith expressed his opinion that this is an improvement over the previous plan.

No one spoke in opposition to the application.

Ms. Warzecha confirmed that the kitchen for the restaurant has been removed from the plan. Mr. Smith noted that the banquet facility and kitchen will remain.

Ms. Rhodes read information into the record including an email from the City Historian, Dale Plummer. She asked to waive reading of the list of exhibits and the Commission concurred. She reviewed her memo and stated that her concerns had been met by the applicant.

On a motion to close the public hearing by Les King, seconded by Swarnjit Singh Bhatia, the CCP unanimously closed the public hearing.

Kathy Warzecha made a motion to approve SP#18-08A with the following conditions:

1. The waiver for compensatory storage and all other conditions from previous approval SP#18-08 shall remain in effect and are to be considered part of this approval. Conditions #3 & #4 of SP#18-08 (M) are superseded by this approval.
2. Separate mylar sets are not required to be filed for SP#18-08 and #18-08(M), but the City of Norwich letters of approval for those applications shall be placed on the final mylar set for this project.
3. That the approval of this modification does not extend the previously set timeline from SP#18-08. The approval will expire in 5 years from the original approval date of 12/18/18 unless an extension has been granted by the Commission in accordance with ZR Section 7.7.10.1.

REASON: The proposal conforms to Chapter 5 and Section 3.4 and Section 7.7 of the Zoning Regulations.

Swarnjit Singh Bhatia seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**2) SDP#A: 140 Yantic Road.** Modification to a Site Plan (previously known as SDP #1042) to convert an existing mill building to a hotel. Proposed modifications are in response to comments from the State Historic Preservation Office and National Park Service and include the following: reduction in the number of rooms from 151 to 146; boiler building use change from restaurant to recreational/pool amenity; elimination of an addition

to the boiler building, reduction in size of connection from boiler building to hotel; Porte Cochere eliminated and replaced with canopy; rear entrance plaza reduced and landscaping increased. Application and property of Mill Development CT, LLC. Assessor's Map 49, Block 1, Lot 45, Zone PMR (Mill Re-Use Overlay Zone)

Chair Manfredi noted that a public hearing was not necessary. Ms. Rhodes reviewed her memo. She further stated that all the testimony and exhibits presented for SP 18-08A are also replicated with this application.

Kathy Warzecha made a motion to approve SDP#1042A with the following instructions that are integral to this approval as recommended herein:

1. That all conditions from previous approval SDP#1042 shall remain in effect and are to be considered part of this approval.
2. That the mylar set for SDP#1042 is not required to be filed due to this modification, however, the City of Norwich letter of approval for that application shall be placed on the final mylar set for this project.
3. That the approval of this modification does not extend the previously set timeline for SDP#1042. The approval will expire in 5 years from the original approval date of 12/18/18 unless an extension has been granted by the Commission in accordance with ZR Section 7.7.10.1.

REASON: The proposal conforms to Chapter 5 and Section 7.5 of the Zoning Regulations.

Les King seconded the motion. The CCP unanimously approved the motion.

**3) Referral from Zoning Board of Appeals in accordance with ZR Section 7.10.2.5: ZBA#21-07: Myrtle Drive.**

Request for a use variance to allow multifamily residential development on properties located within the Business Park (BP) Zone. Application of Alexander Gebbie, member of Ever Real Properties, LLC. Property of Estate of Margaret C. Stanley c/o Michael Lahan Esq. Assessor's Map 41, Block 1, Lots 5 and RD, Zone BP

Ms. Rhodes noted that normally outside testimony was not customary allowed for a board-to-board referral. However, Mark Block, Counsel for the applicant, Brandon Handfield and Alexander Gebbie were present and available to speak. She read the application narrative including their stated hardship as it relates to the request for a non-permitted use in the zone.

Discussion ensued as to the uses of adjoining properties which include multi-family residential and an industrial warehouse. The relative availability of industrial property was also discussed. Kathy Warzecha asked about the length of time the property has been listed for sale, noted the proximity to the Federal Express building for possible expansion opportunities and added that financial reasons are not a hardship.

Les King made a motion to send a positive recommendation to the ZBA regarding the variance request. The motion was seconded by Swarnjit Singh Bhatia. The motion passed.

**F. OLD BUSINESS:**

- **612 West Thames Street** – Plan for Tree Cutting and Conservation Easement  
Joseph Theroux, Certified Forester and Soil Scientist, presented a restoration plan for the property and noted . He suggested two phases including site clean-up and planting. Mr. Daniska reported that the parties have been sent this report. Attorney Greene reported that he wants his client held harmless. Ms. Rhodes noted that Cove View Towers is in violation of the conservation easement. After discussion, the CCP members were comfortable with this plan with the only outstanding questions relating to the number and position of the plantings.

Kathy Warzecha made a motion to approve the plan with the following conditions:

- 4 each of the trees listed in the report shall be planted
- 6 each of the shrubs listed in the report shall be planted

- Mr. Theroux will mark the locations of the plantings in the field
- Mr. Theroux will submit an invoice for all of his work to Teresa Hanlon, the City Tree Warden, who will then bill the responsible party (CVT).

Les King seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The CCP members agreed that Ms. Rhodes and Mr. Daniska can now independently move forward with parties.

- **Referral from the City Council:** AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE ABATEMENT OF REAL ESTATE TAXES ON REAL PROPERTY IMPROVEMENTS AND THE WAIVER OF BUILDING PERMIT FEES FOR THE HISTORIC REDEVELOPMENT AND/OR REUSE OF THE PONEMAH MILL BUILDING #2, ALSO KNOWN AS 555 & 575 NORWICH AVENUE – **TABLED At the Request of the Applicant.**

G. EXTENSION REQUESTS: None

H. BOND REDUCTION / RELEASE REQUESTS: Ms. Rhodes reported that Dime Bank requested release of a bond related to their work at 115 West Town Street for ATM improvements. She noted that the work is complete. They request that the bond of \$4,500 be released. She noted that Brian Long, City Engineer, said it is all set. This relates to SP #19-01. On a motion by Les King, seconded by Swarnjit Singh Bhatia, the CCP unanimously released the bond for SP #19-01.

I. OTHER BUSINESS:

- DRAFT – Open Space Fee Language – Subdivision Regulations  
Ms. Rhodes asked to table this item. She met with Michael Lahan today. She will present this at next month's meeting.
- DRAFT – Building Square Footage to Trigger CCP Review Language – Zoning Regulations: **Referred to City Attorney**

J. POCD Plan Implementation Committee (PIC) MEETING UPDATE + REMINDER: July 14, 2021 Virtual Meeting

Chair Manfredi reminded the CCP members of the July 14, 2021 POCD-PIC meeting. Ms. Rhodes said staff will go through each chapter and prepare comments. At this meeting, decisions will need to be made regarding the process that will be followed for the update of the POCD.

K. STAFF REPORT: Ms. Rhodes reported the following:

- June 21 Presentation in Council Chambers – Draft Short-term Rental Ordinance  
Ms. Rhodes reported that Dan Daniska, Rich Shuck and she will present for 45 minutes prior to the June 21, 2021 City Council meeting. This will be from 6 - 6:45 PM. Her department has collaborated with Mayor Peter Nystrom, Council President Pro-Tempore Mark Bettencourt and the City Attorney, Michael Driscoll. They have reviewed ordinances adopted locally and through-out the nation. This is a complex issue and Norwich is somewhat unique. The idea is to propose locating short-term rentals within ½ mile of public transit. This will allow for less impact in more rural areas. Their approach applies transit-oriented development to a short-term rental ordinance.
- Complete Streets – Draft Ordinance  
Ms. Rhodes reported that her department has collaborated with the Department of Public Works to draft this ordinance. Mr. Daniska, a transportation planner, started working on this project as a volunteer before he worked for the city. This is important for the development of the city. It is

expected that there will be a presentation to the City Council once the budget season is over. The directive is to consider all road network users when making transportation investments. Relative to this, the City applied through the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) for a planning study of downtown mobility. This would include the Route 82 redevelopment to downtown and Route 2 Washington Street to Main Street. The goal would be to diminish high speed car travel and make it easier for people to walk and get to intermodal parking. SCCOG submits to the state Department of Transportation for selection. The cost of the study would be \$250,000.

L: ADJOURNMENT: On a motion by Les King, seconded by Swarnjit Singh Bhatia, the CCP unanimously adjourned at 8:18 PM.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Melinda Wilson,  
Recording Secretary*