

East Hartford Planning & Zoning Commission
Hybrid-Teleconference Meeting
January 10, 2024

2024 JAN 12 AM 11:15

TOWN CLERK
EAST HARTFORD

A Regular Meeting of the **EAST HARTFORD PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION** and was held via Microsoft "Teams" at Community Cultural Center 50 Chapman PL Auditorium, East Hartford CT – January 10, 2024.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ryan called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Present:

John Ryan, Chair
Peter Marra
Henry Pawlowski
Valentine Povinelli
Stephen Roczynski
Sidney Soderholm
Wesaneit Tsegai

Also Present

Carlene Shaw, Town Planner
Steve Hnatuk, Deputy Director of Planning Development

PUBLIC HEARING

The legal notice read into minutes by Sidney Soderholm, Commissioner.

LEGAL NOTICE

The following legal notice was published in the **Journal Inquirer** on **December 30, 2023** and **January 2, 2024**.

The Town of East Hartford Planning and Zoning Commission will hold a hybrid teleconference public hearing at the East Hartford Community Cultural Center Auditorium located at 50 Chapman Place East Hartford and on a Microsoft Teams virtual meeting on Wednesday, January 10, 2024 at 7:00 P.M. for the following applications:

2. PUBLIC HEARING APPLICATIONS

A. REGULATION AMENDMENT: 475 East Hartford Blvd North, 501 East Hartford Blvd North, 595-645 East Hartford Blvd North, 695 East Hartford Blvd North, and 186 Brewer Street – Under Section 5.3 and 9.5; Application for a regulation amendment for an

increase in permitted vehicular directional signage associated with the existing DDD-1 Master Plan.

Applicant: Darcie Roy

Assessor's Map/Lot: 33/5, 33/6, 33/7, 33/8, 31/3

Application Documents: 475 East Hartford Blvd North Application Documents

Carlene Shaw gave a brief synopsis of the text amendments before the applicant presents. The town's general signage requirement allow for a maximum of 3sqft; with P&Z approval can be more, up to 50%, expanding up to 4.5sqft. There are two different master plans and two different text amendments.

Russ Hassman, President and CEO of National Sign spoke on behalf of the DDD-1 Master Plan and text amendments for both on site and off site. Due to the size of the technology park and the number of businesses within the park, clear and distinct signage is necessary to direct both passenger vehicles and trucks entering and exiting. The signs will be 17inches high and 18 inches long which will be easily read and followed at all times of day.

Chair ask if any questions or comments by commission.

Anyone wishing to speak in favor of this application? Anyone wishing to speak in favor of this application? Anyone wishing to speak in favor of this application? Hearing none.

Anyone wishing to speak against this application? Anyone wishing to speak against this application? Anyone wishing to speak against this application? Hearing none.

Carlene Shaw- essentially next text amendment not necessary to go over as applicant spoke on behalf of both. Steve Hnatuk –text reads very similar language; only slightly different as 400 Main Street parcel is adjacent to logistic center. Carlene Shaw- applicant provided renderings of what it would look like, on the screen now to view.

B. REGULATION AMENDMENT: 400 Main Street – Under Section 5.3 and 9.5; Application for a regulation amendment for an increase in permitted vehicular directional signage associated with the existing DDD-1 Master Plan.

Applicant: Darcie Roy

Assessor's Map/Lot: 20/45

Application Documents: 400 Main Street Application Documents

Anyone wishing to speak in favor of this application? Anyone wishing to speak in favor of this application? Anyone wishing to speak in favor of this application? Hearing none.

Anyone wishing to speak against this application? Anyone wishing to speak against this application? Anyone wishing to speak against this application? Hearing none

Chair asks for a motion to move into regular meeting.

Com. Roczynski makes motion to move into regular meeting. Motion seconded by Com. Soderholm. All in favor. Motion approved.

REGULAR MEETING

3. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. REGULATION AMENDMENT:** 475 East Hartford Blvd North, 501 East Hartford Blvd North, 595-645 East Hartford Blvd North, 695 East Hartford Blvd North, and 186 Brewer Street – Under Section 5.3 and 9.5; Application for a regulation amendment for an increase in permitted vehicular directional signage associated with the existing DDD-1 Master Plan.
Applicant: Darcie Roy
Assessor's Map/Lot: 33/5, 33/6, 33/7, 33/8, 31/3

Application Documents: 475 East Hartford Blvd North Application Documents

Com. Soderholm – glad that this signage allowance will improve; I was finding my way in the dark into a dealership in East Hartford and the signage was smallish in print and can't imagine a tractor trailer dealing with this. Maybe we should also be looking into our directional signage regulation.

Motion made by Com. Pawlowski to approve the regulation amendment 475 East Hartford Blvd North, 501 East Hartford Blvd North, 595-645 East Hartford Blvd North, 695 East Hartford Blvd North, and 186 Brewer Street – Under Section 5.3 and 9.5; Application for a regulation amendment for an increase in permitted vehicular directional signage associated with the existing DDD-1 Master Plan. Applicant: Darcie Roy Assessor's Map/Lot: 33/5, 33/6, 33/7, 33/8, 31/3
Motion seconded by Com. Roczynski. All in favor. Motion approved.

- B. REGULATION AMENDMENT:** 400 Main Street – Under Section 5.3 and 9.5; Application for a regulation amendment for an increase in permitted vehicular directional signage associated with the existing DDD-1 Master Plan.
Applicant: Darcie Roy
Assessor's Map/Lot: 20/45

Application Documents: 400 Main Street Application Documents

Motion made by Com. Pawlowski to approve regulation amendment 400 Main Street – Under Section 5.3 and 9.5; Application for a regulation amendment for an increase in permitted vehicular directional signage associated with the existing DDD-1 Master Plan. Applicant: Darcie Roy
Assessor's Map/Lot: 20/45
Motion seconded by Com. Roczynski. All in favor. Motion approved.

4. MISCELLANEOUS:

A. 2024 PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (POCD)

- Summary of Findings from the November 28th, 2023 Public Workshop
- Review of Vision, Goals, and Objectives of the 2024 POCD

Document Link: Public Workshop Summary

Steve Hnatuk –BFJ has put together a PowerPoint with small project update and recap of the public workshops. Presentation can be found on the website.

• Stakeholder meetings complete • Additional meeting held with Port Eastside developer on Founders Plaza • Ideas Wall launched; November 28 public workshop held

Ideas Wall launched on 11/28/23. Public workshop summary available online. Heavy Comments. Newspaper article published in Gazette with Bill Doak's help. BFJ is finalizing Founders Plaza existing condition and market analysis, to schedule targeted stakeholder meetings. Asking for commissioners suggestions.

Chair Ryan states targeted workshops are better, more effective. Com. Pawlowski agrees targeting meeting to areas.

Continuing work on draft POCD chapters; overview of public workshop by BFJ.

- Held at Senior Center November 28, approximately 30 attendees, including: residents, business owners, P&Z and Town Council members.
- BFJ presented project overview, feedback from stakeholder meetings, and key demographic trends. Open House portion sought open-ended public feedback on 2014 vision and goals.
- Participants supported the overall goals from the prior POCD and largely echoed feedback from stakeholder meetings.

Emergent Themes-Vision and Goals

Desire for more self-sufficient neighborhoods where people can access their basic needs. This may indicate a need to allow different formats and scale of housing beyond just single-family, while maintaining the overall neighborhood scale, as well as a focus on nearby corridors/transit nodes within walking distance, and how to focus mixed-use investment to these areas. ♣ Focus on non-auto mobility – safe and effective pedestrian and bike linkages, particularly along key corridors, employment nodes, and near parks and schools. This includes need for traffic calming and bus improvements (service and amenities). ♣ Town seen as offering little in goods and services; people must travel elsewhere. Town Center, especially, needs activity and a reason to visit. Strategies include more housing, traffic calming/complete streets, and public realm improvements, as well as downtown management (e.g. a BID). ♣ Need to balance community needs for social services and public facilities with fiscal prudence, focusing on effective maintenance of the existing system vs. significant expansion. ♣ Lack of cultural resources and organizations in East Hartford, but an opportunity to build on its diversity and entrepreneurship to cultivate a creative class and increase visibility of the arts. ♣ Need to incorporate sustainability and resiliency across the board, given climate change impacts.

Chair-do we allow retail store on bottom of building with living above? S. Hnatuk states yes, mixed use zone. Also in residential can run a business in a home with a special permit.

Com. Soderholm is there a feasibility of small business in front yard? S. Hnatuk – yes small scale business can exist in residential neighborhood.

Com. Marra agrees with Chair Ryan going back in time when we had small businesses in town; mom and pop; have closed up as couldn't survive. That the draw to Main Street.

Susan Favate of BFJ joined the meeting and continued the discussion with the remaining slides.

Vision statement

Existing 2014 POCD and expanded on the proposed.

Proposed: East Hartford's tapestry of neighborhoods, business and employment nodes, and natural and municipal resources create a unique and diverse community that combines suburban living and an urban vibe. Our vision is that all residents can enjoy the highest quality of life balanced with economic prosperity: with thriving neighborhoods, an effective and accessible transportation network, a range of goods and services in attractive settings, and excellent community facilities and services.

Goals –Land Use

Existing 2014 POCD and expanded on the proposed.

Proposed goals: • Promote a diverse mix of uses that meet the needs of the community and support a strong tax base. • Use targeted zoning strategies and best practices to implement desired land use patterns, bolster existing neighborhoods, and facilitate economic revitalization of opportunity areas and corridors.

Goals-Housing

Existing 2014 POCD and expanded on the proposed.

Proposed goals: • Focus on enhancing and preserving East Hartford's neighborhoods. • Provide opportunities for the development of a diverse range of new housing types, at various price points, that meets the needs of people at various stages in their life. • Support programs that assist in the rehabilitation and maintenance of the Town's existing housing stock.

Com. Soderholm likes bullet 3-suggestion of community volunteers - cleanup day for homeowners. Com. Marra states we have a program- Home Front Program- Com. Roczynski runs the program. Helps homeowners, residents need to apply for help. Contractors go in and repair and replace what is needed.

Is there funding available? Yes –S. Hnatuk funding from HUD and PECG -needs to be better publicized.

Goals Transportation

Existing 2014 POCD and expanded on the proposed.

Proposed goals: • Ensure safe, functional, and accessible mobility for all users: drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders. • Leverage opportunities to better connect public and community facilities such as parks, schools, business districts, and natural resources. • Promote efficient traffic circulation and adequate parking to ensure that East Hartford's commercial areas and employment nodes can continue to thrive.

Goals Environmental

Existing 2014 POCD and expanded on the proposed.

Proposed goals: • Promote the conservation and preservation of natural resources to enhance the Town's ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change, including its capacity to recover from emergencies and natural disasters. • Support environmental sustainability initiatives that improve waste and energy systems, enhance the tree canopy, protect natural resources, and strengthen connections to open space and recreational amenities.

Goals Economic Development

Existing 2014 POCD and expanded on the proposed.

Proposed goals: • Promote economic development activities that support existing businesses, attract new business and employment, and foster entrepreneurship and creativity, including programming, strategic zoning, and revitalization of deteriorated commercial sites. • Invest in Main Street to facilitate mixed-use nodes of activity in the central business district, in the Goodwin University area, and at the southern end. • Support revitalization of the riverfront area as an

attractive gateway into East Hartford and a focus of economic activity. • Upgrade commercial corridors to support diverse uses, improve aesthetics, and support a multimodal environment.

Com. Soderholm in description of Main Street- how far are you going up Main? Also people forget about School Street Plaza; fit it into the neighborhood area.

Goals Parks/Open Space/Recreation

Existing 2014 POCD and expanded on the proposed.

Proposed goals: • Provide a system of linked public and private open space that offers both passive and active recreation opportunities, protects environmentally sensitive areas, and leverage opportunities for sustainability and resiliency initiatives. • Improve and protect residential quality of life by maintaining and enhancing the park and open space system to provide active and passive recreational amenities that are adequate in extent, strategic in location, and equitable in distribution. • Pursue strategic investments in the open space system that ensure achievable and consistent long-term management and maintenance of facilities.

Com. Soderholm states the last bullet is an important one. How the town manages those long-term maintenance.

Goals Community Facilities

Existing 2014 POCD and expanded on the proposed.

Proposed goals: • Facilitate necessary infrastructure and municipal facility upgrades to maximize public safety, meet the capacity needs of residents and businesses, protect against natural hazards, advance sustainability and resiliency initiatives, and ensure cost-effectiveness. • Exercise strong capital and programmatic planning to ensure adequate provision of community and social services, efficiency in the use of buildings and land, and predictability in Town expenditures. • Improve communication and coordination across municipal departments, agencies, and boards and committees.

Goals Historic & Cultural Resources

Existing 2014 POCD and expanded on the proposed.

Proposed goals: ♣ Preserve the Town's historic resources to enhance quality of life and promote economic development, including updating data and resources to reflect current best practices and provide the necessary tools for effective preservation. ♣ Within designated historic districts, upgrade the public realm (sidewalks, signage, and streetlights) to present a cohesive district identity and enhance conditions for pedestrians. ♣ Enhance the visibility of historic districts and sites through repair/replacement of historical markers and publicizing such resources on the Town's website and other publications.

Com. Soderholm- the communication piece is very important. With the amount of people moving in and out of town how do we let them know what there is here? Social media? How can we communicate with them?

B. 2024 PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION ELECTIONS:

- Chairperson
- Vice-Chairperson
- Secretary
- Regional Planning Commission Representative and Alternate

Chair would like to postpone for one month. Many have not received their letters. Entertains a motion to table.

Com. Soderholm makes a motion to table for one month the commission elections. Motion seconded by Com. Pawlowski. All in favor. Motion approved.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes – November 8th, 2023

B. Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes – December 13th, 2023

Motion to approve minutes of November 8, 2023 made by Com. Pawlowski and seconded by Com. Roczynski. All in favor. Motion approved.

Com. Soderholm states he only attended the meeting up to #3 Pre-Application Review after the comments. Also Com. Soderholm has a correction/addition to comments made. Add the following the comment: The study did not address the question of the safety and possible long delays turning left onto Main Street if there was no stop light or 4-way stop sign installed there. Remove the sentence –Also if a traffic light installed.....

Motion made by Com. Soderholm to accept minutes with corrections. Com. Roczynski seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion approved.

Questions by Commissioners:

Com. Soderholm asks about the meeting stated in the minutes for 2/8/24. S. Hnatuk states that meeting is no longer on the table.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Ryan entertains a motion to adjourn.

Motion by Com. Soderholm to adjourn meeting, seconded by Com. Roczynski. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:22 PM.

Next meeting is February 14, 2024 at 7:00 pm

Location Community Cultural Center Auditorium

Respectfully submitted,

Sana Hart, Clerk