

**STAMFORD PLANNING BOARD
APPROVED MINUTES - TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2020
REGULAR MEETING & PUBLIC HEARING
VIA THE INTERNET & CONFERENCE CALL**

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- If your computer/smartphone has mic and speaker then: Type in, paste or click the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86785289603>; **OR** If not, **Call in** using the **phone number & password** provided above.
- Sign-up for Planning Board meeting updates by emailing lcapp@stamfordct.gov.

Web meeting ground rules:

- The meeting shall be recorded and the video shall be posted on the City of Stamford website http://cityofstamford.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=8
- The Planning Board shall moderate the audio for attendees.
- Attendees shall be on mute and will be unmuted when called to speak by the Planning Board members.
- Applicants will have 20 minutes to make their presentation.
- Any applicant wishing to submit written testimony can send it prior to the meeting to lcapp@stamfordct.gov or submit through a Chat message to the Planning Board Chair during the meeting.

Stamford Planning Board Members present were: Voting Members: Theresa Dell, Chair; Jay Tepper, Vice Chair; Jennifer Godzeno, Secretary; Michael Boccino and Michael Totilo. Alternates: Claire Fishman and William Levin. Present for staff: David W. Woods, PhD, FAICP, Deputy Director of Planning and Thomas Madden, Director of Economic Development.

Ms. Dell called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. and introduced the members of the Board and staff present.

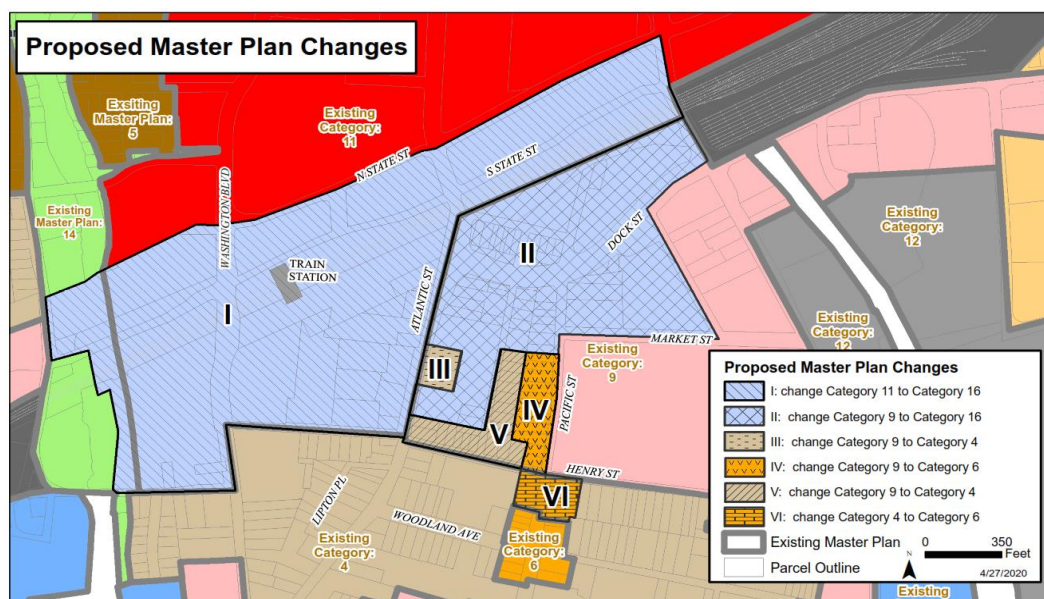
PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES:

April 28, 2020 (Tabled until the May 26, 2020 meeting)

PUBLIC HEARING

MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT #MP-436: The Planning Board of the City of Stamford has submitted a Master Plan Amendment proposing the South End Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) District - Master Plan Category #16 and various Map Changes. The applicant is proposing a new Master Plan Category #16 - Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) District as well as the proposed Master Plan Map Changes as follows:

- Area I:** Change from MP Category #11 (Downtown) to MP Category #16 (Transit-Oriented Development District)
- Area II:** Change from MP Category #9 (Urban Mixed-Use) to MP Category #16 (Transit-Oriented Development District)
- Area III:** Change from MP Category #9 (Urban Mixed-Use) to MP Category #4 (Residential-Medium Density Multifamily)
- Area IV:** Change from MP Category #9 (Urban Mixed-Use) to MP Category #4 (Residential-Medium Density Multifamily)
- Area V:** Change from MP Category #9 (Urban Mixed-Use) to MP Category #6 (Commercial - Neighborhood Business)
- Area VI:** Change from MP Category #4 (Residential-Medium Density Multifamily) to MP Category #6 (Commercial - Neighborhood Business)



Ms. Dell read the following introduction to the Public Hearing:

Good evening. My name is Theresa Dell, Chair of the Stamford Planning Board. With me tonight from the Planning Board is Jay Tepper, Vice Chair; Jennifer Godzeno, Secretary; Michael Totilo and Michael Buccino - Voting Members, and William Levin and Claire Fishman - Alternates, as well as Dr. David W. Woods, Deputy Director of Planning for the Land Use Bureau.

Tonight the Planning Board is holding a Public Hearing under **City of Stamford Charter Section C6-30-1: Powers and Duties of the Planning Board, Subsection (2)**, which states “the Planning Board has the duty and responsibility to “Prepare, adopt and amend the Master Plan.”

The Planning Board hopes to amend the Master Plan to add an additional Category #16 (Transit-Oriented Development District), as well as to make numerous map changes in response to the South End Neighborhood Study that was adopted in the Fall of 2018. The Planning Board wanted to hold this Public Hearing for this Master Plan Amendment in the Spring of 2019, but was advised to wait until the appeal was decided by the Court one way or the other, which had been rendered in favor of the advocate. It is important to note none of the areas that are being proposed to be amended tonight are near Harbor Point nor the B&S Carting site, but are north of Henry Street (except for a small area south of Henry Street on Pacific Street). In addition, since we have **no idea what form** future Public Hearings on all Boards and Commissions will take, and in conforming with the Governor’s Executive Order Nos. 71 and 7B, regarding public gatherings, we are going to hold this Public Hearing on Zoom, and believe all Planning Board business will take place online as well with Zoom.

II. Process of this Public Hearing

1. I, Chair Dell, will explain the Public Hearing process.
2. Jennifer Godzeno, Secretary, will read the Legal Notice into the Record. Dr. David W. Woods, FAICP, Deputy Director of Planning for the City of Stamford, will make a presentation outlining the reasons for these amendments and the properties involved; the Planning Board will have the opportunity to ask Dr. Woods any questions.
3. Prior to tonight’s Hearing, the Planning Board has received a number of letters in support and opposed to this Master Plan Amendment. I will start with the letters in support and ask if any of the writers would like to read their letters into the record; if not, Ms. Godzeno will read them for the public record. (This is to create the public record.) I will then ask if anyone who wishes to speak “In Favor” to raise their hand and will be called upon to address the Board.
4. I will do the same process with those opposed.
5. Finally, I will ask if anybody wishes to make any general comments; if so, they will be called upon to do so.
6. This is a Public Hearing. Once you have spoken, the Board will not allow you to speak a second time unless you want clarification of something already discussed.

III. Action by the Planning Board

Once all of the public testimony is completed, the Chair will close the Public Hearing and wait to deliberate and decide at its next meeting on May 26, 2020.

Ms. Dell asked Ms. Godzeno to read the Legal Notice into the record as follows:

LEGAL NOTICE
PLANNING BOARD - CITY OF STAMFORD

APPL. #MP-436 - Notice is hereby given that the Planning Board of the City of Stamford, CT will conduct a Public Hearing on **Tuesday, May 12, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.** via the Internet on Zoom to consider the application of the Stamford Planning Board to change Master Plan Category #11 (Downtown) to proposed Master Plan Category #16 (Transit-Oriented Development District - NEW); change Master Plan Category #9 (Urban Mixed-Use) to proposed Master Plan Category #16 (Transit-Oriented Development District - NEW); change Master Plan Category #9 (Urban Mixed-Use) to Master Plan Category #4 (Residential - Medium Density Multifamily); and change Master Plan Category #9 (Urban Mixed-Use) to Master Plan Category #6 (Commercial - Neighborhood).

NEW - Master Plan Category #16 (Transit-Oriented Development District)

This category is intended to support the development of high-density residential and office development within walking distance of the Stamford Transportation Center and to create a bridge between and support Downtown with its retail, entertainment, residential and other uses, and the predominantly residential South End. Densities could equal those of Downtown, but uses shall be limited to primarily office and residential uses with limited retail supporting these uses and commuters using the Stamford Transportation Center. The District shall be walkable but also accessible to the commuting public and maximize the potential of the Stamford Transportation Center. As the gateway to Stamford, special attention must be given to: (1) excellence in architecture and urban design; (2) public amenities; (3) pedestrian enhancements; (4) adequate parking for all uses including commuter parking; (5) mixed-use development, and (6) the creation of transit supporting amenities.

In addition, the following Master Plan Map Changes are proposed:

AREA I: Land to be changed from MP Category #11 to MP Category #16
AREA II: Land to be changed from MP Category #9 to MP Category #16
AREA III: Land to be changed from MP Category #9 to MP Category #4
AREA IV: Land to be changed from MP Category #9 to MP Category #4
AREA V: Land to be changed from MP Category #9 to MP Category #6
AREA VI: Land to be changed from MP Category #4 to MP Category #6

ATTEST: Theresa Dell, Chair
Planning Board
City of Stamford, CT

Dated at the City of Stamford, CT this 29th day of April 2020.

Ms. Dell introduced Dr. David Woods, PhD, FAICP, Deputy Director of Planning for the City of Stamford.

Dr. Woods made a presentation explaining the Master Plan Application and the reasons for the proposed changes. Afterwards, Dr. Woods answered questions from the Board.

Ms. Dell opened the public portion of the meeting and called for those “In Favor” to speak. Ms. Dell called for Mr. Baker to speak but did not respond. Mr. Goldstein stated he would be representing Mr. Baker of Baker Properties but he just had questions. Ms. Dell asked Mr. Goldstein to wait until she called for those who wished to address the Board with general comments.

Ms. Dell called Michael Moore who deferred to David Kooris, both with the DSSD, who read a statement previously sent to the Board.

Ms. Dell did agree with Mr. Kooris in making the change in the application from “limited retail” to “neighborhood retail” but would have a discussion on this item at a later date with the DSSD at a separate meeting to work on language.

Dr. Woods also suggested adding the word *hotels* into the language after the word *residential* to read “...residential, hotels and other uses...” I believe this is an oversight that the DSSD correctly pointed out.

Ms. Dell called asked the Board if all were in agreement and all concurred.

Mr. Levin asked for clarification.

Dr. Woods explained going back to 2002 and before that, we have wanted to have hotels in the core area of Downtown where they actually belong and the DSSD correctly pointed out that hotels do not belong south of I-95 (next to the STC). We already have a few hotels along the north side of I-95, (as well as in Waterside, and West Side neighborhoods within walking distance from the STC), especially the Marriott and a number Downtown. The idea of no hotels in this area and have hotels downtown has been a long-term policy and should be supported.

Mr. Levin stated he has an issue with this because he feels if hotels are restricted only to Downtown they will be expensive and have to pay for parking, etc. Other places, like motels, where people can stay less expensively and I know there are some in Stamford already and I would hate to see those disappear.

Dr. Woods explained these smaller motels would not go away.

Ms. Dell said when originally building in the South End we were allowing boutique hotels at one time.

Mr. Levin expressed concern that smaller motels would not be able to afford to be located downtown.

Dr. Woods said smaller motels would be in the downtown; it would be larger entities and would be high end because the land is expensive.

David Kooris stated that the issue at hand isn’t Downtown vs. highway-oriented motel, it’s Downtown vs. a comparable product immediately south of the tracks in this proposed Master Plan category. That is exclusively what we are commenting on today.

Ms. Dell explained the reason for the Transit-Oriented district was to make a distinction between Downtown and Transit-Oriented.

Ms. Dell stated this issue would be continued in the Planning Board discussion.

Ms. Dell called for anyone else to speak “In Favor.” Ms. Dell called on Marty Levine and asked him if he would like to speak. Mr. Levine declined as he was participating as an observer.

Ms. Dell then called for Frank Steinegger to address the Board.

Ms. Dell called on David Stein, Chair, Zoning Board; Ted Ferrarone, BLT and Rick Redniss, Redniss & Mead and all responded they were just listening.

Ms. Dell then asked Ms. Godzeno to read the letters & emails received “In Favor” from those who were not present into the record as follows:

- Christine Chung
- Barbara Czescik - South End Resident
- Dee (Czescik) Fumega - South End Property Owner
- Maribeth Czescik McMahon - South End Resident
- Mary Janocha - South End Resident
- Mike Morabito - South End Resident
- Frank Baker, Cacace Tusch & Santagaga

Ms. Dell called for those Opposed to this application.

Ms. Dell called Anne Goslin (Moore), Acting Chair, HPAC, to speak. Ms. Goslin spoke about a presentation heard by James Travers, Transportation Bureau Chief, on a project to improve Garden Street, which would include the demolition of three National Register Historic contributing resources located at 130 Henry Street, 79 Garden Street, and 644 Atlantic Street. HPAC feels the City did not show the need for this project and HPAC does not condone moving forward. Ms. Goslin spoke of other historic properties that were demolished.

Ms. Dell explained that the project spoken about by Mr. Travers has no connection to this Master Plan Amendment and the historic preservation would be a Zoning Board issue and again, is not part of this Master Plan application. Ms. Dell stated staff would reach out to Mr. Travers and to the Zoning Board regarding HPAC’s concerns.

Ms. Dell then called on Judy Norinsky, President, Historic Neighborhood Preservation. Ms. Norinsky read prepared comments into the record.

Ms. Dell stated again, the comments made are more in relation to the Transportation Department’s project to widen Garden Street and would be passed along to Mr. Travers.

Ms. Dell then called for Sue Halpern, Vice President, South End NRZ. Ms. Halpern read prepared comments previously sent to the Planning Board.

Ms. Dell then called for Sheila Barney and Marlene Rhome, who were not on video only on phone.

Ms. Dell then called the following who made comments for the record:

- Elizabeth MCauley, South End Resident
- Peter Quigley, South End Resident
- Sheila Barney, South End Resident & Property Owner
- Barry Michelson, Stamford Resident
- Terry Adams - Board of Representatives, District #7

Ms. Dell then asked Ms. Godzeno to read into the record letters & emails received in “Opposition,” who were not present, as follows:

- Robert Katchko - South End Property Owner
- Marlene Rhome - South End Resident
- Irene Toigo - South End Resident

Carmine Tomas, South End Business & Property Owner, joined the meeting and asked to read his comments into the record, which Ms. Dell granted.

Ms. Dell made a final call for anyone to speak in Opposition. There was no response.

Ms. Dell then called for anyone who would like to make general comments or ask questions.

Chris Brecciano asked about the small parcel on Henry Street and why this would change from MP Category #4 to MP Category #6.

Dr. Woods explained the change is to connect the area on Pacific Street as recommended in the South End Neighborhood Study.

Ms. Dell further explained that this would also provide an additional level of retail.

Ms. Dell called for Mr. Goldstein to address the Board.

Oliver Goldstein, Baker Properties, owner of a warehouse located at 49 John Street. Mr. Goldstein asked the following questions:

1. Will the heir rights to this property be impacted?
Dr. Woods: This is a Zoning question but no, the rights will not be impacted.
2. Building is currently in the M-G Zone and building use meets that. Can it be grandfathered in for future use?
Dr. Woods: Yes, the underlying zoning determines use under the Master Plan, which is MP Category #9 and would not change if the MP Category were changed to MP Category #16.
3. Would it be possible to get a letter stating such?
Dr. Woods: Yes but why?
Mr. Goldstein: Would like to have something to show property owners and have written record for our files.
4. In this current COVID-19 situation, will there be any economic impact?
Dr. Woods: At this point, we do not know.

Ms. Dell closed the public portion of the Public Hearing and opened up discussion for the Board members to ask Dr. Woods questions or make any comments.

After some discussion, Mr. Dell added in conclusion that these proposed changes were thought of as a way to clean-up the Master Plan especially with the designation change from Downtown vs. Transit-Oriented and the Transit-Oriented designation being a new feature that we are working through. The density feature would basically stay the same; just changing the Transit-Oriented designation on Areas I & II. But I think in Areas III, IV, V & VI helps bring down and will help keep the historic values on Henry Street and down near Woodland Avenue. We are now saying developers can only have a maximum of 4 stories in Category #4 and 5 stories in Category #6. If they do not put retail on the first floor in Category #6 they will have to build as if in Category #4 and only be allowed 4 stories. We thought this would help the South End in keeping development to a lower, more garden-variety type home that they were asking for and no high rises in the area. I understand the Historical Society's problem but do not feel this can be addressed by this Master Plan Amendment. Those issues will be addressed when an application from a developer comes forward and has a historic building as its home. There, we as a Planning Board, can state that the historic structure must be kept as part of the build. BLT kept the historic structure when redeveloping and renovating the fire house. The historic aspect of the South End has to come on an individual basis and here is where the Planning Board can make recommendations to the Zoning Board on what is allowed. As far as this application goes, it is more for with allowing heights in the development and to change the look of the Master Plan and separate Transit-Oriented from downtown. I have heard many of you asking to hold this but we cannot delay this indefinitely. We do not know how long this pandemic will last. I will ask the Planning Board that we do not close the Public Hearing tonight and continue to May 26, 2020. David and I will speak; we will try to see how we can get people to understand what is going on in the South End and allow others who have not spoken this evening, as you are already on the record, an opportunity to make comments. On May 26th, after any new speakers have made comments, the Planning Board will then close the public portion of the meeting and deliberate.

Ms. Dell then asked for a show of hands from the Board members if in agreement to continue the meeting to May 26, 2020. Ms. Dell stated all Board members raised their hands.

Ms. Dell stated the Public Hearing will not be closed and David and I will get together to figure out how to advise more people in the community about this and will hold our meeting on Zoom and get more people onboard and hear more opinions and hopefully, render our decision.

Dr. Woods stated that there were a total of 40 people who joined the meeting, which is one of the highest number of participants for a Planning Board meeting.

Ms. Dell stated the Board would take everyone's comments into consideration when making the decision.

Ms. Dell called for a motion to continue the Public Hearing to May 26, 2020.

Mr. Tepper made a motion to continue the Public Hearing to the May 26, 2020 meeting; Mr. Totilo seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Buccino, Godzeno, Tepper and Totilo).

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Next regularly scheduled Planning Board meetings are:

May 26, 2020 - Continuation of Public Hearing for Master Plan Amendment #MP-436

June 9, 2020

There being no further business to come before the Board, Ms. Dell adjourned the meeting at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Godzeno, Secretary
Stamford Planning Board

NOTE: *These proceedings were recorded on video and are available for review on the Planning Board website at <https://www.stamfordct.gov/planning-board-0>*