

**STAMFORD PLANNING BOARD
APPROVED MINUTES - TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2024
REGULAR MEETING
VIA THE INTERNET & CONFERENCE CALL
6:30 P.M.**

ZOOM WEBINAR

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83228676895>

Webinar ID: 832 2867 6895

Passcode: 830166

Stamford Planning Board Members present were: Voting Members: Theresa Dell, Chair; Jay Tepper, Vice Chair (Left the meeting at 8:55 p.m.); Jennifer Godzeno, Secretary and Michael Totilo. Alternates: William Levin and Stephen Perry. Present for staff: Ralph Blessing, Land Use Bureau Chief and Lindsey Cohen, Associate Planner.

Ms. Dell called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Ms. Dell introduced the members of the Board and staff present and introduced the first item on the agenda.

PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES:

May 14, 2024 - Regular Meeting (Tabled from the May 21, 2024 meeting): After a brief discussion Mr. Tepper moved to recommend *approval* of the Planning Board Regular Meeting Minutes of May 14, 2024; Mr. Perry seconded the motion, and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Godzeno, Levin, Perry and Tepper). (Mr. Totilo was ineligible to vote as he was absent at the May 14, 2024 meeting.)

May 21, 2024 - Regular Meeting & Public Hearing: After a brief discussion Mr. Perry moved to recommend *approval* of the Planning Board Regular Meeting Minutes of May 21, 2024; Mr. Tepper seconded the motion, and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Levin, Perry, Tepper and Totilo) (Ms. Godzeno was ineligible to vote as she was absent at the May 21, 2024 meeting.)

REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION

SUPPLEMENTAL CAPITAL PROJECT APPROPRIATION REQUESTS:

- 1. ELECTRIC VEHICLE INSTALLATION - 4TH FLOOR GOVERNMENT CENTER GARAGE - PROJECT #001394 - TOTAL REQUEST \$732,818.55:** This request is for the purchase and installation of twelve (12) Dual-Port Level II Electric Vehicle Chargers located on the 4th Floor of the Government Center parking garage. These chargers will be open to the public and will also serve the future electric fleet vehicles used by city employees. The administration will charge a fee to cover the operating costs of electric consumption when used by the public. The exact fee will be set closer to when the chargers are ready for use as electric prices fluctuate over time, and the \$/kWh rate will likely change from now until project completion. A fee will not be charged for use by City fleet vehicles. Included in the total cost are the chargers, electrical 'make-ready' components and infrastructure, engineering design, labor, and a 5-year maintenance contract. This project is eligible to receive CT Department of Environmental and Energy Protection (DEEP) grant funding (65% Grant / 35% City Match). This project is also eligible to receive utility incentives, estimated to be \$40,000. As the incentives are not a guarantee, they are not factored into this appropriation request.

Brandon Mark, Energy & Sustainability Engineer, City of Stamford, made a presentation and answered questions from the Board.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Totilo recommended *approval* of the Electric Vehicle Installation at the Government Center, 4th Floor. This request has been reviewed pursuant to Connecticut General Statute Section 8-24 and the City Charter Section C6-30-13 and finds this request to be consistent with CGS Section 8-24, and the City Charter Section C6-30-13, as well as consistent with the adopted 2015 Master Plan; Ms. Godzeno seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Godzeno, Levin, Tepper and Totilo).

- 2. TRANSFER STATION UPGRADES - PROJECT #001395 - TOTAL REQUEST \$99,250.00:** In reviewing the water bill for the Scale House / Transfer Station account, the Engineering Department noticed the water usage was significantly higher than normal, which led to believe there was a leak in the system. Based on this, the water bill is significantly more. To address this matter as quickly as possible, Aquarion Water Company recommended vendors, AJ Penna and CT Professional Water Services, to resolve this issue in an expedient manner. CT Professional Water Services has detected a leak at the Scale House, which is currently inaccessible as it is located under the concrete ramp to the Transfer Station. This request is to install 150 feet of 10-inch water main, bypassing an inaccessible section where the leak has been identified. Please refer to the cost proposal from AJ Penna for further details.

Lou Casolo, Engineering Bureau Chief/City Engineer, made a presentation and answered questions from the Board.

After a brief discussion, Ms. Godzeno recommended *approval* of the Transfer Station Upgrades. This request has been reviewed pursuant to Connecticut General Statute Section 8-24 and the City Charter Section C6-30-13 and finds this request to be consistent with CGS Section 8-24, and the City Charter Section C6-30-13, as well as consistent with the adopted 2015 Master Plan; Mr. Perry seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Godzeno, Perry, Tepper and Totilo).

SUBDIVISION:

- 1. SUBDIVISION #4051 - RAYMOND MAZZEO, REDNISS & MEAD representing THE HOUSING AUTHORITY CITY OF STAMFORD - 0 CONNECTICUT AVENUE (2 LOTS):**
The applicant is proposing to subdivide this 2.34-acre property into two (2) lots, which is known as 0 Connecticut Avenue (Tax Assessor #002-5960), more commonly known as 38 Connecticut Avenue and 8-32 Connecticut Avenue (part of Rippowam Park) and is in the Multiple Family Low-Density Design District (RM-1). This property has historically been two (2) separate lots, other map filings indicated a potentially unintentional consolidation. This application will serve to formally subdivide the property into two (2) lots and clarify the title and ownership.

The property is in Master Plan Category #3 (Residential - Low Density Multifamily). The property is owned by the City's Housing Authority, Charter Oaks, and is already developed with 100% affordable low density multifamily housing. There are no changes proposed except for the division of property. The development is built such that no new nonconformities would be created as a result of the subdivision. The lots and utilities function as if they are already two separate lots. While it was always thought the property was on two separate lots, the subdivision is to formalize it for the purpose of receiving funding. The subdivision would thus enable maintenance of permanently affordable housing (Policy 6B.2).

Ms. Cohen made brief comments and introduced Mr. Mazzeo.

Raymond Mazzeo, Redniss & Mead, along with Michele Tarulli, Charter Oaks Communities, made a presentation and answered questions from the Board.

After some discussion, Mr. Levin recommended *approval* of *Subdivision #4051* and found this request to be in general harmony with the neighborhood and consistent with Master Plan Category #3 (Residential - Low Density Multifamily); Mr. Tepper seconded the motion and passed with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Godzeno, Levin, Tepper and Totilo).

ZONING BOARD REFERRALS:

1. **ZB APPLICATION #224-17 - STAMFORD ZONING BOARD - Text Change:** The purpose of this Text Change is to create the position of “Acting Zoning Enforcement Officer (ZEO)” in case the ZEO is unable to fulfill their duties, for example, due to illness. The Acting ZEO would be the Deputy ZEO. If there is no Deputy ZEO, the Zoning Board would appoint an Acting ZEO.

Approval of this application would allow the Land Use Bureau to provide timely service to the public on certain applications or permits that require ZEO signoff in cases where the ZEO is unable to fulfill their duties due to, for example, illness or time off.

Ralph Blessing, Land Use Bureau Chief, made a presentation and answered questions from the Board.

After some discussion, Mr. Totilo recommended *approval* of *ZB Application #224-17* and found this request to be in general harmony with the 2015 Master Plan; Mr. Perry seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Godzeno, Perry, Tepper and Totilo).

2. **ZB APPLICATION #224-19 - STAMFORD ZONING BOARD - Text Change:** Applicant proposes a change to the Stamford Zoning Regulations to adjust the parking requirements for residences according to the findings and recommendations of the Stamford Citywide Parking Study and to address residents’ concerns regarding the parking requirements for large dwellings.

Specifically, the proposed changes:

- Reduce parking requirements for large group parking facilities (40 or more spaces).
- Creates special parking requirements for Master Plan Categories #11 (Downtown) and #16 (Transit Oriented Development District ¹).
- Increase parking requirements for large dwellings (five or more bedrooms).
- Adjust parking requirements for residential buildings including increasing requirement for studios, decreasing requirement for 2+ bedroom units and decreasing requirements for market-rate single-family homes in Parking Category #3.

The proposed changes are a direct result of the Parking Study, which was approved by the Planning Board at its November 28, 2023 meeting. This Text Change is one way the City is implementing the recommendations of the Parking Study. The Parking Study found a surplus of parking around the Stamford Transportation Center (STC). The reduction in required parking around the STC (MP Categories #11 and #16) would encourage shared parking, promote usage of municipal garages while also providing adequate parking for all uses including commuter parking. Master Plan Categories #11 and #16 speak to a pedestrian-oriented environment with access to mass transit and encouraging shared parking. The proposed changes are aligned with the intent of the Master Plan Categories that they affect. The proposal is also aligned with Policy 4D.3 to continue to evaluate opportunities to reduce parking ratios for development near transit. The other proposed changes to the parking requirements not tied to a Master Plan Category are a direct reflection of the findings and recommendations of the Parking Study.

Ralph Blessing, Land Use Bureau Chief; along with Luke Bittenwieser, Transportation Engineer, made a presentation and answered questions from the Board.

¹ Master Plan Category #16 was created through a Master Plan text amendment (MP-436) and was approved by the Planning Board on May 26, 2020.

After some discussion, Ms. Godzeno recommended *approval* of **ZB Application #224-19** and found this request to be in general harmony with the 2015 Master Plan; Mr. Totilo seconded the motion and passed with eligible members present voting, 4-0-1 (In Favor - Dell, Godzeno, Tepper and Totilo / Abstain - Levin). Mr. Levin expressed concerns over the increase in the parking percentage for studio apartments and felt he did not have a thorough understanding of the Parking Study.

3. ZB APPLICATION #224-23 - McPHERSON TAYLOR representing VOLTA CHARGING, LLC - Text Change: Applicant is proposing to amend Section 12.L by adding a new Subsection 12.L.3 to add standards for charging stations with electronic displays.

The Text Change would permit Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Station Display Kiosks as an as of right accessory use on lots in commercial and industrial zoning districts subject to certain design requirements. Examples of design limitations include setbacks from residential property lines and public right of ways, overall size and screen size limitations, no moving images or audio effects and automatic dimming. The revenue from advertising on the displays directly benefits EV owners who charge vehicles at a subsidized rate. The Text Change is not location specific, however, if approved, the applicant would install two displays at the Stop & Shop in the Ridgeway Shopping Center. This Text Change is aligned with the Master Plan implementation strategy 7I.4 to encourage private applicants to install vehicle charging stations and the Master Plan objective of promoting alternative modes of transportation to support cleaner air and reduce fuel consumption. The application also recognizes the importance of separation from residentially zoned property, protecting residential neighborhoods from intrusion of advertising and light, which goes towards the preservation of the residential character.

Ms. Cohen stated the applicant was not in attendance and made brief comments.

After some discussion the Board decided to **TABLE** this item to either the June 25, 2024 or August 13, 2024 meeting to allow the applicant to attend and speak about their application.

4. ZB APPLICATION #224-11 - RICHARD REDNISS, 22 1ST CORP. - Text Change (Tabled from the May 14, 2024 meeting): River Bend Center, LLC is seeking to amend the City of Stamford Zoning Regulations to revise portions of the HT-D Regulation and create an opportunity to infill new residential development where it helps sustain the maintenance and viability of existing industrial/flex type uses in new or existing buildings.

This project was first considered by the Planning Board at its regularly scheduled meeting on May 14, 2024. The Planning Board expressed concerns over the number of residential units that would be allowed at the site, the availability of homeownership opportunities and how the resulting vehicular traffic would impact Hope Street. Since then, the Applicant has proposed several changes:

- a. To encourage development of ownership housing, reduce the number of rental units permitted by lowering allowable rental floor area to 0.25 floor area ratio (FAR). Homeownership or senior housing would remain at 0.30 FAR, thus incentivizing homeownership units and senior housing.
- b. To encourage development of ownership housing and reduce overall permitted residential density, reduce the total permitted floor area if residential is developed. Currently permitted 1.0 FAR. If ownership units are proposed, permitted FAR would be reduced by one square foot. If rental units are proposed, permitted FAR would be reduced by two square feet. This dually incentivizes non-residential development that's already permitted on site.
- c. To address Transportation, Traffic & Parking's (TTP) concerns regarding setbacks of parking areas, replaced a "waiver" of setbacks to internal property lines with "may not be required."
- d. In addition, clarify that TTP can review existing internal site nonconformities if they are to remain.
- e. Finally, require developments to make financial contributions toward or in-kind construction of roadway improvements to address existing transit issues and mitigate additional impacts resulting from development.

The proposed Text Change is aligned with the following Master Plan policies and strategies:

- Strategy 3B.4: Encourage the reconfiguration of existing office and retail space to accommodate market trends and potential new users.
- Strategy 6A.1: Balance new development with preservation of existing residential communities.
- Strategy 7G.3: Where feasible, in multifamily zones, locate and/or design development such that 50 percent of the residential units are within a quarter-mile radius of walkable, diverse uses supportive of the compact and complete community.
- Strategy BGS1.1: Encourage higher-density, mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly development around the Glenbrook and Springdale train stations, along the Hope Street commercial corridor and Glenbrook Road and in the Belltown neighborhood business district.

Richard Redniss, Redniss & Mead, made a presentation and answered questions from the Board.

After some discussion, Ms. Godzeno recommended *approval* of **ZB Application #224-11** as it is consistent with the promotion of transit-oriented development; and to approve the amendment of .3 FAR for home ownership and senior units and .25 FAR for rental units and found this request to be in general harmony with Master Plan Category #13 (Industrial - General); Mr. Totilo seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Godzeno, Perry, Tepper and Totilo).

NOTE: Mr. Tepper left the meeting due to audio problems.

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS REFERRALS:

1. **ZBA APPLICATION #024-24 - JOHN MARINELLI, representing EMRAN M. RAHIM - FAIRFIELD AVENUE, LOT #1 - Variance of Table II, Appendix B:** Applicant owns an existing vacant lot of approximately 4,972 sq. ft. and is proposing to construct a two (2) family dwelling with four (4) parking spaces located at the rear and an open greenway in the front yard. The address for the vacant lot is “Lot 1 Fairfield Avenue,” not 249 Fairfield Avenue. The proposed footprint is 37.5 ft. x 35.5 ft. and will be 2½ stories in height. Applicant is requesting a lot size of 4,972 sq. ft. in lieu of the 6,000 sq. ft. required.

The property is located in Master Plan Category #3 (Residential - Low Density Multifamily). The property is zoned R-5 which requires 6,000 square feet minimum lot area for lots to be developed with a two-family dwelling. The Zoning Regulations also require two parking spaces per unit for a total of four parking spaces. There is no hardship of the land described in this application or known to Staff. The lot size could be considered a hardship being that it’s undersized for the zoning, however the minimum necessary to afford relief would be a variance of 5,000 sq. ft. for a single-family home, not what is being requested. Second, the Applicant owns the adjoining lot and is proposing access to the proposed parking from the adjoining lot stating that the adjoining lot’s parking issues will be resolved as a result of this proposal. The proposal is providing the minimum required spaces for the two-family home and if the adjoining three-family home is to also use that parking, it would be non-compliant. On the other hand, a two-family home would be aligned with the intent of this Master Plan category that allows for the amenities of multifamily living in a single-family neighborhood setting, in general harmony with surrounding land uses that are also single, two- and multi-family buildings and would provide housing on an infill lot when Stamford is in need of housing and short on available land.

Ms. Cohen made brief comments and answered questions from the Board.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Totilo recommended *DENIAL* of *ZBA Application #024-24* with the recommendation the ZBA speak with the Zoning Enforcement Officer regarding the parking available at 249 Fairfield Avenue and whether that lot is legally non-conforming and clarify how that lot's parking would relate to the parking and dwelling at Lot #1 Fairfield Avenue. This request is not in general harmony with Master Plan Category #3 (Residential - Low Density Multifamily); Ms. Godzeno seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Godzeno, Levin, Perry and Totilo).

Next regularly scheduled Planning Board meetings are:

- June 25, 2024 (Regular Meeting)
- Summer Hiatus - No Meetings in July
- August 13, 2024 (Regular Meeting)

There being no further business to come before the Board, Ms. Dell adjourned the meeting at 9:11 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

June 14, 2024

Jennifer Godzeno, Secretary
Stamford Planning Board

NOTE: These proceedings were recorded on video and are available for review on the Planning Board website at http://cityofstamford.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=20