



**TOWN OF NEWTOWN
DESIGN ADVISORY BOARD**

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, July 8, 2020 at 7 p.m.

Zoom Virtual Meeting Participation Information
Call-In Number: +1 646 558 8656
Meeting ID: 876 6063 5379 #
Website: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87660635379>

Board members: Phil Clark, Peter Cloudas, Frank Caico, Agni Kyprianou
Staff: George Benson, Director of Planning; Christine O'Neill, Clerk

Mr. Clark called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

Minutes

Mr. Cloudas moved to approve the minutes of December 16, 2019. Mr. Caico seconded. All were in favor and the minutes were approved. (As discussed in a previous meeting, Mr. Clark's name was moved from the Board members section and added to the Presenters section.)

Mr. Cloudas moved to approve the minutes of June 10, 2020. Mr. Caico seconded. All were in favor and the minutes were approved.

Mr. Cloudas suggested the following edits to the minutes from the Special Meeting of June 18, 2020:

- "internal process" to "review process" (1st paragraph)
- "guidelines" to "process guidelines" (1st paragraph)
- "brainstorm" to "informal discussions among the Board" (2nd paragraph change)
- "Mr. Cloudas crafted into a draft" to "Mr. Cloudas took the initiative to craft into a draft" (2nd paragraph)
- Change "option" to "optional" in Mr. Cloudas's outline (pages 1 and 2)

Mr. Cloudas moved to approve the minutes from the Special Meeting of June 18, 2020 with the above amendments. Mr. Caico seconded. All were in favor and the minutes were approved with the above amendments.

Process Discussion

Mr. Clark asked if he was right in assuming, based on last month's minutes, that Mr. Benson wanted the Board to simplify their drafted process. Mr. Benson explained some of Mr. Cloudas's suggestions went a bit far into the construction phase. Mr. Benson stated that the purpose of the Board is to give suggestions, which may or may not be taken into account by the applicant or the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC). These are design standards, not regulations.

Mr. Benson said there is no mechanism for the Board to be involved in anything past the PZC approval, unless there is a significant modification in which case the Land Use Agency may send it back to the Board.

Mr. Benson had always felt the problem was that the developer wasn't getting involved with the Board early enough in the process. Mr. Benson is able to suggest it, but cannot require it. He felt the best way to move forward would be: (1) create a list of what applicants should bring to the table, considering they might not have detailed drawings at the beginning of the process, and (2) specify a timeline of when an applicant might get involved. Neither of these things require modifications to the Ordinance.

Mr. Benson addressed the request brought up last time to expand the jurisdiction of the Board to cover all of Newtown rather than just the Design Districts. Mr. Benson felt that at this point, they did cover the majority of the areas in Newtown. He suggested perhaps including Fairfield Hills campus – which is a Special District, not a Design District.

Mr. Caico stated that the Board was not looking for "more process." He pointed to PZC Chairman Don Mitchell's statement from the last meeting that PZC can consult with any agency or expert they wish, including the Board. Mr. Clark said he'd like to keep this Board at the forefront of the Mr. Mitchell's mind.

Mr. Cloudas asked if Ms. Kyprianou had anything to say. She said she would like to see PZC strongly advise applicants to come to the Board for design guidance earlier on.

Mr. Cloudas said that while he respects and agrees with Mr. Caico's opinion of expanding the jurisdiction of the Board, it is off-topic and he would appreciate if everyone stayed on the concept of process as not to complicate matters.

Mr. Clark shared that as a licensed architect, he is in front of review boards like this one frequently. In the vast majority of cases, they are expected to bring a list of materials like renderings and give a presentation. The processes that work best are the simplified ones. It is rare that he would need to go to more than one meeting.

Mr. Caico agreed that no one was trying to gum up the works with more process, but that the goal was to create better projects in Newtown. The issue comes when an applicant has already designed a building and cannot make changes. Mr. Clark agreed that there should be more time between the Board giving feedback and the PZC meeting, unlike what happened with the Police Station project last year.

Mr. Cloudas advocated for a brief meeting before elevations are made to discuss design elements, to precede the formal design review. Mr. Cloudas asked Mr. Benson if there is a required pre-application process for PZC applicants. Mr. Benson said that the pre-application review is voluntary, though he noted that all the applicant has at that point anyway is the site plan. Ms. Kyprianou and Mr. Cloudas felt that this is actually an ideal time to discuss design features. Mr. Cloudas said that by requiring the applicant to come to the Board, it is asserting the importance of adhering to the parameters of the Design District.

Mr. Benson explained that it cannot be a requirement; the Board is advisory in nature and does not have that authority. Mr. Cloudas understood, but wanted the applicant acknowledge to the

Board that they understand they are in a Design District. Mr. Cloudas felt that Mr. Mitchell indicated the best way to get an applicant to come before the Board is to make it part of a process.

Mr. Cloudas went into detail about the process document that he drafted, pointing out that the construction phase would only happen in a "one in a million" scenario, but that it should be accounted for in the written procedure. Mr. Benson insisted that that step was unnecessary, and that Mr. Cloudas was getting too complicated. Mr. Cloudas said that the process he'd outlined was actually quite simple.

Mr. Benson wondered if the PZC application asked the applicant if they are in a Design District, to call attention to the Board early in the process. Ms. O'Neill looked it up and found that it asks if the property is in a Special District.

The Board and Mr. Benson agreed that a discussion - rather than a presentation - early in the process would be beneficial.

Mr. Caico said he is not in favor of making more meetings for applicants to attend. Mr. Caico asked if developers need to submit elevations for the formal application. Mr. Benson confirmed this was the case. Mr. Caico asked if there were several meetings to discuss the submission ahead of the PZC meeting. Mr. Benson explained that no, once a submission has been made, there are no further meetings until the public hearing. Mr. Caico said all the discussions that happen with the staff before the submission is made would be an ideal time for the Board to participate in those earlier reviews.

Ms. O'Neill offered to modify the PZC application to ask if the property is inside a Design District, and then prompting the applicant to fill out a Design Advisory Board Pre-Application Form. Mr. Benson worried about making it seem like a requirement, and Mr. Clark suggested adding the word "optional."

Mr. Cloudas pointed out that the Sandy Hook Design District regulations say that "Applicants are encouraged to meet with the Design Advisory Board (DAB) before submitting applications to the Planning and Zoning Commission." Mr. Cloudas and Mr. Benson went back and forth about the wording.

Mr. Cloudas went through a few options of how to move forward, one of which was letting Mr. Benson work on implementing the procedure. The Board was in agreement with that idea.

Mr. Cloudas made a motion to table this discussion until next meeting when Mr. Benson would return with his draft of the process. Ms. Kyprianou seconded. All were in favor and the discussion was tabled.

Adjournment

Mr. Clark announced that this is his last meeting, and will be submitting a formal letter to that effect shortly. The Board thanked Mr. Clark for his service.

Mr. Cloudas brought up the issue of the three candidates that have been waiting for interviews. He feared that they were getting "stale" and wanted to move forward with them. The Board needed clarification on how party affiliations came into play, and Mr. Benson said he would get

that information. Ms. Kyprianou wanted to know if the Board should elect a new Chairman before they carried on with these interviews. Mr. Cloudas recommended a Special Meeting (so they wouldn't need to wait until next month) to elect a Chairman, and the Board was in agreement. Ms. O'Neill will coordinate the date/time via email.

Mr. Cloudas moved to adjourn. Mr. Caico seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 8:10.

*Respectfully submitted,
Christine O'Neill, Clerk*

To access a recording of this meeting, copy and paste the following URL into your Internet browser:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1I4vkM_oNXdbv74eOGEsDB_SKO_tHEPA-