



**TOWN OF NEWTOWN
DESIGN ADVISORY BOARD**

MINUTES

Wednesday, August 12, 2020 at 7 p.m.

Zoom Virtual Meeting Participation Information

Call-In Number: +1 646 558 8656

Meeting ID: 858 8120 9562 #

Website: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85881209562>

Board members: Frank Caico, Peter Cloudas, Agni Kyprianou

Staff: Dan Rosenthal, First Selectman; Christine O'Neill, Clerk; Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk-in-Training

Candidates: Brook Clark, George Daniels

In the absence of a Chairman, First Selectman Dan Rosenthal opened the meeting at 7:06 p.m.

Elect Chairperson

Mr. Rosenthal entertained nominations for Chair of the Design Advisory Board. Ms. Kyprianou nominated Mr. Caico, stating that he was the most qualified in terms of experience. Mr. Cloudas seconded. With no other nominations, Mr. Rosenthal called for a vote. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Mr. Caico, as Chair, carried on with the meeting. Mr. Rosenthal exited.

Approve Minutes

Mr. Cloudas did not have a chance to look over the minutes from the last meeting. He moved to table the minutes from the meeting of July 8, 2020. Ms. Kyprianou seconded. All were in favor and the approval of the minutes was tabled.

Interview Candidates

Brook Clark, George Daniels, and Gwen Mulcahey each submitted resumes and letters of interest. Ms. Mulcahey withdrew her application earlier this evening via email.

The Board asked for some clarification about tonight's proceedings. Ms. O'Neill explained that two positions were open, both for "Alternates," but that only one would be filled by the DAB. The other would be filled by the Board of Selectmen, though the DAB could make a recommendation (which is somewhat moot since there would only be one remaining candidate). Mr. Cloudas clarified that whoever was selected by the DAB would serve a full term, taking the space Kathy Geckle vacated, while whoever was selected by the Board of Selectmen would only serve the remainder of Phil Clark's term.

Mr. Caico and Mr. Cloudas told the candidates that although the Board was filling an Alternate position tonight, the new member would be expected to attend all meetings and contribute. They would be treated more or less as a full member.

Mr. Cloudas wondered if DAB could enter an Executive Session for the interviews. Ms. O'Neill relayed that Director of Planning George Benson and Deputy Director of Planning Rob Sibley did not recommend an Executive Session, and instead suggested the entire meeting remain open to the public.

Mr. Caico invited both candidates to share their backgrounds and why they were interested in serving on this Board.

Ms. Clark stated that she is a licensed Landscape Architect in the State of Connecticut. She is a University of Connecticut alumni who has worked throughout the state. Her firm is located in Sandy Hook on Glen Road. Ms. Clark's background is in commercial and residential layouts, though now she usually does high-end residential properties and private schools. She has grown up and lived in Newtown almost all her life. She described Newtown as her "home forever," sharing that she has children in the school system. Her desire is to bring respect to landscaping as a valuable element of DAB recommendations.

Mr. Daniels has been in the construction industry for 35 years, with a wide array of experience within that field. He has worked for large corporations, pioneered his own development projects, and participated in all phases of the process. He and his family have lived in Newtown for 30 years. His goal is to foster responsible development that will maintain the "quaint flavor" of Newtown.

Mr. Caico asked Mr. Daniels if his experience was mostly with commercial or residential construction. He explained that it has been mostly commercial, but he has done a little bit of everything. He has worked for Phil Clark, former DAB Chairman, for ten years. Mr. Daniels gave a bit more detail about his experiences at Claris Construction.

Mr. Caico told Ms. Clark that her goal of trying to improve landscape design in a practical way resonated with him.

Ms. Kyprianou asked both candidates for their opinions on the current architecture and design of Newtown's buildings and streetscapes.

Mr. Daniels felt that the development of the town's design has been fairly responsible. Most people, he thought, seem to like the "hamlet feel" of Newtown and were concerned that it stays that way. Nothing in particular stuck out to him as a sore thumb. With a growing demand for urbanization and modernization, he stated, he wants to be part of smart solutions to maintain Newtown's small town aesthetic.

Ms. Clark shared that the new veterinary building [Pleasant Paws, 94 South Main Street] looks nice and that she'd like to hold other buildings to similar standards. She pointed to some room for improvement in Church Hill Village's [2 The Boulevard] design. The standard stamped concrete

for sidewalk paving does not seem to hold up well, she said, and she'd like to see something more like Bethel's concrete pavers used instead.

Mr. Cloudas invited the candidates to speak about any experience they had going in front of municipal boards, such as a Planning and Zoning Commission or an Architectural Review Board.

Ms. Clark remarked that her experience runs the gamut, including Planning and Zoning, Wetlands, and Architectural Review. Mr. Daniels said that he has never presented solo in front of a review committee; rather, his role is to share information with presenters and prepare them for the meetings as part of a team.

Mr. Caico asked if the candidates had any questions.

Ms. Clark explained that after reading last meeting's minutes, she wondered if the "process document" mentioned therein was available to the public. Mr. Caico responded that it is a public document, but is still in the process of being revised. The struggle is to find the sweet spot between "process for the sake of process" and useful guidelines to make the DAB experience coherent and the outcome valuable.

Ms. Clark asked if participation of applicants was voluntary. Mr. Caico explained that yes, and DAB's recommendations are advisory. Ms. Kyprianou added that the Planning and Zoning Commission relies on DAB for direction and respects the recommendations. Mr. Caico agreed and spoke about the goal to elevate the Board from an ad hoc committee to a well-respected board with regular meetings. Mr. Cloudas explained that in the past, DAB sometimes had as few as a single member. Because of this history, recent applicants have been coming to the Board with documents that aren't necessarily applicable. Mr. Cloudas said voluntary or optional is not a great way to describe the role of the Board, because the Planning and Zoning Commission might require an applicant to go before the DAB. Mr. Cloudas added that they are trying to fix the problem of applicants coming before the Board too late in the process with an already completed package.

Mr. Daniels asked for clarification on Mr. Cloudas's comment that at times, it is not optional for a candidate to go before the DAB. Mr. Cloudas said the Zoning Regulations sometimes specifically call for the applicant to go before the Board, and other times the Regulations are vague depending upon the Design District. Mr. Caico and Mr. Cloudas shared their wish for the future that the Planning and Zoning Commission will send all applications to the Board for feedback.

Mr. Caico stated that he is really pleased with both candidates, and felt they would add great value to the Board. Ms. Clark would bring landscape experience, and Mr. Daniels would bring construction experience - both of which are missing at the moment. Ms. Kyprianou agreed that a diversified Board is important. Mr. Cloudas's impression was that Mr. Rosenthal would likely choose whichever candidate was not chosen tonight, so the question tonight was really who would come first and therefore serve the full term.

Ultimately, all Board members were very pleased with the candidates and looked forward to working with both of them. Therefore, they were having a little trouble deciding how to proceed

with voting, given that they'd like to elect both candidates. Mr. Cloudas suggested that they elect Ms. Clark tonight, based on the fact that her application came in first.

Elect Candidate to Fill One (1) Alternate Position

Mr. Cloudas moved to elect Ms. Clark as an Alternate to the Design Advisory Board. Mr. Caico seconded. With no further discussion, the Board voted in favor of Ms. Clark unanimously.

Congratulations Ms. Clark, welcome to the Board!

Select Candidate to Recommend to the Board of Selectmen for One (1) Alternate Position

The Board expressed that they did not wish for Mr. Daniels to feel he was "rejected" in any way, since it was just a matter of process that he be appointed by the Selectmen.

Mr. Cloudas moved to recommend Mr. Daniels to the Board of Selectmen for the remaining Alternate position on the Design Advisory Board. Ms. Kyprianou seconded. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Ms. O'Neill will write a letter with the recommendation and send it to the Board of Selectmen.

Adjourn Meeting

Ms. O'Neill thanked the Board for the experience of working with them and passed the baton to Ms. Chiappetta. Ms. Chiappetta shared her background as the Economic and Community Development Coordinator and Fairfield Hills Coordinator, as well as a clerk for the Fairfield Hills Authority. She was welcomed to the Board.

Mr. Cloudas moved to adjourn. Mr. Caico seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

*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/1nH3w9pFl3eeEPuf2UXdunvRMgDNqj5TF>