

City of Norwich  
Planning Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
Norwich City Court

August 20, 2018  
7:00 PM

Present: J. Roque, K. Campbell, H. Graves, M. Parker, E. Caldwell

Absent: J. Miller

Staff: A. Donnison

**I. Call to Order:**

J. Roque called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Chairman J. Roque welcomed the newest member

Minutes of June 18, 2018 were approved on a motion made by H Graves. Seconded by K. Campbell. Ayes all.

**II. Museum District Review:**

Joseph Angelino, Eric Larsen, Tom Sutton, Robert Jeffrey, Pegi LoPresti and Steve Craig are present to answer any questions about the reason for requesting a review and amendment of the Museum District boundaries.

J. Angelino stated that they are part of an organization called Friends of the Museum District and are operating much in the same manner as the Friends of the Parks organization did. They organized community members with the goal of revamping the downtown parks and those efforts were most recently seen by the 3,000 visitors at a recent concert in the park. Now, the Friends of the Museum District are organizing community members to put forth the same effort for the Museum District and one of the first steps is to get the Planning Commissions support and to pass it on to the Common Council.

K. Campbell asked if there had been any issues or concerns to date with the parcels that have already been within the Museum District? J. Angelinos stated none that he has heard of.

Upon review of the most recently amended map J. Angelino noted that that are a couple parcels that should be left within the district. The parcels that have been within the boundaries since the beginning that were under consideration to remove while updating the district boundaries are the parcels along the south side of Berry Street between Lee Ave and Silver Street. All members agreed and those parcels will be added back in to the proposed map. It was noted that the use table and definitions were not being amended – only the boundary of the Museum District.

B. Jeffrey stated that many may ask why this is an important step for the area? B. Jeffrey stated that in 2012 there were approximately 10,000 visitors to the Northeast Classic Car Museum.

This number has steadily increased each year and they are on track this year to approximately 17,000 visitors. A high number of those visitors are from downstate area and related a story of a family who rented a limo to bring the family to the museum for the day from the Hudson Valley region. T. Sutton noted that if they can get a conceptual approval from the Common Council it would be helpful.

K. Campbell stated that when a community meeting is scheduled and the average property owner asks “What’s in it for me?” what is the answer? J. Angelino stated absolutely nothing from the sidewalk to the house and beyond. What they would see are improvements such as new street lighting, sidewalks that are consistent throughout the district, some benches located between the sidewalk and the curb. K. Campbell stated she was onboard with improved sidewalks and inquired what funding is available to make all this happen? S. Craig noted that there are several grant opportunities with different foundations and organizations that will be applied for. K. Campbell asked who would be applying for these grants since it is common knowledge that city staffing and money is tight. E. Larsen stated that there would be zero cost to the city in cost and in workload relating to any grant or foundation funding.

S. Craig stated the Chenango Foundation (a Commerce Chenango department) are very experienced in grant writing and would not require any city assistance to write grants but that the grants would likely need to be in the name of the City for administrative purposes. M. Parker notes that city residents will be happy to know that proposed improvements will not be taken from the property taxes.

K. Campbell asked if there were any obvious downside to approving boundary changes that anyone could see? E. Larsen stated none that have been noted or brought forward to date. Tourism is becoming a big deal in our area and the Museum District could be a big boon to assist our area – these visitors will likely eat at local restaurants, stay at local hotels, shop locally – no downside there to be seen. B. Jeffrey noted that he has had visitors inquire about local hotels and that sometimes he isn’t comfortable giving that information out due to stories that circulate about some local accommodations. What is the status on the new hotel that was looking at coming into the city? A. Donnison stated that she has not heard from any representative of the organization in months about the proposed new hotel nor have any blueprints or plans been received by codes office.

B. Jeffrey stated that he has already personally spoken to several property owners in the neighborhood explaining what will be proposed for the museum district and so far not a single one was opposed to the plan. A. Donnison stated that a community meeting should be scheduled as soon as possible and that it could be held at the City Court building. B. Jeffrey stated it could be hosted at the Northeast Classic Car Museum which would allow resident sin the area to see what they have as well as address any and all concerns. A. Donnison stated that she could provide the mailing addresses and labels for all property owners that will be within the existing boundaries as well as the approximate 50 that would be added. Also could draft up the letter and make copies of same to be mailed as soon as the Friends of the Museum District has a date and time where they as well as members of the Planning Commission could meet with members of the community that had questions. The community meeting should be scheduled and held well prior to the Common Council meeting so that when a public hearing is scheduled so should the Common Council and attending public have any questions they will be already asked and answered so as not to hold up the process.

A. Donnison stated that the procedure would be to have the Planning Commission make a motion to approve and forward the amended map boundaries tonight to the Joint Committee,

which will not meet again until September 4, 2018. The Joint Committee would then review and pending no issues or unanswered concerns, would then forward this to the next Common Council meeting on September 20, 2018 to set a Public Hearing date, which historically is set to be held at the next regular Common Council meeting which will be October 16, 2018. Nearly 2 months to complete the process and having the community meeting as soon as possible so that the Common Council has seen due diligence being performed will assist the process.

M. Parker stated that he has lived in the community of r 40 years and has seen many businesses leave the area. Therefore this proposal to improve the area and bring in something new like improved tourism has his support.

J. Angelino noted that one area of concern he has still is the extension of the district to the North Broad Street intersection where the 2 parcels on each corner are already within 2 districts (base R-2 zone and historic district) and understands the complications that would be involved having another overlay. It would however be a benefit for the district to show an actual "Gateway" to the district at each end, which was one of the initial goals and wonders if it would be possible to incorporate into the map or the boundary description only the city right of way area of the 2 parcels at the North Broad Street intersection. It would accomplish the "Gateway" goals and yet still not infringe upon the 2 existing zones already in place for these 2 parcels since no construction can be done in the small area between the curb and the sidewalk. A. Donnison stated that since the plan does not encompass the 2 parcels at the intersection and the intent is only to show that the North Broad Street end of Rexford Street is the 'Gateway' to the district it likely would not be a problem but would pass this question on for attorney review. In the meantime, the Planning Commission could make the motion to include right of way area only in the mapping and should we receive a legal opinion that this is not allowed then we would adjust the map as needed.

*M. Parker made the motion to amend the map as presented to the Planning Commission this evening to keep the parcels along the south side of Berry Street between Lee Avenue and Silver Street within the District boundaries and to amend to show on same map the right of way area only (between curb and sidewalk) on the Rexford Street side of the 2 parcels at the intersection of Rexford Street and North Broad Street and to forward the amended Museum District boundary map to the City of Norwich Joint Committee for review & forward to Common Council for adoption.. Seconded by H. Graves. Ayes All.*

### **III Other Items:**

A reminder that there are still 2 vacant openings on the Planning Commission.

A. Donnison stated that a location has been found by the organization that desires to open a dialysis center here in the area. The company who has setup a dba as Chenango Dialysis will be located in the Tops Shopping Plaza next to the UHS facility located there. Plans were just received for the renovation of that area to accommodate the dialysis center.

### **IV Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned on a motion made by K. Campbell at 8:27 pm seconded by M. Parker. Ayes all.