

TO: Steve Kleppin, Director of Planning & Zoning, City of Norwalk
FROM: Rowayton Advocates for Zoning
DATE: April 10, 2022
RE: Updating of the Building Zone Regulations of the City of Norwalk and the Implications for Rowayton

Dear Mr. Kleppin,

We are **Rowayton Advocates for Zoning (RAZ)**, a group of Rowayton residents concerned about preserving the coastal character of the Rowayton Avenue Village District (RAVD) and Rowayton in general. We have been alarmed at the trend in development in the RAVD. One recent example of note is the new condominium project at 111 Rowayton Avenue. Many Rowayton residents are shocked by this building which has irrevocably impacted the historic water view corridors from Rowayton Avenue and McKinley Street and breaks the footpath/sidewalk continuity. Residents are amazed that a project with such an impact on the character of the RAVD did not require a public hearing and that only the abutting neighbors needed to be alerted, one of whom was the owner of the property that was sold to create space for the new building. Our concern was not allayed when, upon more careful reading of the code, we learned that a public hearing could have been called to inform citizens at the discretion of the Planning Commissioners. This project and the process by which it gained building permits, has galvanized our group to put forth a Rowayton Vision Statement and to provide specific input into the update of the Norwalk Planning & Zoning regulations. We want to ensure that the updated Planning & Zoning Regulations support the Norwalk Citywide Plan's goals: *The public has access to the Harbor and Coast, protect and manage sensitive environmental resources, maintain the character of historic New England community on the coast within a thriving city in the county's largest metropolitan area, maintain high-quality design standards for all new development, act transparently.*

We have identified five key areas of concern with regard to zoning requirements and preserving the coastal character of the RAVD and Rowayton in general. These are:

1. Buildings

For example: height, setbacks, coverage, floor area ratio, design considerations

2. The Space Around Buildings

A. Open Spaces

B. Site Planning

For example: view corridors, public access to the water, sidewalks, footpaths, landscaping, trees, natural light, street lighting, site lighting, village character

3. Uses

A. Building Uses

B. Land Uses

For example: The current code is at the most general level and allows for an enormously wide variety of use within the RAVD business and residential designations.

4. Exemptions/Incentives

5. Administration/Implementation/Communication

For example: The current code allows for a public hearing for structures within the coastal boundary. The Commission may hold a public hearing at its discretion on any coastal site plan yet a hearing was not scheduled for 111 Rowayton Ave. Further, as stated in the current BUILDING ZONE REGULATIONS of the City of Norwalk, Article 50, § 118-530. Rowayton Avenue Village District: *The Commission shall hire a Village District Consultant, who shall be an architect, landscape architect or certified planner, with pertinent experience, to review the design of new construction and substantial rehabilitation of all properties within the district. The report of such a consultant shall be entered into the public hearing record and considered by the Commission in making its decision.*

We are looking forward to your report at the upcoming 6th Taxing District Commissioners Meeting on April 13th. We wanted to let you know of our concerns in advance of the meeting. We would appreciate a report on the status of the updated zoning requirements in light of our areas of concern. We would also request that the member of your staff who is responsible for Rowayton attend the meeting so that s/he and we may work directly together. We would also appreciate it if the consultant working to update the zoning requirements could be in attendance at the meeting so that s/he may hear our concerns and the discussion. We greatly appreciate your consideration and your leadership of this significant effort.

Sincerely,

Rowayton Advocates for Zoning

CC: Andy Meyerson, 6th Taxing District Commissioner