

COMMISSION ON THE CITY PLAN AND ZONING COMMISSION - PUBLIC HEARING -
June 2, 1960

Present: Chairman Traverse, Commissioners Higgins, Misenti, Dillon,
Passanesi, Mayor Clew, City Corporation Counsel Briggs

Meeting was called to order at 7:30. The Secretary read the Call to the Meeting - re: Establishment of an Industrial Zone in the Westfield area.

Mr. Ralph Gustafson, the City Planner, was introduced to the meeting and asked to explain the proposed zone, which he did with the aid of maps.

Mr. John Bickford, Country Club Road:

"How is "industry" to be defined for this area, and will there be any buffer zone between industrial plants and other property? Could we fill this area up with small job shops, etc., or are you looking for large industrial plants?"

Mr. Gustafson:

"Large industry, if possible, but also almost any type."

"There will be 50' areas in front, rear and at sides, at least. Minimum area will be three acres, with 20% coverage by buildings, plus a 10% increase after original building."

Mr. Bickford:

"That is not in effect now?"

Mr. Gustafson:

"Should be about the first of September."

Mr. Robert Brainard, East Street:

"How many acres in that plan?"

Mr. Gustafson:

"940 acres."

Mr. Brainard:

"What provision for utilities and what will they cost?"

Mr. Gustafson:

"I do not know. Depends on construction. Most logical solution is to begin construction nearest to the reservoir."

Mr. Brainard:

"If this is rezoned, any manufacturer with any type of unit could place his plant wherever he could get a space. At the South end, the City might be required to provide facilities."

"Then why zone it?"

Mr. Gustafson:

"Because the City, being 42 square miles, must prepare for the future with enough land for industrial area at a price they can afford to develop it."

Atty. Wayne Sargent, of Meriden:

Representing the Castelows

"Is this proposal in compliance with your general plan of development for the City of Middletown?"

Mr. Gustafson:

"At the time this general plan was made up the exact location of Route 91 and the reservoir was not definite. This has changed the plan somewhat."

Atty. Sargent:

"So it does not comply with the plan? And you are taking an industrial zone in the heart of the largest residential area in the plan . . ."

Mr. Gustafson:

"No, it is not the largest."

Atty. Sargent:

"It is the largest area in the city of Middletown zoned residential."

Here the Chair ruled that Attorney Sargent had no right to question the City Planner.

Atty. Sargent:

"This is a copy of your Zoning Map. As far as any area in the city, you can see it is the largest residential zone at the present time. What are you proposing as buffer zones around the industry? Will you go from Industrial to Commercial and then to Residential? These plans propose industry completely surrounded by residence."

Mr. Gustafson:

"The reservoir is a buffer; your highway taking line goes through the whole area. There is a high ridge adjacent to the proposed highway which is a buffer zone."

Atty. Sargent:

"Then you are talking about not buffers of zoning, but geographical buffers. Are you proposing any other type buffer zones?"

Mr. Gustafson:

"No, but other types of residences . . ."

Atty. Sargent:

"In this area you will propose multifamily?"

Mayor Clew:

"Attorney Sargent, this is not a question and answer period. If you are opposed to this, and your clients are, just state why you are opposed."

Atty. Sargent:

"We have not made up our minds whether or not we are for it or against it."

Mayor Clew:

"Sufficient time has been given, through the ads, pointing out the area and where the changes are to be made. It has been in the papers and in the public mind for at least five days. I don't see why Mr. Gustafson, who is our Planner, is to be questioned so thoroughly. I hesitated to say this, but we have to hold hearings as they should be held. Members of Commissions should not answer questions. Our Attorney says a public hearing is exactly what you and I know it is. It is for the people to stand up and speak their views pro and con."

Atty. Sargent:

"Let me point this out: At the present time your zoning ordinance says that anything can be built. A new zoning ordinance will be passed about the first of September which will change off this. That can change the opinion of people, whether they want to be for this or against it. If the law stayed as it is now, we might go along with it, but if within a couple of months a new zoning ordinance will go through, it may completely change their minds."

Mayor Clew:

There would still be another public hearing before any such change could be made."

Atty. Sargent:

"I think people are entitled to know that such is proposed. This is the first we have heard that change is to be made so that nothing higher than industrial can be built.

Let's face a practical proposition: As far as this property is concerned at the North end, you have everything handy. . . Rote 91, for trucking; Sebethe River for draining; railroad for transportation; reservoir for water supply.

What about the South end? What will happen to these people? That will be the last part that anybody will consider. With the proposed change in zoning, if you are going to zone the area industrial, you will have to make it very attractive to the people to tie up their land so they cannot use it for anything but industrial. We have got to have the necessary utilities: power, water, drainage, sanitary facilities . . . there is a problem. What are we going to do about sanitation? I don't believe the State Water Commission is going to condone any further pollution of the streams. A hundred years ago it could go into the river. This is being cleared up by the Water Commission and I am sure that any question of using the river will not be taken kindly.

"Unless the people know what plans you have regarding that, I do not see how they can be for changing this zone to industrial use. They have got to rely on the City of Middletown to furnish the necessary facilities so that they can find someone to buy the land and not be stuck with non-merchandisable property. If is only industrial, it will be right off the market until Middletown decides they will go in and put in all the necessary facilities for utilizing the property for industrial purposes.

"All these factors have to be taken into consideration before considering changing the zone."

Mayor Clew:

"I should point out for you and your clients that the City Departments concerned have already considered these factors. Hartford Electric Light Company has assured us that power will be supplied when needed. Middletown was the first town along the River to take care of its sewage and build its own disposal plant. I think that that proves that we are concerned as much as the State Water Commission with pollution of the rivers. This area would have a very good system of sewage disposal. That has already been taken care of. All these things have been considered before this proposition was even discussed.

Atty. Sargent:

"They may have been considered, but suppose my clients found a buyer - is the City of Middletown going to furnish such disposal facilities? If so, somewhere

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in this area would have to be a treatment plant, I doubt if it could be put into the City system. Are you proposing that a municipal treatment plant be put into this area, or would it be up to the individual purchaser?"

Mayor Clew:

"Public Works feels that any large industry would have to build their own. It is not a big problem for an industrial plant. We have no idea of extending the sewers to that area."

Atty. Sargent:

"Therefore, we would be restricted on industrial plants to be brought into the area to those without excessive waste. Sanitary systems would be all right for industry with little waste, but with those requiring use of water in any quantity that has to be disposed of, it is practically impossible.

"Of course, if they were located near a stream, they would have the high cost of a filtration plant, or something like that. So you are limiting the available users of the property without a regular sewer system.

"Looking at the land ownership map, you don't have too many large holdings; most of it is small holdings which will pose the problem of having an industry say: "We might buy it if we can buy more land to put with it." All I have to do to have my deal killed is to have one of my neighbors refuse to sell. I think that in view of the utilities problem in this area, the only thing you will be able to attract will be a group of small industries. If you put a reservoir there, it will take care of the water problem. There is no gas available in the vicinity; there is electric power and telephone, but there will be a huge expense for the piping to fit a reservoir. I think your action in requesting a change of zone at this point is premature from the standpoint of the property owners. I understand what you have in mind, for the future, but you cannot tie up these people's lands for 20 years until these facilities are available. When these are available, it will be time to consider it."

Atty. Briggs:

"Presently the City of Middletown has two types of industrial zones: light (where only light industry can be built), the alternate, where anything else may be built except for noxious plants. This would be our alternate zone.

"The City Planner is working on a new zoning ordinance which would completely revamp the City of Middletown. I don't believe it will be ready by September. It takes time to get these things worked out. I think Atty. Sargent has the cart before the horse. It would permit anything else in that area. Of course, there would have to be another public hearing, but this does not affect the hearing tonight. It does not limit their use of land."

Robert Brainard:

"I think Atty. Sargent answered that point. A man can use it, but what for? He might want to build a residence, but not with this change in view. I am opposed to this."

Lowell Lippincott, Middle Street:

"I live in Lot #2 of four new homes, and I see by the map published in the paper that my home, and the other four, are included in this heavy industry zoning. I am surprised and disappointed because if the town had issued permits for building new homes for sale here recently, one within two weeks, they would not have done this with any intention of rezoning this to heavy industry. I want to register my objection to including this section or any of these new homes."

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Mr. Lippincott: (cont)

"I have heard mentioned the buffers against this heavy industry. What would be considered a buffer for me in my location, where heavy industry would be across the street and where I am living. It is now a delightful residential section."

Chairman:

"We have no control over the Public Works issuing permits. Mr. Gustafson will show you why your area is included."

Mr. Gustafson:

"Only because it is right in the middle of the area."

Mr. Lippincott:

"What about the financial loss we take by being included? "

Mr. John McInerny, Middle Street:

"My family have been on a 150-acre farm for 90 years. It seems as though our farm will be the heart of the area where heavy area will be going in. We have given it a lot of thought, but as we all know, a farm is getting to be a thing of the past in Connecticut and we are having tax troubles, etc. In view of the fact that something like this is right at our front door, and after talking with many people, I have decided to go on record as being 100% in favor of it. This is an ideal set-up for industry as far as we are concerned. To put homes in there would bring us about one-half of what industry would bring. Taxes from industry would help to hold City taxes where they are. Industry would not bring in new schools, etc., which homes would require. As far as I can see, the topography of the land to the south end may not catch as on fast, but one pilot plant would bring in others.

"Another thing pointed out to me was the type of plant, and the way the specifications are set up ; the set-back, the lawns in front, etc. Just look at Bloomfield, or Newington. Lafnir Bearing have a new plant set back off the road 500 to 800 feet; that in itself is a buffer zone. I'd much rather see that than 500 houses across the street from me."

Mr. Rondeau:

"Would you stay there if you sold?"

Mr. MacInerny:

"Yes, definitely."

John Bouchard, Atkins Street:

"Do we have a purpose for zoning this? Do we expect industry to come in? ~~Yes~~ I do not know of any industry coming into this area."

Mayor Clew:

"One industry has already talked to one property owner, and not a small industry."

Dr. Burbank, Country Club Road:

"In the proposed area, is there any limitation as to the type of industry?"

Mr. Gustafson:

"You cannot limit industry. Any limitations put into an ordinance is a flat rejection in most cases. Most industry has its own limitations. Any use would

Mr. Gustafson (cont):

"be allowed in this zone."

Dr. Burbank:

"What would be the requirements for any industrial plant? Would they have to have laws, would land owners be protected from noise, odors, etc.?"

Mr. Gustafson:

"Under present zoning ordinances there is provision for smoke, noise, etc." Under today's type of manufacturing, as well as the land use, they have their own regulations; insurance companies take care of that."

Dr. Burbank:

"Some plants, like a foundry, would be undesirable. Would you have any insurance that we would not get plants that would be unsightly?"

Mr. Gustafson:

"I don't know."

Mr. Potter, Bell Street:

"There has been a lot of talk about buffer zones. I live on the West side of Bell Street which has not been zoned industrial. Across the street the topography is not conducive to industrial use and the only reason I can see for this zoning is the access road. Our property on the West side of Bell Street was not zoned. It is very hilly and almost all open ledge in the back. It is certainly going to put all of us at a disadvantage. There no buffer zone there but the street. If that area is going to be industrial, the area we own should be industrial to give us any advantage that might be derived from the zoning. Our property would be valueless. I don't see why we were left out. I am opposed to this change."

Mr. Lyman Hoops, Plumb Road:

"Has any consideration been given to the previously discussed plan (brought up about two years ago), - along the river, having access by highway, existing rail-road, access to power and also having a natural buffer zone because of being down under a hill and protecting the rest of the community.

"I have tramped over Westfield - as far as topography is concerned it just about comes out even-Stephen. If grading was done there would be no more swamp - there is enough natural fill right there."

Mr. Gustafson went to the maps and explained the reasons for including the areas shown.

Mr. Wood:

"In including this whole area in the industrial zone, I feel you are going to hurt the people in the south part unnecessarily. I don't believe the area there would be taken for industry."

Howard Nelson, Atkins Street, between Bradley and Miner:

"We have approximately 40 homes on this side of Atkins Street, mostly new within two years. Their back yards would fact the new industry zone. I thank Mr. Gustafson for leaving us out, but even though we are not in the zone, I believe the noise, smoke, and other industrial noises might be bad for us. I would like to suggest that they consider altering the north boundary of the zone very slightly.

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Mr. Nelson (cont):

"It runs down the HELCo right of way to East Bradley Brook. I would like to suggest that the Commission consider continuing the western boundary down the right of way to an unlabeled brook which is east of East Bradley Brook. I would like to ask the Commission to consider running the boundary down this brook to Miner Street. On the map it appears you would lose some acreage but this land would not be suitable for building because of rocky cliffs. This proposal would not completely eliminate the noise to myself and the neighborhood but would help us a great deal."

William Miller, Plumb Road:

"One thing bothers me; up until last year, all the portable typewriters in the world were made in Hartford: now, none of them are - not even in Connecticut. There will be only one major typewriter manufactured in Connecticut. I may have to go to work somewhere else, but I like the typewriter business. Our plant in Mississippi is in a residential area, but fully restricted covering smoke, noise, etc. No major industry is going to come here unless adequate facilities are provided. Unless Middletown is willing to offer a low tax rate, you cannot get business. Railroads mean nothing now, everything is shipped by trucks. This area has access to everything - I am opposed to having it at the south end, but not here, but by all means, enforce strict restrictions. Tax reductions are necessary; available help is necessary."

Mrs. Lippincott:

"I do want to say to the people of Westfield that with heavy industry you downgrade property. All the streets in Westfield will be used by people taking short-cuts. People in Middletown proper should be thankful to Westfield because they will have that highway cutting through. I came here because of a highway being built in my former home. You can hear the trucks on the highways a mile away."

Mrs. Otto, Middle Street:

"One thing still remains unanswered. We have been talking about geographical buffers; however what is going to be the barrier between the homes that face Middle Street that do not have the cliff, the swamp, or anything to protect us? We cannot sell our homes. We came there to enjoy freedom from the city. It cost my husband's life and all our money to build that home. We are talking about atomic energy for our factories. It will be used. "I am opposed 100% to this proposed industrial zoning."

Mr. Davis, Miner Street:

"What expense will this involve to the land owners? If you bring in water, etc."

Mayor Clew:

"No one pays unless they tie in."

Mr. Potter:

"If the water main goes by your property and you tie in, how much?"

Mayor Clew:

"\$1.20 a front foot."

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John Bickford, Atkins Road:

"I have a friend in Meriden who is a Planner - he received a pamphlet from the City of Middletown showing this map and making the statement that this area has been zoned as industrial - this is premature."

Att. Sargent:

"This map is not correct. The Castelow property line is 111' east and to the line. This property cuts off their salable frontage and access to their property. The State is taking a lot of their land for the highway and your buffer will cut further into the rest of their property. I think that if you gentlemen would give more serious consideration to this area west of 91 - the people down here don't want it zoned industrial, and from all practical purposes it is going to be much too expensive and difficult to develop industrially. You might work out a plan of going along with Mr. Miller's suggestion - all facilities are up there in that corner. That is a natural location for dissemination of traffic and handling of goods. Down here you have the problem of coming through already developed residential areas, unless we have a . . . maybe the State of Connecticut might put some ramps in here. Before the State puts in ramps they will want to know what they are to be used for? Before industry buys they will want to know where are the ramps. For all practical considerations, the south end is useless for industrial use and my clients are opposed."

William Miller:

"What is the objection to Mile Lane or Congdon Road past East Street? for industrial zoning?"

Mayor Clew:

"Industry has looked at that and backed away because of the flooding of the Sebethe River. On Mile Lane there are 200 homes being built. Industry has already turned that area down. Mohawk has the only high spot."

Jean Hines:

"What about neighbors in East Berlin? That is a very nice area. Is there a State Law to protect one town from such zoning in the next town?"

Mr. Salzman, Smith Street:

"I know much thought has been given this, but I think not enough."

Mr. Anthony:

"I am in favor of it."

Noreen Tempe, Falls Road:

"I am opposed."

Madeline Nelson:

"I am opposed."

Mr. Nardini:

"I am opposed."

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Mrs. Snow, Middle Street:

"The only reason for considering the south end is for access roads to the other section. This must be the only reason. It doesn't make sense."

Mr. Burbank:

"Most of us are opposed to this proposed rezoning because we have not been shown that there will be specific requirements of industry there. I think that if there were definite recommendations to assure us that there would be no unsightly or unpleasant features associated, we would not be opposed."

Hearing closed at 9:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Claire Hedges,
Secretary