



Land Use-Urban Redevelopment Committee – Board of Representatives

Virgil de la Cruz, Co-Chair

Charles Pia, Jr., Co-Chair

Committee Report

Date: Wednesday, January 2, 2019
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Place: Democratic Caucus Room, 4th Floor Government Center, 888
Washington Boulevard, Stamford, CT

The Land Use-Urban Redevelopment Committee met as indicated above. In attendance were Co-Chair de la Cruz and Committee Member Reps. Cottrell, Lee, Lion, Sherwood and Summerville. Absent or excused were Committee Member Reps. Graziosi, Michelson and Pia. Also present were Reps. Di Costanzo, Figueroa, Morson and Zelinsky; Ralph Blessing, Land Use Bureau; Josephine Carpanzano, Mayor's Office; Jay Klein, Carmody, Torrance Sandak & Hennessey LLP; and several members of the public.

Co-Chair de la Cruz called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
1. LU30.020	REVIEW; Procedures Followed by Zoning Enforcement Officer After Receiving a Complaint. 10/01/18 – Submitted by Reps. Figueroa and Sherwood 10/09/18 – Moved to Pending 11/19/18 – Held in Committee	Report Made & Held
2. LU30.021	REVIEW; Process And Results Of Imposing And Collecting Fines for Zoning and Other Infractions, Such As Illegal Commercial Advertising. 10/01/18 – Submitted by Reps. Lion and Quinones 10/09/18 – Moved to Pending 11/19/18 – Held in Committee	Report Made & Held

The Committee discussed items 1 and 2 together.

Rep. Figueroa explained that Item 1 was put on the agenda in response to a complaint from a constituent, but she believes that the Land Use Bureau is working with that resident. Rep. Lion explained that he has spoken to Mr. Fedeli about the number of off-site signs around the City, which are prohibited under the Zoning regulations. Rep. Lion stated that to date, the City has collected no fines.

Mr. Blessing and Mr. Carpanzano reviewed the [attached Power Point slide](#) and discussed these items with the Committee as follows:

- The Land Use Bureau website contains a quick link regarding zoning violations, including what is a violation and how to report it
- Zoning enforcement had few teeth until recently; cease and desist orders are cumbersome and the zoning violations often recur after they have been cured; recent ordinance changes created zoning citations

- As a result, the Land Use Bureau mapped the zoning enforcement process
 - Complaints come in through Fix It Stamford
- The Land Use Bureau has not collected any money yet
- Fees are accumulating while a claim is processing
- Frank Fedeli is a Civil Citation Officers. The Land Use Bureau has 3 Zoning Citation Officers, who handle permits in the morning; last year they handled 5000 permit requests; they received about 300 zoning violation requests; an additional zoning enforcement person was approved last year but was not hired due to budget cuts
- The process of digitizing the zoning information on buildings throughout Stamford is in process, some of the notes are in handwritten in pencil and are difficult to scan; to date the quality has not been acceptable; there are a total of 400,000 records which need to be read by a machine and indexed
- The Board could pass an ordinance requiring sellers to search for and disclose any violations prior to the transfer of any real property; Mr. Blessing will look at what such an ordinance should require
- The letters sent to violators need to be specific about the violation and should have clear instructions about how to fix it
- One of the goals of the automation is to notify the person filing the complaint of the status of the complaint during the process; they may or may not be able to automatically notify the district representatives based upon possible confidential information contained in a complaint; they may be able to create reports of complaints in the district; it might be possible to include this in the Fix It site
-

There was no quorum present, however, the Committee wished to hold both of these items.

3. [LU30.022](#) REVIEW; Feasibility of Enacting an Ordinance to Regulate Short-Term Rentals of Private Dwellings. **Report Made & Held**
 12/04/18 – Submitted by Reps. Pratt and Zelinsky

Rep. Pratt discussed that there is an increase in short-term rentals in the City. He has received complaints about this.

Mr. Blessing discussed this with the Committee as follows:

- The City does not receive many zoning complaints about Airbnb or short term rentals
- When there was a zoning problem, they contacted Airbnb which removed the listing
- Airbnb has a place on its website for neighbors to complain
- He is not sure how well the City could enforce this
- The City might be able to charge a registration fee on either owners or Airbnb
- Hartford has an ordinance in place
- Corporate-owned short term apartments would also raise these concerns
- Rep. Zelinsky is working with Mr. Minor to create an ordinance
- Under the zoning regulations, 4 unrelated individuals may live in a single family home and an owner-occupied home may have 2 boarders
- Should the Zoning Board be involved in determinations of what is a family? There is federal law and fair housing laws which may come into play. An ordinance limiting short term rentals may be a better tool

4. LU30.023 REVIEW; Fiscal Requirements of Land Use Bureau and Opportunities for Process Improvements. **Report Made & Held**
 12/05/18 – Submitted by Rep. Miller

Co-Chair de la Cruz explained that this item is in anticipation of the budget process.

Mr. Blessing discussed the following with the committee:

- Zoning enforcement and zoning permitting is one functional area of the Land Use Bureau
- Environmental protection is another area, which does enforcement, permitting and inspections
- Planning and zoning is the third area; which prepares studies on various areas; the next one will look at city-wide parking to determine parking needs in different neighborhoods (in conjunction with the Traffic Bureau); it is also working on a city-wide housing study
- He is hoping to increase to 4 zoning enforcement officers
- Another person is needed for the Environmental Protection Board; he is hoping to use a part time land use clerk because there is paper work currently being done by an environmental analyst; the EPB board is the only part of the Land Use bureau without a dedicated staff person
- He has also asked for a planner/urban designer; this would help with the LU bureau's current plans to do large scale improvements to the zoning code, including making the historic preservation zoning more restrictive; revising the BMR program by getting rid of some of the exceptions; changes to parking design standards; adding a chapter on bike parking facilities; addressing sidewalk guidelines; street replanting guidelines; electric vehicle charging station and parking guidelines and implementation of a draining manual (as required by federal law); and building sustainability
- The goal of zoning enforcement is not to raise money for the City but to set off costs; more efficient enforcement is better for the City
- Having a planner will enable the bureau to create relationships with a community and also will alleviate some of the reliance on consultants
- There are \$23,000 in fines outstanding and uncollected
- He would like to see the Board consider setting up an affordable housing trust fund, to use fee-in-lieu funds, which would be allocated by a board for affordable housing projects (based upon the housing study which is proposed)

This item was held pending future budget questions.

Co-Chair de la Cruz adjourned the meeting at 9:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Virgil de la Cruz, Co-Chair

This item is on video ([Pt 1](#) & [Pt 2](#))