

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: ORDER OF THE BOARD OF ALDERS designating the corner of Park Street and South Frontage Road as “Fred Harris Way” to honor the life of Fred Harris, a prominent community activist.

Submitted by: Alder Ron Hurt, Ward 3

REPORT: 1640-11

ADVICE: Approve with conditions.

BACKGROUND

This request comes from the Board of Alders regarding an ordinance to designate the corner of Park Street and South Frontage Road as “Fred Harris Way” to honor the life of Fred Harris in memory of a deceased individual and a beloved member of our community. According to Section 18-2(a)(3) of Title III, Chapter 18, Article I of the City’s Code requires, **“Each submission shall contain:**

- (i) **Plan of the site of the proposed location indicating all structures and street features as well as the proposed signage drawn to scale for review by the city.**
- (ii) **Proposed wording of the signage.**
- (iii) **A petition of at least two hundred fifty (250) city resident signatures in favor of the proposed naming, of which at least two-thirds (2/3 (one hundred sixty-six ((166))) shall be residents of the neighborhood of the proposed sign location.”**

An Order of the Board of Alders has been submitted by Alder Ron Hurt, Ward 3 to designate Park Street and South Frontage Road as "Fred Harris Way" in honor of a prominent community activist in New Haven.

Mr. Harris's life and work embodied the spirit of social justice and community empowerment in New Haven's history. From his early involvement in the civil rights movement to his founding of the Hill Parents Association, and his contribution to the establishment of the Hill Health Center. Mr. Harris was hired as Special Assistant to the Director of the Connecticut Mental Health Center in April of 1969. In this role, Mr. Harris sought to facilitate a stronger relationship between the CMHC and the Black and underserved residents of the area.

In the sixties he became deeply engaged with organized and civil rights groups, notably the Black Panther Party. In response to Mayor Richard C. Lee's urban renewal programs of the 1950s, which specifically discriminated against low-income populations of color, Mr. Harris ran for a seat on the Connecticut General Assembly in 1966. During his campaign, he advocated for policies aimed at addressing pollution, environmental degradation, tax burdens, and unaffordable housing. His work offers valuable lessons for the community, particularly for younger generations.

A petition of at least two hundred fifty (250) city resident signatures in favor of the proposed naming has been submitted.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

This proposal in accordance with Title I, Article XIII, Section 2(A) of the New Haven Code of Ordinances states, "**Every Ordinance or Resolution of the Board of Alders relating to the location and use of any street, bridge, boulevard, esplanade, square, park, playground, playfield, aviation field, parking space, public building, the facilities or terminals of any public utility, or the establishment or change in the boundaries of or regulations concerning zoning, shall be at once referred to the City Planning Commission and final action shall not be taken on any such Ordinance or Resolution until the commission shall have reported thereon, provided that the Board of Alders may establish by ordinance a period of not less than sixty (60) Days within which the commission shall file its report with the City Clerk and if no report is filed within such period the approval of the commission shall be presumed.**" Accordingly, the Board of Alders seeks guidance regarding the proposed amendment.

The Board of Alder seeks guidance as to:

- Whether the proposal is aligned with the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- Whether the proposal is "complete" and meets the criteria set forth in Section 18-2(a)(3) of Title III, Chapter 18, Article I of the City Code.

ADVICE

The proposal is aligned with the City's Comprehensive Plan because it:

- Fosters a greater "sense of place" and neighborhood pride
- Honors a community leader who made great contributions to the Hill neighborhood and championed racial, economic, and environmental justice state-wide.

However, prior to the Board of Alders rendering any decisions, the Planning Commission suggests having the applicant meet Section 18-2(a)(3) of the City Code by providing the following as required:

- (i) Plan of the site of the proposed location indicating all structures and street features as well as the proposed signage drawn to scale for review by the city.
- (ii) Proposed wording of the signage.

ADOPTED: May 15, 2024
Leslie Radcliffe
Chair

ATTEST: _____
Laura E Brown
Executive Director, City Plan Department