

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 3, 2016**

- ATTENDANCE:** John Kydes, Chair; Douglas Hempstead, John Igneri, Tom Livingston, Fay Bowman, Shannon O'Toole-Giandurco (6:35 p.m.); Travis Simms (6:50 p.m.)
- STAFF:** Timothy Sheehan, Redevelopment Director; Tami Strauss, Community Development Planning Director; Susan Sweitzer, Senior Project Manager
- OTHERS:** Mayor Harry Rilling, Council Member Bruce Kimmel, Maureen Sheehan, Person to Person; Laura Epstein, Senior Services Coordinating Council; Dr. Gail Melanson, Fairfield County Child Guidance Center; Adele Gordon, Senior Dental Program; Mr. Alan Miller, M.F. DiScala Company; Bruce Beinfield; Michael Lyons, BOE Chairman; John Ireland, Silver Petrucelli; Michelle Miller, Silver Petrucelli; Ryan Chmielewski, Malone & MacBroom; Emily Innes, Cecil Group; Brian Meek, Norwalk Board of Education Member

**PUBLIC HEARING –
REGARDING PY 42 DRAFT ANNUAL ACTION PLAN**

Mr. Kydes called the Public Hearing regarding the PY 42 Draft Annual Action Plan at 6:32 p.m.

Mr. Kydes announced that there had been some additional funding allocated to the City and reviewed the figures with those present.

He then asked if there was anyone present who wished to address the Committee at this time.

Ms. Maureen Sheehan, from Person To Person, came forward and said that last year, over 8,000 people were served.

Ms. O'Toole-Giandurco joined the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

Ms. Sheehan went on to give a brief overview of the various services that Person to Person was able to provide for the local residents and thanked the Committee for their support.

Ms. Laura Epstein, from the Senior Services Coordinating Council, spoke next. She held up a sign with information about a recent article in the newspaper regarding a senior's residence that was recently robbed by a fake electric employee. She said that there were 3 billion dollars in scams that were happening each year.

Ms. Epstein said that she hoped that the Committee would find some funding for the bathrooms at the Senior Center. The bathrooms were designed for grade school children and too low for the seniors.

Ms. Epstein then spoke about some of the aspects of the services that the Senior Services provides for their clients.

Dr. Gail Melanson, the Clinical Director of the Child Guidance Center of Mid Fairfield County, thanked the Committee for the \$10,000 for the group programming. She said that she hoped that some the extra funding could be used to work on the waiting list, mostly comprised of Spanish speaking families.

Ms. Adele Gordon, from the Senior Dental Program, thanked the Committee for their funding. She listed the various services the group provided.

Mr. Kydes said that the Committee would be making the recommendations at the next meeting. He then closed the public hearing on the PY 42 Draft Annual Action Plan.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Kydes called the regular meeting of the Planning Committee to order at 6:45 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Kydes called the roll and announced that there was a quorum present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

Mr. Alan Webber, the Chief Financial Officer of the M.F. DiScala Company, came forward to speak about a parcel of land locate at 1 Bates Court, which is just off of Martin Luther King Drive. He said that the 15,000 sq. ft. building on the site was abandoned and he would like to develop the building into apartments for commuters. However, to do this, the zoning needs to be changed.

Mr. Bruce Beinfield, an architect, came forward and said that he has had an office in SoNo for many years. The re-zoning for the Transit Oriented District (TOD) is very important for the area because there is so much potential available there that can be realized.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

February 4, 2016 Regular Meeting

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 4, 2016.**

The following correction was noted:

Page 7, under **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT(CDBG) PROGRAM**, paragraph 2, line 1: please change the following from:

Ms. O'Toole-Giandurco recused herself.

TO:

Ms. O'Toole-Giandurco recused herself due to a conflict of interest under the HUD Guidelines.

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 4, 2016 AS CORRECTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

BUSINESS

**BOARD OF EDUCATION SCHOOL FACILITY MASTER
PLAN PRESENTATION**

Mr. Michael Lyons, the BOE Chairman came forward to speak about the background of the School Facilities Study.

Mr. Simms joined the meeting at 6:50 p.m.

Mr. Lyons spoke about the fact that currently the schools are operating at approximately 104% of capacity. There are a number of portable classrooms, but the system is at capacity. When the Roosevelt School project is completed, it will provide a short breathing space. However, the Master Plan includes projects for 10 to 15 years out. He cautioned everyone that the study includes various options with the demographics.

Mr. Kimmel asked what this year's capital budget projects were. Mr. Lyons said that this year is focused on capacity and it would cost 3 million dollars for a new school. Mr. Lyons listed a number of options that the 3 million would cover.

Mr. John Ireland, and Ms. Michelle Miller, of Silver Petricelli, and two representatives from Milone and McBroom came forward to narrate a PowerPoint presentation.

Part of the vision, all of the elementary schools would have a Pre-K classroom. Mr. Ireland said that this would provide choices for a family for their child in terms of arts or international community or another specialized program at an early age.

Ms. Miller then reviewed type of report form that was filled out for each of the 16 schools. Mr. Chmielewski gave an overview of the exterior property standards. Mr. Kimmel asked about the rating system. Mr. Chmielewski explained the ranking systems and also pointed out that the ADA standards were updated in the past few years. A school exterior site may have a number of issues, such as detectable warning strips on the ramps, but alligator or spider cracking indicates that the walkway's base has failed, which indicates a total replacement project. Discussion followed.

Mr. Simms asked about the portable classrooms. Mr. Ireland gave a brief overview of the pros and cons of using portables as a long term investments. Discussion followed about the State regulations. Mr. Ireland said that the architects do not view portables as a solution.

Ms. Miller said that almost all of the schools need new windows. Mr. Kimmel asked if it would be possible to do all the windows at once. Mr. Ireland pointed out that all the windows are custom made, so doing them all at once would have some savings for the administration of the project, but the normal economy of scale savings would not be applicable.

The discussion moved to the condition of the school roofs. Mr. Ireland said that the State will reimburse for a roof replacement every 20 years. In the study, each of the school information sheets note when the roof was last replaced

Mr. Simms said that he was concerned that Nathan Ely might be used as a Pre-K. Ely is an older building and he felt that would present more problems. Mr. Ireland said that the proposal would be to construct a new building on the current baseball fields which are under utilized.

Mr. Hempstead asked what level of reinvesting in the various schools. Mr. Ireland said that one of the big question was determining at what point would it be advisable to construct a new building versus remodeling.

A review of the multi family units was the next topic discussed. Ms. Bowman pointed out that the projected student increase could actually populate a school. Mr. Sheehan commented that when the study was done on the urban core, the overall increase was 25 students. Mr. Ireland said that he had been surprised at the number of one bedroom or studios. He also said that a family with more than two children may end up deciding to move out of Norwalk. At the present time, most of the students are coming from established housing units rather than the new project.

It was pointed out that there were a number of residential projects underway, such as West Avenue, which is the site of the mall, so there would not be any children residing there. Mr. Ireland pointed out that the information and data came from Planning and Zoning. Discussion followed.

Mr. Hempstead pointed out that the only firm figures were the projects that were for the first five years. Past that, there are too many variables.

He also added that the biggest requirement for classrooms was the increase in Pre-K classrooms. Mr. Ireland agreed. Discussion followed.

Mr. Ireland said that overall in Connecticut, the school populations were declining. However, Norwalk's school population is growing. He went on to speak about having "choice" schools where the local neighborhood students would have first right of refusal. Any remaining seats will be open for non-district students in the City. The State currently has a moratorium on magnet schools and greatly reduced the number of charter schools.

Mr. Kimmel asked about the fact that a student living in Cranbury might decide to attend Marvin at the other end of town. Mr. Lyons said that Dr. Adamowski had stated that Norwalk already has a higher percentage of students being bussed than the rest of the cities in the State.

The discussion moved to the State formulas that were used to calculate the costs and space requirements.

Mr. Ireland then gave a brief overview of school site analysis. Mr. Simms asked if there had been any consideration regarding combining the schools for 6th grade to 12th. Mr. Ireland said that there was a development issue and that younger students were not ready for the high school environment.

Mr. Ireland then gave the overview of the recommendations, which included two new pre-K to 8th grade schools. Mr. Chmielewski reviewed the overall site plans.

Ms. Bowman pointed out that part of the parcel at Ely was deemed open space and there might be restrictions. Mr. Ireland said that the research had been done and there did not appear to be any deed restrictions. Ms. Bowman said that there had been a murder near the site. She also expressed concerns about the amount of building that would occur on the parcel. Discussion followed.

Mr. Ireland then gave a brief overview of the potential additions to the three of the schools. He then reviewed the costs. Ms. Bowman asked if the City needed the three schools for capacity.

Mr. Hempstead asked if Mr. Ireland could provide a break out of the three million. Mr. Ireland said that he could. He added that the State funding cycle was June 30th. He gave a brief timeline and pointed out that the grant applications had to be submitted and approved by June 30th. Mr. Hamilton said that the local appropriation would have to be in place before the application is submitted. Mr. Meek pointed out that if the District did not do anything, they would need three additional portables, which each cost a million apiece in the next three years.

Ms. Bowman suggested that the former NCC site on Meadow Street be considered. Mr. Lyons pointed out that the site would require purchasing the land on top of the construction costs. The City already owns the land at Nathaniel Ely.

Mayor Rilling said that he had met with Mr. Barron, the City's Financial Manager, and the allocation of three million has been put back for this year. He added he was waiting for some completed capital projects to be closed out and the remaining funds would be then moved to current capital projects. He said that after all is said and done, he expected that the three million would be back in the account.

Mr. Kydes thanked the BOE representatives, and the staff from Silver Petrucelli and Milone and McBroom for their input.

RECESS

Mr. Kydes announced a recess at 9:09 p.m. He reconvened the meeting at 9:16 p.m.

TRANSIT ORIENTATED DEVELOPMENT REDEVELOPMENT

Review Cecil Group responses to previous Committee comments.

Mr. Sheehan explained that there were three different actions proposed for approval. However, Mr. Sheehan said that none of them moved the TOD beyond the Committee level. The Committee is being asked to approve due diligence regarding TOD Plan by authorizing the information to be released to the Planning Commission and the Zoning Commission along with the public at large for their input. All the information from the public will come back to the Committee before the project advances to the full Council.

Secondly, neither the Committee nor the Common Council is taking any action in regard to the Zoning recommendations in their entirety. The Redevelopment Agency will forward whatever zoning actions that the Council feels comfortable with to the Zoning Commission for their consideration. Neither the Council nor the Redevelopment Agency can impose restrictions on the Zoning Commission. The Zoning Commission can review the suggestions, but they will take whatever actions they deem necessary. All the information from the public and the Commissions will come back to the Committee before the project advances to the full Council.

Ms. Emily Innes came forward to give an overview of the South Norwalk TOD Plan, Draft January 2016. She then narrated a PowerPoint presentation.

Approve Scheduling a Planning Committee Public Hearing on April 7, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. on the TOD Redevelopment Planning and Zoning Recommendations.

**** MR. KYDES MOVED TO APPROVE SCHEDULING A PLANNING COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING ON APRIL 7, 2016 AT 7:00 P.M. ON THE TOD REDEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Authorize Staff to refer TOD Redevelopment Plan and Recommended Zoning to the Norwalk Planning Commission seeking their written comments for the Planning Committee review.

**** MR. KYDES MOVED TO AUTHORIZE STAFF TO REFER TOD REDEVELOPMENT PLAN AND RECOMMENDED ZONING TO THE NORWALK PLANNING COMMISSION SEEKING THEIR WRITTEN COMMENTS FOR THE PLANNING COMMITTEE REVIEW.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Authorize Staff to release the TOD Redevelopment Plan and Recommended Zoning to the Norwalk Zoning Commission seeking their written comments for the Planning Committee's consideration.

**** MR. KYDES MOVED TO AUTHORIZE STAFF TO REFER TOD REDEVELOPMENT PLAN AND RECOMMENDED ZONING TO THE NORWALK ZONING COMMISSION SEEKING THEIR WRITTEN COMMENTS FOR THE PLANNING COMMITTEE REVIEW.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services

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March 3, 2016