

**Draft**  
**CITY OF NORWALK**  
**LAND USE COMMITTEE**  
**January 26, 2017**

**PRESENT:** Steven Ferguson, Chair; Frances DiMeglio; Walter McLaughlin; Bill Dunne; Nora King; George Tsiranides; David Davidson

**STAFF:** Steven Kleppin; Mike Wrinn

**COMMON COUNCIL:** John Kydes, Tom Livingston, Bruce Kimmel, Travis Simms, Eloisa Melendez, Shannon O'toole Giandurco (she left early), Faye Bowman (left early)

**OTHERS:** Tim Sheehan; Susan Sweitzer; Tom Hamilton, BOE; Mike Barbis-School Board Member; Dr. Steven J. Adamowski - Superintendent of Schools; Ralph Valenzisi, BOE, John Ireland Architect - Silver Petrucelli; Mike Zuba, Demographer - Milone & MacBroom

Mr. Wrinn called the Land Use Committee to order and then the Planning Commission to order at 7:05 p.m.

1. Redevelopment agency – Mr. Sheehan and Ms. Sweitzer both presented.

a) Mr. Sheehan discussed the first request which was for West Avenue/ Wall Street Development

The funding did include some grants that the Redevelopment Agency had received. Mr. Sheehan said that the state put forth \$3 million for which the city would provide \$1 million.

Ms. Sweitzer gave the commissioners examples of types of pedestrian improvements, which included crosswalks, sidewalks, lighting. There would also be upgrades to the utility services including fiber optics. They explained where the upgrades would occur. There was a discussion of when that would occur. The timeline would coincide with the POKO project. It could not be started before.

b) Affordable Housing –

Ms. Sweitzer said this was an ongoing project. She explained how the program worked by rehabilitating houses in the South Norwalk area. They would like to do that with 10 houses in the next 4 years. They help owners that cannot afford improvements. Ms. King said that she was in support of the project. Mr. Sheehan said that the state would

like the Redevelopment Agency to do more but they did not have the capacity. The property would be an affordable housing unit in perpetuity.

c) Washington Street Plaza –

Ms. Sweitzer discussed the plaza in front of 50 Washington Street is an eyesore. The owner is doing other projects and cannot work on this one. The plaza is a public park so they believe that it should be rehabbed. It has been neglected for many years. There would be a landscape design.

There was no cost to the city for the land since it came from the state. There was a discussion about the parking for this building. There would be a discussion of this by the Planning Committee at a meeting on Monday. There was a discussion about the look of the building but there was not much the city could do about it. Recreation and Parks is the department that is responsible for this plaza. Mr. Sheehan said that Mr. Moccia works on the parks that get the most usage, which this one does not. There was a discussion of lighting. It is on the Redevelopment's capital budget request because the Recreation and Parks has many more requests. Mr. Sheehan said that he would send out drawings for the park. There was a discussion about other uses of the park.

d) Public Art

Ms. Sweitzer described how this fund had been used in the past. There are 100 pieces of public art around the city. There was a discussion of how the art would be chosen. In the past it has been done by a juried art committee that helps to decide. The Redevelopment Agency has worked with the Arts Commission to decide. There was a discussion as to why the funding request was increased this year. Mr. Sheehan said that the city has a park that is known as "Art Park" but there is only 1 piece of art in it. There was a discussion of how much the art would cost. There was a discussion of how the jury was selected. There was then a discussion of why there were still funds left in the program. There was a discussion of how much was given from the city and who chose the art.

**2. Board of Education**

Mr. Hamilton introduced everyone before the presentation. He also noted the statute that this request fell under. He noted that the POCD stated that the city should maintain the schools.

He then began the PowerPoint presentation.

2 big projects:

Nathaniel Ely and Ponus

Mike Barbis continued the presentation. Enrollment started growing in 2007. He said that there is a residency requirement to be enrolled in the schools. At one school, Jefferson, there are 200 more students than there should be. He gave a background of how they reached the presentation today. The study was done in 2015 and presented to the public in 2016. He then discussed the planning that occurred over the past year. Some of the study did not make the plan that has been presented.

Mike Zuba, the demographer on the project, continued the presentation. He explained how the study was done. He explained how they realized the demographics changed. Real estate market, among other things, that has had an impact on the demographics of the schools. He then went over the demographic projections for the next 10 years. He explained the models that were used. He described the schools that were at capacity and how they would be affected by these projections. They would have to decide where the needs were greatest.

Superintendent Adamowski continued the presentation by explaining that they compared Norwalk to the state levels of capacity. Norwalk was well over 100%. There was concentrated growth in certain areas. He explained the models that were used and that there would be new models for the future. They tried to determine which schools could be expanded. He explained how they decided that Nathaniel Ely could be expanded.

Dr. Adamowski thanked 2 of the common council members who had helped with the Facilities Committee to come up with this plan. He discussed the guiding principles of the plan. He explained the phases of the plan which included finding seats for 900 seats for students, especially in South Norwalk. There are 65 acres at Ponus which makes it the ideal site to build on. He discussed magnet programs and providing more choices for families. He said that it would help racial balances. He discussed "unassigned" students. He also discussed current assets and help from the public which helped to share the plan. He began the discussion of the Nathaniel Ely Campus which would include indoor and outdoor tennis courts. He then discussed the 46 Concord St. school and Ponus Ridge campuses.

There was then a discussion about current enrollment. Dr. Adamowski said the district was at 110% capacity at the moment. He said this program was overdue. He said that the city has a problem that many other municipalities around the state don't have. Most have declining populations. There was then a discussion about the cost differential of sending children out of the district for services. Dr. Adamowski said they were spending a lot of money by doing that but they have to because there is no space to have these programs. There was then a discussion about how the demographics were analyzed

especially of some of the new developments that were being constructed in the city. Dr. Adamowski discussed the drivers of the increase in enrollment.

Architect of schools, showed the site plans and layout of the Nathaniel Ely site which included the new South Norwalk School. It would be 100 ft. above sea level so the opportunity for alternative energy usage was available which would also allow for L.E.E.D.

Mr. Hamilton then discussed the costs projections which he said were detailed in the commissioners' packets. John Ireland, the architect, explained why there were differences in the original costs and the updated cost which were higher than the originals. There was a discussion of why the Ponus School's costs seemed to almost double. There were discussions of the International Baccalaureate program which could be rolled out in 2 years. There was then a discussion about the Nathaniel Ely campus and what the facilities would include. There was then a discussion of capacity at the high schools. There was also a discussion of summer learning so that these that are being built would have air conditioning. Dr. Adamowski said that half of the schools in Norwalk do not have air conditioning.

There was then a discussion of the wetlands on the Nathaniel Ely site and why this site had been chosen. Mr. Simms noted that this was the only park in the area for the families and children that lived there. He asked them to find another place for the school. There was then a discussion of using some of the old schools that had been repurposed over the years.

There was also a discussion of the ranking of the Norwalk School District as compared to other schools throughout Connecticut. Dr. Adamowski said that this area was "unassigned" and children could go to other schools. There would be choices for children. There was then a discussion of operating costs projections as well as how the cost per foot figures had been arrived at. As Mr. Davidson pointed out, the proposals needed backup documentation to explain why they were so much higher. There was then a discussion as to the entire Capital Budget process.

Dr. Adamowski said that the state really determines the cost of the project during the design phase.

Ms. DiMeglio explained that there was a public hearing on the budget on the following Wednesday. She said she would like to receive the comparisons of costs from the Board of Education so that the public could review it. There was then a discussion as to the Finance Director's recommendations on the Capital Budget.

At this time, the Planning Committee of the Common Council adjourned and left the room. The commissioners then took a 10 min. break and returned to the meeting at 10 p.m.

There was a discussion as to what was needed to submit paperwork with the State of Connecticut as far as funding, Board of Education curriculum plan, etc. for the funding of new schools for the city. Mr. Hamilton said that the state had to see that all of the funds were appropriated for the project.

The next item to be discussed is a request for funding for textbooks. Most of it would be for the International Baccalaureate program because of the start-up costs. Also necessary were the textbooks for high school biology textbooks which were 14 years old as well as new textbooks for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade in social studies.

Mr. Hamilton discussed the district technology request which included backup documentation. Ralph Valenzisi also described what the funding would be used for, including Teach to One. It's a progressive, personalized learning program. It is only used in 6<sup>th</sup> grade at Nathan Hale but it may be expanded to the entire middle school grades. The cost is for the build-out of this program. There is a suggestion in other states that this is a successful program but they do want to test that at Nathan Hale. There was a discussion as to the life expectancy of the technology that will be bought with Capital Budget funds. He then explained that about 70% of students would have Chrome books to use in the classroom on a regular basis. Mr. Ferguson said that in his secular position his company would give Chrome Books to Norwalk students. There was then a discussion about the Board of Education asking developers to donate things such as Chrome Books to the district. Mr. Ferguson said that his bank had been giving out checks to teachers as donations.

There was a discussion of the funding for Capital Repairs. Mr. Hamilton said that this was a new fund which had started the prior year for unexpected repairs.

There was then a discussion about the Facilities Master Plan which was an analysis of all the schools except the high schools. Norwalk High School was later added to it. This report is for the capital needs for all the schools which included a new cafeteria at one school and a change in the dining program. The pilot program for the dining program would start at Rowayton School. There was then a discussion of air conditioning in the Rowayton School as opposed to starting a new dining program. It was stated that it is expensive to install the air conditioning in schools.

There was a discussion of the request for paving. Mr. Hamilton explained which schools were completed and which schools they would like to continue paving.

There was then a discussion about some discrepancies in the figures and whether anyone did a line-by-line review of the Capital Budget requests from the Board of Education.

No one else had any questions.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero