

**DRAFT
CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMISSION
January 24, 2018**

PRESENT: Frances DiMeglio, Chair; Steven Ferguson; Brian Baxendale; David Davidson; Michael Mushak; Nora King; Tammy Langalis (arrived after the roll call at 7:16p.m.)

STAFF: Steven Kleppin; Mike Wrinn

OTHERS: Fire Chief Gino Gatto; Lt. Fire Chief Bassett; David Westmoreland; Deanna D'Amore; Adam Bovilsky; Darlene _____; Tom Hamilton; Mike Barbis; Bruce Kimmel; Bill Holdel; Ralph _____; Craig Crawley; Ed Adams; Alex Knopp; Christine Bradley; Sharelle Harris

I. CALL TO ORDER

Frances DiMeglio called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Kleppin called the roll.

III.

A. Fire Department – Fire Chief Gino Gatto began the presentation.

- a. **Portable Radio Upgrade** – The Chief said that all of the radios need to be replaced because they were 10 years old and not being supported by Motorola. One radio would have 3 frequencies so that they would not have to carry more than 1 radio. There was a discussion about combining their request with the Police Department since they were making a similar Capital Budget request. There might be a cost savings by doing that.
- b. **Fire truck Intercom with Headsets** – The Chief said this was a new request. He explained how the headsets would be used, especially since there are a lot of claims for hearing loss by firefighters.
- c. **Security Cameras & Intercom System** - The Chief said that the only fire station that had cameras was the new Headquarters. They would like to have cameras at the other stations as well. The intercom would allow for anyone that came to the building to speak with someone at dispatch while fire personnel were out.
- d. **Apparatus Replacement** – Lt. Fire Chief Bassett said that one of their old trucks would be able to handle high water and high snow activities.

The new truck would have a dual purpose. The cost of repairing the old one has become very expensive. He then explained how the other trucks were used as well as how the trucks would be used in the future. There was a discussion about how often the new truck would be used. There was also a discussion about why the first projects were not on the Capital Budget list last year.

There was then a discussion about projects that the Department had requested funding for in prior years. Lt. Chief Bassett said that when the request had been made previously the cost of many of the vehicles were less. There was also a discussion about a parking lot near the Broad River station that was city property but leased out to a vet that was nearby.

- e. **Building Repairs – Various** – Chief Gatto said they would like to replace garage doors. There are other building repairs that they would like to make, as well.

The commissioners thanked the Fire Department for their service at the Richards Avenue fire. Mr. Ferguson thanked them for a job well done, especially with helping families that were displaced.

- B. **Historical Commission** – Mr. Mushak said he would not participate in the discussions because he and Mr. Westmoreland, who was the Chairperson of the Historical Commission, were married and it did not feel it would be appropriate.
 - a. **Norwalk Museum** - Mr. Westmoreland began the discussion about constructing an elevator in the Norwalk Museum. He explained how they would provide ADA access in the building. He said that he had increased his request because elevators are expensive. He said that the Museum was doing well with public/private partnerships. Attendance is up.
 - b. **Smith St. buildings** – The old jail building would be reconstructed. There had been a fire in the building for which they received insurance funds. The project was being done in phases because the Historical Commission was the general contractor. They would be working on an exhibit of Norwalk Pottery. He discussed the amount of funding he had requested and why the Historical Commission needed that amount. He also noted that many of the buildings were being redesigned with rental income in mind. There was a discussion about the number of visitors to the various buildings, including the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion. There was a discussion of the cultural tourism in Norwalk which could help the economy.
 - c. **ADA access Mill Hill and Master Plan** – He explained what would be done. After the project is done, the buildings would need to be painted. There was also a historical analysis of the color of the paint. There was

a discussion about the flag pole. There was then a discussion of the Head of the Harbor project including the parking spaces. He discussed an exhibit that would be at the Townhouse

- d. **Lockwood-Mathews Mansion roof** – This had started several years ago. Most of the leaks have been fixed. Phase 4 bids would be coming in soon. This year's Capital Budget amount was less than last year. Ms. DiMeglio was impressed that Mr. Westmoreland's projects came in under budget.
- e. **WPCA murals** – There are several in the Crystal Theater that should be restored. The glue that holds the paintings onto the wall have lead in them so they will not move them. Once they are restored then Plexiglass would be put in front of them. The restoration can only be done during 3 weeks when there are no programs at the theater. There was a discussion of how the restoration would be done. There was then a discussion of the roof on the Lockwood-Mathews mansion.
- f. **Museum collection** – He said that the city had a large collection of objects that were worth about \$5-6 million. He said that many of these objects did need to be repaired before putting them into an exhibit. Although it cost money to repair the, it increased the value of them. Mr. Ferguson asked what types of exhibits there could be in Norwalk about the history of African-Americans. Mr. Westmoreland said there was an exhibit at the Museum which showed the great migration of African-Americans from the south to the North.
- g. **Lockwood-Mathews Mansion repairs** – There is a concern about the front entrance doors that need to be restored. He explained what had to be done for them. There was also a discussion about a grant which would give ADA access to the front of the building to make the building compliant. There was a discussion about the leaks in the building which Mr. Westmoreland said he has not seen for about 1 ½ years so that the repairs have helped.
- h.

C. Health Department – Deanna D'Amore, the new Health Director, introduced herself to the commissioners.

- a. **Oil Prover** – She explained that this request was for the weights and measures program which showed the public that the weight was valid such as at gas stations and with oil trucks.
- b. **Building Upgrades and Improvements** – She then discussed the request to have bullet proof glass in the reception area of the Health Department building. It had been recommended by the Police Department. Currently there is a panic button for the receptionist. There was also a discussion about whether an assessment was done by the Police Department for other buildings, including City Hall, but she was not aware of that. There was a discussion about how many people come to the Health Department every day. She said that they had an active WIC program. She also mentioned that there is no

security in the building. She also noted that there were equipment improvements that were necessary which she put in the later years. The commissioners felt that she should request them this year. There was a discussion about the garden that is in now at the Norwalk Museum.

- c. **Health Department Technology Upgrades** – Ms. D’Amore asked for upgrades for tablets that were used in the field. She suggested that if they could do the work in the field, they would not have to do this work in the office. The commissioners suggested that she speak with the IT department as well. She thanked the commissioners for their suggestions.

- D. **Human Relations & Fair Rent** - Adam Bovilsky and Darlene _____ explained that they were requesting less funds this year. He explained that some projects were behind so they had funding that was not used. There would be a larger Capital Budget funding request in a future year for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”) access from City Hall to the Health Department as well as from East Ave. to City Hall. He hoped that there would be leftover funds from some of the projects. There was a discussion about collaborating with Recreation and Parks for ADA access to Cranbury Park. Mr. Bovilsky’s department reviews the plans by every department when they make changes to confirm that things are ADA compliant. Mr. Bovilsky explained the process of how his Department works with the other departments. There was a discussion about an ADA Master Plan for the City Hall complex. One reason that the access from City Hall to the Health Department had not been done in 2012 was because they thought it should be done later since it would be expensive. There was a discussion about raising awareness about how people are not able to get around the complex if they are disabled, etc.

At 8:30 p.m. the commissioners took a 10 min. break and returned at 8:40 p.m.

- E. **Board of Education – Mr. Hamilton introduced Mike Barbis, Bruce Kimmel, Bill Holdel, Ralph _____, Craig Crawley, the Academic officer, Ed Adams. Mr. Barbis said that they are now in year 2 of the**
 - a. **Columbus School** – Mike Barbis discussed this school and Ponus which were fully funded so there were no new requests. The projects had begun.
 - b. **Jefferson School** – This school did need a complete overhaul.
 - c. **Facilities Master Plan** – This had been completed and they were working on things that had to be addressed. They had added a year to the plan. They have applied to the state for funding on the projects that have begun. Mr. Davidson noted that the funds had been re-distributed in their Capital Budget request. He also asked what projects had been

added. There was a lengthy discussion about this. Mr. Hamilton said the additional year addressed the inequalities in some of the schools. Two schools had cafeterias that were also used as the gymnasium and others had a separate cafeteria. There was a discussion about the new Capital Budget 5 year plan from the Board of Education, which added a 6th year. There was also a discussion about the fact that there had previously not been any investment in the schools for over 10 years, since Mayor Knopp.

- d. **Curriculum Materials and Textbooks** – Mr. Hamilton explained that this was a limited request. It was for roll out of brand new curriculum. Replacement books are now in the Operating Budget. Mr. Hamilton said he would summarize his presentation and then the commissioners could ask questions.
- e. **District Technology** – Mr. Hamilton noted that there was an increase in the request.
- f. **BOE Capital Repairs** – This item was for unanticipated repairs in all 22 Board of Education buildings.
- g. **District Paving** – The district had made progress in paving and ADA compliance.
- h. **NHS Band Uniforms** – Mr. Adams would discuss this later in the presentation.
- i. **Energy Conservation program** – This is a new request.
- j. **District Vehicles** - This is a new request.

Mr. Hamilton then discussed a spreadsheet with all of the projects and the funds that the Board of Education was requesting in this year as well as later years. He explained why some projects could be funded later. He then went over the facilities requests as well as a timeline of all the major projects, including the design and construction. He explained that one of the schools would be a pre-K to 8th grade campus. There was then a discussion of the risk in implementing these plans. One of the campuses could take a longer because of approvals from federal and state level government. There were concerns about funding from the state. There was a discussion about the names of some of the schools as they moved to different buildings. There was a discussion about the IB school at McMahan which after the facilities were constructed would become an IB school from K-12th grade. Mr. Hamilton also discussed a breakdown which was the Board of Education's priorities. Cranbury school would have a separate cafeteria. Mr. Hamilton discussed several projects which included exterior work and interior work in the hallways, on the stage, etc. which would be completed during the summer. There was a discussion about rebuilding a new high school. Mr. Mushak said that the architecture of the school was coming back into style now. There was also a discussion of the Testa field that needed to be replaced. There was a

discussion of Safe Routes to School project which Mr. Barbis said a municipality could only do one of these projects at a time. There was a discussion about the security in the schools. The cameras had better resolution and there was film on the windows. There was a discussion of Joe _____ who was Norwalk's Officer of Preparedness. He had been an officer at Newtown at the time and was now assisting Norwalk with their readiness in emergency situations.

Joe Abrams discussed the Norwalk Band uniforms request. They were requesting 200 uniforms. He did not have a picture of what they would look like. He explained how they obtained the quotes. He said once they received funding, there would be a design committee for the uniforms. The band is recognized for their colors and the current design is a little dated. He was very proud of his band members.

At this point, the commissioners began to ask specific questions about the Capital Budget requests. There was a discussion about having the books on-line. Mr. Crawley said that they are still in a hybrid world with both books and online books. There was also a discussion about the fact that for younger kids the workbooks are important so that kids can learn to write. The workbooks are out of the Board of Education budget. There was also a discussion about whether there was a book for every student. The Board of Education said that it was a fact. There was a concern if a student did not have online access at home. Mr. Ferguson said that he did give out Chromebooks to some students, through the bank that he worked at. Mr. _____ explained that his vision was to make sure that every student had online access. The Board of Education had received a grant from Sprint to give out hotspots. Currently some high school students were given these. He explained what the Capital Budget request was for that included Chromebooks. During a discussion of textbook funding, there was a discussion about a removal of a textbook in 4th grade. There was a discussion of the increase in the cost of Chromebooks. There has been an increase in the use of Google Classroom by teachers and students.

Mr. Hodel discussed a continuation of the Repairs funding. Since maintenance had been deferred for years, this was a very necessary fund. He said he did not know how he would have funded a repair of the air conditioning chiller at Brien McMahon without this. There was a discussion of air conditioning at all the schools. Mr. Hamilton said that new schools or any renovation of a school would include central air conditioning. He said that the Cranbury project may not be able to have it, but perhaps when funding is available. There was a discussion of electrical assessments at the various schools. There was also a

discussion about the health benefits of having air conditioning in the schools. There was a discussion about the digital sign at Brien McMahon. There was then a discussion about district paving and what would be done this summer. Mr. Hamilton said that the Department of Public Works (“DPW”) does the work for the Board of Education. He thanked them for their help and working together. If DPW breaks a curb while plowing the parking lot , they will come out and fix it. There was a discussion about the LED lighting on the outside of the buildings. With the use of lighting, Mr. Mushak suggested a way to keep the schools safer and compliant. Mr. Hodel asked him to review some upcoming work and give him some advice on how to set them up.

There was also a discussion about 2 vehicles that the Board of Education would like to replace because they are 16 years old. They are used every day. They would do a state bid for the vehicles.

There was then a discussion as to open Capital Budget fund accounts. The commissioners would like to know why large amounts of money had not been used. It could be provided by the Planning Commission’s Feb. 20 meeting. Mr. Hamilton said that some of the monies would be rolled into the larger districtwide project.

There was a discussion of study halls in the high schools. Mr. Barbis said that some of the teachers retired and were never replaced. Since that happened the kids were put into study halls. Mr. Crawley said there was a discussion about a new state accountability index ranking. He said that the city had made great strides in the last 3 years. He believed they would move into the top half of the schools in Connecticut. There was a discussion about how the city should let the public know about how the district is improving.

At this point, the commissioners took a break at 10:25 p.m. and returned at 10:28 p.m.

- F. **Library** – Alex Knopp introduced Christine Bradley and Sharelle Harris and then handed over a proclamation to the Planning Commissioners which stated “Be it resolved that the Board of Directors of the Norwalk Public Library and its Board of Trustees, wish to express its deep appreciation for everyone’s participation in finding a resolution to the parking needs a the Main Library”.

He also thanked Mr. Wrinn for his help over the last 18 months. He then said that the Option Agreement was structured for 6 years. Monies would be put aside incrementally.

- a. **PopUp Library** – Ms. Bradley began with this item and explained how it worked. The cart would be purchased and have some chairs and tables. There was shelving for 100 books. It would be used in the summer months. It would help with the “summer slide.” The cart would have Wi-Fi so that kids could get their library carts. They would discuss a route so that the cart would show up at the same place and the same time. They are collaborating with camps and pre-ks.
- b. **Professional Painting** – Ms. Bradley said this would be at the branch library. Ms. Harris said that it would be done after projects in the branch had been done. There was a discussion about the landscaping behind the building. Ms. Harris said there are 2 little trees. There was a discussion about the ownership of the South Norwalk library. There was a discussion about the bathrooms at the South Norwalk library. The funding was to tile the bathroom because of the condition of the bathroom. It would make maintenance easier.
- c. **Norwalk History Room Equipment** – Ms. Bradley said this was for a piece of equipment to digitize the microfilm. There was a discussion of charging fees to print out digital prints.
- d. **Norwalk Newspaper Digitization** – Ms. Bradley said this was for digitizing the Norwalk Hour. She explained how many years of the Norwalk Hour would be digitizing them. She also explained how a part-time librarian indexed the newspapers so people could search for obituaries and birth records, etc. Alex Knopp said they would ask for a donation from the Norwalk Hour for this project. After 1970, the Hour was digitized but not indexed.

Mr. Davidson asked about the Planning Commission’s meeting on Feb. 20, if they could review the out years as well as the current year. There was also a discussion about when Bob Barron would provide his recommendations to the Planning Commission. There was a discussion about whether it was necessary to ask why a department had not asked for a certain budget item this year when they had projected that in the previous year.

There was a discussion about the Feb. 20 meeting and possibly starting earlier as well as what was on the agenda besides the Capital Budget. There was a discussion about metrics on certain development projects. Mr. Mushak had produced a table for a prior application which the other commissioners had liked. It was suggested that a similar table should be requested from a developer for each application. There was a discussion about adding this to the March agenda. Mr. Kleppin said that changes to zoning applications might not be the purview of the Planning Commission.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Langalis made a Motion to Adjourn

Mr. Baxendale seconded.

Frances DiMeglio, Chair; Steven Ferguson; Tammy Langalis; Brian Baxendale; David Davidson; Michael Mushak; Nora King

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero