

**CITY OF NORWALK
HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
January 23, 2020**

ATTENDANCE: Nick Sacchinelli, Chairman; Dominique Johnson; Thomas Keegan;
Lisa Shanahan

STAFF: Deanna D'Amore, Director of Health

OTHERS: Erica DePalma, Board of Education; Paul Sotnik; DPW Senior
Engineer; Lori Keegan; Mike Mushak; Officer Stephane Smarth

I. WELCOME - ROLL CALL

Mr. Sacchinelli called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and stated that the above members were in attendance and there was a quorum present.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Mushak- 50 Elmwood Avenue

Mr. Mushak stated that he is representing the leadership St. Paul's Church and is here to address the street light installation at the corner of St. Paul's Place and Park Street. He said there is not a light on the corner pole and is the only pole on the green that has no light and is a public safety issue. There are a lot of evening events held at the church and there are a lot of mobility challenged people that go to the church and are very concerned about their safety. There are no residents within 100' so he sees no downside to having a street light installed and requested that the committee approve the installation of the streetlight.

Lori Keegan

Ms. Keegan stated that she has been championing school bullying for the past five years. She provided an overview of what she has been doing in the schools and said she has become friends with Stephane Smarth who is a police officer in Stamford who had started a bullying proofing program in 2013 and he is very well known in the Stamford school system.

III. NEW BUSINESS

Action Items:

Public Works

1. AUTHORIZE THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS TO HAVE EVERSOURCE ELECTRIC TO INSTALL ONE (1) NEW STREET LIGHT ON THE EXISTING UTILITY POLE AT THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF THE INTERSECTION OF ST. PAUL'S PLACE AND PARK STREET IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ATTACHED PLAN AT AN APPROXIMATE COST OF \$20 PER MONTH, TO BE PAID FOR FROM ACCOUNT NO. 014021-5241.

Mr. Sotnik said that Public Works had received a request from Mr. Mushak and Mr. Westmoreland to install a light at the intersection of St. Paul's Place and Park Street and it is a reasonable request from a safety point of view and would be supported by DPW. He said because this is on First Taxing District property he contacted Mr. Di Gangi who is the General Manager and he stated that he would be willing to take it to his commission in support of the installation if approved by this committee and the Common Council. Mr. Keegan asked Mr. Sotnik if he is reasonably sure the light wont effect any of the residents. Mr. Sotnik said it should not because it will only light up the intersection but if they do get any complaints Eversource can put a shield on it to keep the light concentrated in the intersection. Mr. Sacchinelli asked if there is a need to add any additional light in the area. Mr. Sotnik said not that he is aware of and he has not received any additional requests for additional lighting.

**** MS. MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IV. OLD BUSINESS

Discussion Items:

1. Bullying

Mr. Sacchinelli provided an overview on what the former committee had been working on in regards to bullying and said he wants to approach the minors and the impact to them and more specifically wants to look at cyberbullying. He said there is certain purview and the Board of Education does the best they can do address the issue but from an enforcement standpoint there are very limited things that can be done to enforce something that did not lead to an incident. He said the goal is not to tell the parents how to parent, but there needs to be a level of awareness for parents and he would like to discuss if there are measures that can be put in place in advance of an

incident, and to have clear guidelines in place if we choose to move forward and which city body would be the enforcer and to also be in step with the Board of Education. Ms. Johnson asked what policy is currently in place. Mr. Sacchinelli there is currently nothing in place as far as enforcement.

Ms. DePalma said that there is a new state law regarding bullying that shifts the definition to include only one incident. She said that one in three students are bullied in some form by their peers and in Norwalk equates to 3,950 students that will be victims to bullying. It causes lasting physical and mental harm and the FBI.gov has said that 75% of school shooting have been linked to harassment and bullying. She said that she works in marketing and the advertising committee has rallied behind this media and will be beneficiaries and will figure out how to steward it in a responsible way for both children and adults. Her agency embarked on finding a partner that was leaning in on this subject and using evidence based solutions to support schools. She provided a background on the agency and they will come in and help schools to write policies, proclamations and interventions protocols and is a 360 approach and the solutions team is peer to peer so that education carries with them as they move through the system, and also trickles down to their siblings. She presented proclamations that have been written for other districts.

Mr. Sacchinelli said the committee will be looking at this with two perspectives and one will be to align with the Board of Education as best as possible and to support their goals, and also how the enforcement will be handled and to create a policy that is meaningful and enforceable and suggested there be a goal set. Mr. Keegan said the state statute states that everyone in the school will be trained to recognize bullying and that may be the disconnect in our city and suggested the definition of bullying be simplified. Ms. Johnson said there are other states that have a more progressive definition of bullying and Connecticut is aggressive but not as aggressive as some other states and suggested that be looked to see what kind of leniency we have given with the constraints we have. She said moving forward we will need to draw on the evidence based research regarding cyber bullying because it is a public health crisis and epidemic.

Officer Smart said that he is a police officer in Stamford and that he had started a non-profit organization called bully proofing and it initially started in 2013 in response to a student's passing. He provided an overview of his program and said that they will still give the resources on how to prevent bullying but their approach will be to build self confidence in the victims and the bullies.

Mr. Sacchinelli asked the committee if there is consensus to move forward with this. The committee all agreed to move forward. Ms. Shanahan suggested having a joint committee meeting with the Ordinance Committee. Mr. Sacchinelli agreed but said that would be at a later date once there is something to offer the committee. Ms. Shanahan requested the baseline of what the school policies are that are currently in place and to have the Common Council understand what the state and federal law to figure out how to go from there.

2. Potential Preparedness Community Awareness

Ms. D'Amore said that a preparedness event was held in Bridgeport focusing on zombies. Mr. Sacchinelli said that Norwalk has a lot of great events such as the Touch a Truck for the younger kids and there is outreach for the senior community, but there is a gap in the middle and high school age kids but they are also the most at risk demographic group and have the most expansive realm of communications. There is a need for awareness and preparedness and there may be a better delivery methodology to this specific demographic. He said one thing other communities have been doing events such a zombie apocalypse and the concept would be to hold an event in the fall and that it might promote attendance in that age range that they are looking to have outreach to and to create a level of awareness of the services that Norwalk already provides and that they have access to. Ms. Johnson said she would be very interested for the committee to see the event that Bridgeport had and the success rate the other communities have had with their events and the feedback they have received. Mr. Keegan asked if just one event will be held to cover all topics and suggested a hands on only CPR class and will help people to understand that they can help save a life. Mr. Sacchinelli said the thought is to hold the initial event and have a signup sheet for other events that they may offer, and that he has approached the head of the Norwalk High Student Council to attend one of the committee meeting to help us understand what might interest them to come out to an event. Mr. Sacchinelli suggested if the committee decides to move forward with an event that there be a subcommittee formed to focus on it and asked the committee if they are interested in moving forward with the Zombie apocalypse idea. The committee all agreed to move forward.

Mr. Sacchinelli said if anyone on the committee has anything that they would like to include on the agenda based on comments they receive from their districts to contact him. Ms. Johnson said she would like to include pedestrian visibility as a topic of discussion.

V. ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. KEEGAN MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd
Telesco Secretarial Services