

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMISSION
January 29, 2020**

PRESENT: Frances DiMeglio, Chair; Steven Ferguson; Mike Mushak; Brian Baxendale; Tami Langalis; John Lesko; Michael Mushak; Nora King; Mary Peniston (called in at 8:16 p.m. and left the meeting at 11:30 p.m.)

STAFF: Steve Kleppin

OTHERS: Chief T. Kulhawik; Deputy Chief Susan Zecca; Praveen John; Brian Bidolli; Tami Strauss; Karen DelVecchio; Jeff Oduro; Joyce Lu; Neil Rennie; Chris Torre; Ralph Kolb; Anthony Carr; Paul Sotnick; Drew Berndlmaier; Vanessa Valadares

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. DiMeglio called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

1. Police Department & Combined Dispatch

There was a discussion about the reference to the Plan of Conservation and Development (“POCD”) which seemed to be incorrect. It was suggested to use the same one that the Fire Department used.

Cars and Vans – The City’s new Chief Financial Officer had said that this should be in the Capital Budget but Chief usually would request funding in the Operating. They were requesting funds for 12 vehicles. There was a discussion about what types of vehicles and whether they would be more energy efficient The Chief said that there was a hybrid from Ford but they would look at it for next year. The police cars were maintained by the Department of Public Works (“DPW”). There was a discussion about replacing a BMW motorcycle in a later year.

Firing Range – This would replace the inside of the firing range since it is out of its useful life. It had been in the Capital Budget last year but it was removed. The company was no longer in business. The one that they would like to purchase is using virtual reality. De-escalation is part of police trainings. There was a discussion about the amount of training that the police receive on this. With this more police can be trained. This item was in one of the out years. It was suggested that it be moved up.

Safe Defender Vessels – This was for a police boat. If they could replace it this year, the trade-in could help reduce the cost of the new one.

There was a discussion about a 3 dimensional mapping for recreating crime scenes. The state police have one that they use. This new technology would allow them to do the investigation quicker and it was more accurate. This had been in previous Capital Budgets but moved to later years.

Marine Unit Housing – Deputy Chief Zecca said that they were doing a site study to determine where to place the structure. It is currently near the Sono Seafood. The building is flooding more and more so there have been problems. At this point, they would work with Recreation and Parks for a Welcome Center in Vets Park. It would be an office space as well as other spaces for both departments.

Combined Dispatch – There was a discussion about how this item had decreased in cost. Deputy Chief Zecca explained that they had spoken with the vendor and the Finance Department to possibly splitting the funding for this project between this year and next. There was a discussion about getting revised Capital Budget sheets from the Finance Department if they decided to have the funding split. There was a discussion about building a coverage map to coordinate the police and fire departments for the state.

2. Redevelopment

Brian Bidolli, the new Executive Director of the Redevelopment Agency introduced himself to the commissioners, and explained that since he had started in December, Tami Strauss would handle the presentation.

Affordable Housing was the first item. Ms. Strauss explained that the financing had closed on Soundview Landing in South Norwalk. This project would be 1/3 affordable housing, 1/3 workforce housing and 1/3 market rate units.

There was a discussion about how much funds were not expended. She noted that some of the funding was used by DPW but had not been removed from the Redevelopment Agency accounts. She then explained the discrepancies and had noted it to the Finance Department.

Façade improvement program Ms. Strauss explained helped historic buildings, no matter the use. She explained how the funding was used to restore stained glass windows on a church in South Norwalk. She also showed them pictures of the restoration of the windows. There was also a discussion about how much money was remaining in the account. She explained that they were requesting more money in order to broaden the scope of work. It was used on churches that had historic significance. They worked with the Historical Commission and the Preservation Trust. It helped to increase the property value of the church.

There was a discussion about the storefront programs that are being started by Economic and Community Development. Ms. Strauss explained that these are complementary

programs. There was also a discussion of the TIFFs program that is being looked at for Norwalk.

There was a discussion about the 50 Washington Street Plaza project. The total cost was \$1.5 million. Most of it was completed and they were working on punch list items. It would be on the Planning Commission agenda in the near future.

The next item was Transit Oriented Development which was put in the out years of the Capital Budget. She explained that it would be multi-modal hub and that they are working with other departments to look at it holistically. There are so many different ways to get to the train station. Ms. Strauss said that the Redevelopment Agency request was for engineering. There was a review of the Transportation and Mobility Capital Budget request to determine whether there were duplicative items.

There was a discussion about increasing the number of parking spots at the South Norwalk parking garage. There are 1,000 parking spots in the garage and about 280 as surface parking.

There was a discussion about when the South Norwalk train station was updated. The surface parking was to help ease the wait list in the parking garage.

There was also a discussion about the development of TIFFs and whether there should be a separate item on the agenda to learn more about them.

2. Information Technology

Ms. DelVecchio explained how her department put together all of the requests from the various departments and how she arrived at her Capital Budget request. She also referenced the POCD.

Ms. DelVecchio noted that the majority of users of the website were from their mobile devices. The website would be enhanced to look better on those devices as well as being ADA compliant.

Desktop technology and refresh program – PCs and tablets are refreshed on a 3 – 5 year cycle. They use the older ones by refurbishing them. Ms. DelVecchio's department now worked with the Health Department since in prior years they did it on their own. They inventory all of the PCs, laptops, etc.

Refresh program for the servers – This was done every 3-5 years. There have been no problems since they began this program. There are servers at the Police Department and the Fire Department. Some applications are on the cloud but others are on the server.

There was a discussion about cyber security and a report which noted that some changes were needed to stay ahead of cyber threats. Some funding was in the future years. She noted that investment would be necessary for years to come. There was a discussion about “drills” to City employees as well as new hires. Mr. Oduro explained about a conference he attended about what to do if there was a major cyber-attack in the country. There was also a discussion about how many attempted attacks there were every day.

The phone system upgrade – This was a request for a funding which is shared between the city and the Board of Education. It has been on hold for a few years. They have a plan to do the upgrade with the Board of Education.

The wireless upgrade for City Hall and the library – There would be an upgrade at all locations.

Systems Management Software – Mr. Oduro explained what the IT department did was update software on all the computers around the city. This would send the job to everyone’s computer to be more efficient.

Audio Visual (“AV”) Upgrades to conference rooms – This request was to upgrade 2 conference rooms every year with new AV equipment. She explained which smart boards would be upgraded since some were over 10 years old. There was a discussion about the duplicity of a request from the library for something similar. Ms. DelVecchio said she did not have a request from the library. She also noted that prices on equipment have drastically decreased. There was a discussion about the sound system in one of the libraries which had been mentioned at the Library’s presentation the previous evening. Ms. DelVecchio said they would speak with someone at the library about this. There was a discussion about using GoToMeeting on the AV equipment so that it cut down on travel fees of consultants, as well as departments working together in a similar manner.

There was a discussion about whether the city IT’s department would handle the new library technology, once complete. Ms. DelVecchio explained that currently, they handle two of the four libraries in the city.

Ms. DelVecchio noted that there is no request for the GIS funding since it is now in the operating budget. There was a discussion about some of the layers of the GIS system. They would like to refresh the system every other year but it is expensive. There was a discussion about the different layers that are available to the public. Some cities, such as Greenwich and Darien, charge people to use the different layers. They are not in compliance. There is a mandate that says it has to be electronic and available, at no cost, to the public.

Police refresh program for the mobile data units (laptops) in the vehicles – Ms. DelVecchio explained the refresh program that had been implemented and has worked successfully for many years. The units should be replaced every 3 years. There is now a printer in the cars in order to print tickets. They would replace the laptops and printers when the

vehicles are replaced. It was explained to Ms. DelVecchio that the Police Department would be replacing 12 vehicles so she would purchase 12 laptops and printers to be consistent.

Police server refresh – Once the servers reach 5 years old, they should be replaced.

There was a discussion about software being used by the Fire Department. There is a placeholder for next year as they research new companies for it. The existing software is not working well.

Library refresh of their server and their circulation software. – They would like to switch to a cloud based application. However, the library staff did not feel that it was a good system yet. They would like to wait a couple of years to see if it makes more sense. The next item was software to allow the library to take credit cards and no longer taking cash. There was a discussion about the Printer Coin box devices. The next item was for cell phone charging lockers at the libraries These would be used during power outages and hot and cold days in the city. Patrons can lock their phones while it is charging.

There was a discussion about the Library presentation the previous evening. The library would like to purchase a kiosk to rent laptops. The IT department is requesting funding for the laptops to be put in the kiosk. There was a discussion of the desktop computers that were being purchased. Ms. DelVecchio noted that this request was smaller than ones in the past.

There was a discussion about neighborhood Wi-Fi similar to what Stamford has. Ms. DelVecchio said that there was a grant for it but it was not enough to do it.

At this point the commissioners took a break at 7:50 and returned to the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

3. Operations and Public Works (Includes Water Pollution Control Authority [“WPCA”] and Building Management).

Ms. DiMeglio noted that this department seemed to be more organized with their paperwork and backup than some other departments.

Neil Rennie, Property Manager for the city, began the presentation by noting that there was a summary page and continued with the 2020-21 projects.

Air Handling Unit replacement for City Hall – It would cost \$100,000. There are 7 or 8 units. This would be the 2nd one to be replaced. The ones in City Hall have been maintained but are 30 years old and are being refurbishing. The ones on the roof are easier to be refurbished in place.

Elevator replacement at City Hall – It would be modernized and ADA compliant and the mechanicals would be brought up to the current building code. There have been malfunctions especially since the elevators are 30 years old now.

Restroom upgrades – They would start with the first floor bathrooms since they are used the most. There was a discussion about having the men and women’s bathrooms together but it would be costly to do.

Electrical panel upgrades – There are more computers on the panels so they need to be upgraded. There was a discussion about what the priorities were. Mr. Rennie said that he organized the funding by building and then each project for the building. There was a discussion about security for City Hall. Mr. Rennie noted that several projects were being done for security this year so they could wait for additional funding in the later years. They are adding security cameras to the front and side of the building. There are other projects being done around the building, as well.

At this point, Ms. Peniston called into the meeting.

Various city buildings repair - This is for any capital project that is unforeseen. There was a discussion about what is left in this account.

Police Department – They would replace air handling units there since they are 15 years old now. They would replace 1 per year, based on the most important ones. The life cycle is typically 25 years but the building is in use 24/7.

Architectural Design for the locker room at the Police Department – Some of the shower stalls needed to be re-done, as well as a redesign of the locker room. There was also a discussion about the pavers in the front part of the police station which would be in the later years. They have maintained them but they would move to a concrete sidewalk in the future. There was also a discussion about the vines growing which are not being maintained.

Health Department – Mr. Rennie said that the HVAC needed to be upgraded because those systems are antiquated. They would be more energy efficient. Some heaters are not even turned on because they have failed. There was a discussion about the bathrooms in the building and upgrading them to today’s standards.

Main Library – They would modernize the elevator. They would coordinate the work with them. Since the main building would not be demolished in the renovations, the elevator would have to be modernized.

Public Works Center - The pipes needed to be upgraded because they are leaking. The bathroom also needs attention. They are not ADA accessible. It had been in the Capital Budget for years but was not this year. It seemed to be missing. These pipes are used for the heating system. It was suggested that they should add some language to understand the request better.

Nathanial Ely – This request was to study changing from steam to hot water to heat the structure. They could also save money by changing to a hot water system. There was a discussion about how the projects are reimbursed by utilities.

Various energy conservation projects for all facilities – When fixtures are obsolete, they convert to the latest technology. It is an emergency fund to use to fix things with something better.

Branch library – They would like to retro fit the existing lighting with LED lighting. There are incentives from the local utility which are usually 50% reimbursement.

Building management systems – They would be able to log in remotely. The current system was not as energy efficient. It is easily managed since it is remote. There was a discussion about sensors on buildings to keep them tempered.

Norwalk Museum which is next to City Hall – The roof needs to be replaced since it was last done in 1973. There are slight leaks but patched.

Electrical systems surveys – Since there are no up-to-date surveys, they would like to identify issues that could come up. Many buildings have had additions done to them. They would make sure there is no overload on the electrical systems.

Environmental remediation – This is an account for asbestos remediation or other problems that come up unexpectedly.

Ben Franklin roofing – Mr. Rennie discussed that they had received bids. One had backed out and the other bid was being disqualified. A third bidder was too high.

There was a discussion about fire alarm upgrades in the later year. It was thought that this should be done sooner. The smoke detectors are over 20 years old. Mr. Rennie said that the contractors would tell them when to replace them.

Sidewalks and Curbing for citywide buildings – City Hall is a major candidate for a sidewalk replacement. This request is for replacement and not for making them ADA compliant.

There was a discussion about stamped colored concrete being used for sidewalks.

Chris Torre began his presentation for Operations, along with Anthony Carr.

Fleet Replacement – They would like to replace 4 trucks and a compressor. They would replace snow plows that were bought in 1995, He also explained the trucks that were being replaced. One water truck used for cleaning catch basins had to open hydrants to get more water. This truck would recycle the water so that it did not have to open the hydrants.

There was a discussion about several lights on Wall Street that are off, which should be called into customer service and Eversource.

There was a discussion about which truck they could live without. They said it was the small dump truck. They would add back up information for others looking at the Capital Budget later in the process. They also discussed how the winters were different than years past. There was a discussion about how the salt affected the trucks. There was also a discussion about the camera truck.

Compactor replacement – This had been approved several years ago but not purchased. They are now doing it but need more money.

Truck scale – It has not been replaced at Public Works since they moved in which was almost 25 years ago. It is at the end of its useful life. They wanted the same one as at the transfer station.

WPCA – Ralph Kolb began the presentation.

Pump Station Upgrade – He discussed where the pump stations would be replaced in the FEMA flood zones. The monies requested were for design and construction. Since the WPCA paid for this out of their user fees, it would not be bonded. It did not affect the city's bond rating because of that.

There was a discussion about an old capital account but Mr. Kolb said that it would be used later.

Waste Water Treatment plant – It was to update the plan for the plant. This would happen in a later year. He also noted that he had asked for grant money from the state of Connecticut.

3. Recreation and Parks

The name of the department cannot be changed since it is in the charter. It would also have to be changed in ordinances and codes. Nick Roberts and Ken Hughes represented this department. Mr. Roberts said that the requests were in their priority.

School and Park Playground – There were replacements needed at Silvermine School and at the Tracey School Playground. Some of the Tracey Playground had been replaced in 2012.

Basketball and Tennis Court – This request was for Brien McMahon tennis courts. They also want to have a small portion of money to make repairs at all basketball courts throughout the city.

Athletic Fields – This is for the Calf Pasture beach to host tournaments. Some money would be used for re-sodding. There was a discussion about the flooding in the area. This is for field work including drainage. There are so many programs at this field so that this work would be done first.

Veterans Memorial Park – There was a discussion about the fields at Veterans Park. The problem is drainage. They need to study this to determine what could be done to alleviate the problems. There is also a problem with cars parking on the grass which ruins it. It was suggested that perhaps there should be a different use on the property. There was also a discussion about the Master Plan for Veteran’s Park that had been completed eight years ago. Mr. Roberts suggested that the report should recommend what the park should be.

Cranbury Park – This is for the Gallaher Mansion for leaks to the building, and masonry repairs. There was a discussion about where the revenue from the rental fees go. The fees go into the General Fund.

Calf Pasture Beach – The beach needs sand replacement. Mr. Roberts said that he has received estimates that could lower the Capital Budget request. Next year they would like to do a study for the skate park and whether the location was the best one. The study would also be needed to see if it could be moved to another place in the city. The thought was that it would draw more users to it. There was a discussion about whether the study was necessary.

There was a discussion about some projects which generate revenue. Mr. Roberts said that the dock needs to be replaced at Veterans Park. It was at least 15 years old. There was a discussion about which docks would be replaced. There was also a discussion about comparing the rates that could be charged for the docks. There was a discussion about kayak storage at Calf Pasture and whether it can be added to the marina build at Veteran’s Memorial.

Vehicles - A sidewalk plow is over 15 years old and the beach cleaner is over 25 years old. Both of these would be replaced.

Irving Freese Park – Phase 2 would be funded with this request for the memorial plaza around the site. It would help the overhaul of the Wall Street area. The site has been used for a concert site for a few years. There was a discussion about urban parks which are being used more. Mr. Roberts noted that the cost estimates came from Redevelopment Agency. Some commissioners thought it was a lot of money.

West Rocks Soccer Complex – Mr. Roberts noted what parts of the project were being completed.

Broad River Baseball Complex – This is for the construction phase of 3 turf fields. It is for Little League fields. There was a discussion about different types of fills. For Norwalk, it seems it is a cost factor as well as maintenance.

Turf Softball – The design had been funded and this request was for the construction at a field at Brien McMahon. It was hoped that more fields would be constructed for girls. There was a discussion about having it used as a multi-purpose field.

Oyster Shell Park Improvements – There would be a request in the later years.

Casagrande Field and Testa Field – He noted that Casagrande Field is at Brien McMahon and would be in 2021 and 2022. The Testa Field would be done sooner because it is in worse shape. There was a discussion about whether to hold off on this field since a new high school might be built on the athletic fields. However, if that happens then Casagrande could be done first. There are safety issues at Testa Field. Since the design study has not been done yet no one knows whether the fields would be used during the construction of Norwalk High School.

Ben Franklin Gym – Since roof repairs are being done to the gym, this is a request for air conditioning.

Backstops and Fencing, Paving Sidewalk Projects, Tree Planting – These items were for unexpected items during the year.

Open Space Fund – The request for these items was the same every year, however, no one seemed to know where the previous year's funds were moved to.

At 10:30 p.m. the commissioners took a break and returned at 10:35 p.m.

4. Public Works

The first item was for evaluating bridges. Mr. Sotnick explained that it would be on a 5 year cycle. The bridge would be evaluated first, fixed and then re-evaluated after 5 years.

The next item was structural inspections in which they find unforeseen structural repairs. A contractor will do repairs but more complicated engineering would be contracted out.

West Cedar Bridge – This item was for a full replacement of the bridge which is insufficient. Ms. Valadares said this is for the remaining cost of the construction of the bridge. The city only pays 20% for the construction since it is funded by the federal government. The bridge will be widened. Design work has begun. They are trying to see if they can incorporate a sidewalk for pedestrians.

Pavement Management Program – This is based upon a cycle that has been set up. They want to rehab the pavement and not reconstruct the pavement. They also work with Eversource to coordinate projects.

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Sidewalks and Curbs – There was a discussion about how to evaluate replacement of the sidewalks. Drew said it was usually when roads were paved. They take care of the replacement of the sidewalks. It depends on the area whether they use concrete or asphalt. He explained that it was a higher request because of a big project, Woodward Avenue, between Burritt and Neptune. There was a discussion about using the paving budget for the sidewalks. There was also a discussion about Witch and Hunt Lanes and how expensive it could be.

Footpath Replacement – There was also a discussion about the cost of the footpaths. Owners were supposed to It was noted that footpaths were replaced when roads were replaced, if needed.

General Drainage – This is a fund that helps to pay for general issues. Some funds could be used in conjunction with paving. There was a discussion about the amount of money that seems to be in the account.

Watercourse Management – This is for drainage improvements. It covers design and maintenance and construction of the infrastructure.

Stormwater Mgmt Plan – This funding is requested every year but gets removed. There was also a discussion about MS4. If the EPA came in to order and this was not in place, there could be problems.

Norwalk River Flood Control – This is the levy near Perry Avenue. Mr. Sotnick explained how they were working with the Army Corp. of Engineers. This is for the design and construction.

Coastal resiliency – This is for dealing with climate change issues and making improvements.

Tree Planting DPW – This is a fund which works with the Tree Advisory Committee. It was to maintain the Tree City USA certification. There was a discussion about where the signs are located throughout the city.

East Avenue Roadway & Bridge Reconstruction – This fund had to do with the modifications to the Walk Bridge which then affected the East Avenue Roadway. Ms. Valadares explained it would be used to put utilities underground and the beautification of the area. She explained that they would need funding over several years. They are following the Walk Bridge Program and want the funds to be ready to pay for the city's part. It should be done in 5 years, once started. She noted that it was a high priority for the city. There was a discussion about turning the area around the cemetery in East Norwalk back into a 2 way road, as it once was. It was also recommended to include roundabouts on both ends of it. There was also a discussion about the East Avenue TOD study. Mr. Carr said he would coordinate with TMP.

Grant Local Matching Funds – This was to be prepared for paying matching funds when awarded grants. Mr. Carr said that they would be receiving revenue from the state.

Right-of-Way Use Policy Study – Mr. Carr explained that they would like to have standards for utility companies on how to work in the right of way. The consultants would do comparisons to other towns.

5. Planning and Zoning

Mr. Kleppin, the Director of the Planning and Zoning Department, spoke about the revisions to the Zoning regulations. He discussed some of the areas that he would like to include: Route 1 corridor, signage, and curb cuts, design standards, etc. There was a discussion about the parking lot of Costco. There was also a discussion about hiring an Assistant Director and possibly restructuring the department.

Mr. Mushak apologized to Ms. King for his reaction to a question that she had made on the previous evening about the intermodal hub.

Ms. Langalis noted that she had not heard of any projects to get information easier from the Planning and Zoning Department, Building Department or Tax Assessor's. Mr. Kleppin explained that scanning the Planning and Zoning Department documents would be very expensive. There was a discussion about the GIS system that current residents can use.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Langalis made a Motion to Adjourn.

Mr. Mushak seconded.

Frances DiMeglio, Chair; Steven Ferguson; Mike Mushak; Brian Baxendale; Tami Langalis; John Lesko; Michael Mushak; Nora King voted in favor.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero