

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 7, 2020**

The next scheduled meeting of the Planning Committee of the Common Council will be held on Thursday, May 7, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

To allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone, Zoom, and/or the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. Specific instructions and links can be found at www.norwalkct.org/meetings.

Members of the public can call in and listen to a meeting. They will not be able to speak or see any of the meeting participants. Each meeting will use a unique Meeting/Webinar ID. Please find the information using the link above.

Members of the public who wish to provide "live comments" will need to register in advance and use the Zoom meeting platform. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, click the "raise your hand indicator" and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section. Please find the information using the link above.

Members of the public who wish to view the meeting, but are not participating, can view a live stream on the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. This stream is delayed by approximately 20 seconds. Please find the information using the link above. The meeting recording and minutes will be posted on the City of Norwalk website within seven (7) days after the meeting.

Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be read into the record, they should be submitted at least three hours in advance of the meeting start time. Please email Sabrina Church at schurch@norwalkct.org to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

ATTENDANCE: John Kydes, Chair; Mayor Harry Rilling; Thomas Keegan; Thomas Livingston; Barbara Smyth; George Tsiranides; Darlene Young; Lisa Shanahan (7:05 p.m.)

STAFF: Sabrina Church, Director of Business Development and Tourism; Henry Dachowitz, Chief Financial Officer; Angela Fogel, Director of Management and Budgets;

OTHERS: Gregory Burnett, David Heuvelman, Dominique Johnson, Common Council Members; Brian Bidoli, Executive Director Norwalk Redevelopment Agency; Christine Bradley, Library Director; Anthony Carr, Chief of Operations and Public Works; Jessica Casey, Chief of Economic and Community Development; Lamond Daniels, Chief of Community Services; Karen DelVecchio, Director of Information Technology; Gino Gatto, Fire Chief; Thomas Hamilton, CFO, Norwalk Public Schools; Bill Hodel, Director of Facilities, Norwalk Public Schools; Kathryn Hebert, Chief of Transportation Mobility Parking; Anna Keegan, Acting Director of Human Relations and Fair Rent; Steven Kleppin, Director of Planning and Zoning; Thomas Kulhawik, Chief of Police; Nicholas Roberts, Director of Recreation and Parks; David Westmoreland, Historical Commission

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Kydes called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Kydes called the Roll as indicated above.

PUBLIC HEARING

Draft PY46 Action Plan (2020-2021) and 5-year ConPlan (2020-2024)

The draft plan can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.norwalkct.org/1412/Community-Development-Block-Grant>

Mr. Kydes opened the public hearing and Mr. Bidolli gave an overview of the plans.

The Committee members did not have any questions and no questions were submitted by the public.

Mr. Kydes closed the public hearing.

PUBLIC HEARING

Amendment of the Citizen Participation Plan to include a 5-day comment period to accommodate deployment of CDBG-CV Funding Program application for CDBG-CV funds can be found at the following link:

https://www.norwalkct.org/DocumentCenter/View/15850/CARES-Act_CDBG-CV-Application

Mr. Kydes opened the public hearing.

The Committee members did not have any questions and no questions were submitted by the public.

Mr. Kydes closed the public hearing.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No public comments were submitted.

Ms. Shanahan joined the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

I. ADMINISTRATION

a. Approval of the Minutes of the March 5, 2020 Regular Meeting.

**** MS. SMYTH MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE (MR. KEEGAN; MR. KYDES; MR. LIVINGSTON; MS SHANAHAN; MS. SMYTH; MR. TSIRANIDES; MS. YOUNG)**

II. NEW BUSINESS

a. FY2021 Capital Budget

**** MS. SMYTH MOVED TO APPROVE ADVANCEMENT OF THE FY2021 CAPITAL BUDGET TO THE COMMON COUNCIL**

Police Chief Kulhawik provided an overview of the requests made by the Norwalk Police Department.

Fire Chief Gatto provided an overview of the requests made by the Norwalk Fire Department.

Mr. Carr provided an overview of the requests made by the Public Works and Recreation and Parks departments.

Ms. Smyth asked about the \$1.5 million ask for Cranbury Park. Mr. Roberts explained that the ask is for restorations at the mansion. Mr. Kydes asked about the \$50,000 request for sidewalks and paving. Mr. Roberts explained that is for paving in the parks. Mr. Kydes asked if they piggyback on City contracts. Mr. Roberts said they combine the bids to get the most competitive price.

Mr. Ready gave a brief overview of the requests made by the Building Department.

Mr. Carr gave an overview of the requests made by the WPCA. Mr. Dachowitz noted that the WPCA is an Enterprise Fund and charges user fees. The pricing is designed to break even.

Ms. Hebert gave an overview of the requests made by Transportation, Mobility and Parking. She noted they are working on Safe Routes to School and have a request related to Rowayton and George Avenue sidewalks. She said she has one small change request to move \$40,000 from the Transportation Master Plan to the fleet to replace a critical department vehicle. one account to another.

Ms. Hebert reviewed the Transportation Master Plan.

Mr. Kleppin provided an overview of the requests made by the Planning and Zoning Departments.

Ms. Church gave an overview of the three requests made by the Economic and Community Development department.

Ms. Church reviewed the \$50,000 request made by the Arts Commission for art installation around the Dr. Martin Luther King Drive corridor.

Ms. Hebert reviewed the three requests made by the Parking Authority and noted they are an Enterprise Fund.

Mr. Westmoreland reviewed the requests made by the Historical Commission.

Mr. Daniels reviewed the request to upgrade security at the Health Department building related to their clinics.

Ms. Keegan explained the request by Human Relations and Fair Rent is for ADA compliance.

Ms. Bradley reviewed the requests made by the Library. She said one is for the laptop dispensaries. Another is to digitize *The Norwalk Hour* newspapers between 1929-1950. She discussed the plans to renovate the Auditorium. She said it has gotten a lot of use over the past couple of years. Mr. Daniels added that the space brings in a modest revenue.

Mr. Bidolli reviewed the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency's requests for funding for affordable housing and the general façade program.

Ms. DeVecchio gave an overview of the requests made by the IT department. She said they are for public safety, Library projects and City-wide initiatives. Mr. Kydes noted that this department was tasked with COVID-19 related projects and asked if those additional expenses were taken into account. Ms. DeVecchio explained that this budget was created before that. Mr. Dachowitz said the City had to order some laptops for staff. He described the additional expenses related to the work process.

Due to a potential conflict of interest, Ms. Smyth left the meeting. She said she was pleased to see support for Silvermine and Cranbury Schools and school security.

Ms. Shanahan also left the meeting.

Mr. Hamilton gave an overview of the Board of Education's projects. The top priority is Cranbury School and the second is the Norwalk High School project. He explained that last year it became apparent there was an opportunity for the State to pick up a substantial part of the Norwalk High School project that could be positioned as a pilot for the State of Connecticut. This concept would be an exchange of students and the P-tech model is based upon providing a high school degree with an Associates degree.

The P-tech model is intended to serve underserved students and the arts academy may serve another type of student. It is believed that a number of school districts will be interested in these programs. He noted that details have to be worked out, but believes it will be a one for one student.

Mr. Keegan asked if there is currently a list of students to get into the P-tech program. Mr. Hamilton said it is currently fully subscribed. Mr. Keegan asked if it would be possible that Norwalk students may not get into the program. Mr. Hamilton said Norwalk students would have first preference to attend the program.

Mr. Livingston said the Legislature adjourned without making a decision on funding. He said that Senator Duff said they may have a special session in June or July.

Mr. Hamilton reviewed the kitchen renovation requests at Naramake School and said it has been deemed a high priority project by their school Council.

Mr. Hodel reviewed the plans for removing 11 fuel tanks.

Mr. Hamilton reviewed the Silvermine School driveway improvement plan. Mr. Dachowitz said that in the first year, \$80,000 is for the design and \$1 million is in the subsequent year budget for construction.

Mr. Hodel reviewed the air conditioning program. He said they would like to do two schools per year. Mr. Hamilton said that they put in full air conditioning when they do a major construction/renovation. This request is for those other schools.

Mr. Hodel reviewed the request for funding asbestos abatement. He said this is a continuation of the asbestos management and removal process.

Mr. Hamilton discussed the request for new furniture at Ponus Ridge Middle School. He said this is an issue coming from the school community. He said Mayor Rilling is not recommending funding.

Mr. Hodel reviewed the air quality program at Brien McMahon High School. He said they take this very seriously and this is a continuation of the program. He added that he believes there will be more requests going forward.

Mr. Hamilton reviewed the request for enhancements to school security.

Mr. Hamilton explained that the request for institutional technology is to fund technology at various schools.

Mr. Dachowitz presented slides of the project/budget schedules. He also presented the bonding capacity and said it was determined that \$400 million is the amount they can borrow and keep their AAA rating. He said that currently they have debt service where they can re-pay about \$20 million each year.

Mr. Dachowitz said that going forward they are looking at \$118 million of previous authorized capital projects that have not yet been bonded. New project authorizations net \$129 million. He said they are closing out the existing Norwalk High School project.

Mr. Dachowitz said what needs to be done is an examination of the projects that have been authorized and tough decisions have to be made. He said they were able to get through FY 20/21 and authorize everything, but they are using future capacity and the operating budget will be under tremendous losses. He said we are in a major recession and wants to limit the mill rate.

Mr. Livingston asked Mr. Dachowitz if he was saying that the typical \$5 million paving project is problematic. Mr. Dachowitz said everyone has a need and wish list and they are all wonderful, but they have to be re-evaluated. The best way to do that is to stretch things out and make do. If the grand list grows after the recession, some of that can be translated into capital projects. Mr. Dachowitz said they have to be very careful and cautious going forward.

Mr. Livingston asked how the request for technology for the Board of Education would be dealt with. Mr. Dachowitz said he and Mr. Hamilton have a good working relationship and they are all in this together.

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO AMEND THE CAPITAL BUDGET AND APPROVE THE TRANSFER OF \$40,000 FROM THE TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN TO FLEET EQUIPMENT**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL (VOTE (MR. KEEGAN; MR. KYDES; MR. LIVINGSTON; MR. TSIRANIDES; MS. YOUNG)**

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO APPROVE THE CAPITAL BUDGET AS AMENDED**

**** MOTION PASSED BY ROLL CALL VOTE WITH SIX (6) VOTES IN FAVOR (MR. KYDES; MR. LIVINGSTON; MR. TSIRANIDES; MS. YOUNG) AND ONE (1) VOTE IN OPPOSITION (MR. KEEGAN)**

Ms. Smyth rejoined the meeting.

b. Neighborhood Assistance Act Tax Credit Program

**** MR. TSIRANIDES MOVED TO APPROVE SCHEDULING A PUBLIC HEARING ON THE 2020 NAA TAX CREDIT PROGRAM APPLICATIONS TO BE HELD DURING THE JUNE 4, 2020 PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING**

Mr. Bidoli explained that applications are available for the NAA Tax Credit program.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE**

c. Enterprise Zone

** MS. SMYTH MOVED TO Approve the advancement of the expansion of the Enterprise Zone Ordinance to include Census Tract 437 to the Ordinance Committee of the Common Council.

Ms. Casey presented an overview of the Enterprise Zone and reviewed the projects that received Enterprise Zone tax abatements. She said she was seeing action to approve advancement of the expansion of the Enterprise Zone.

Mr. Kydes asked Ms. Casey if she saw any issues with getting State approval if she gets approval from the City. Ms. Casey said she did not see an issue.

Mayor Rilling thanked Ms. Casey for her informative presentation. He said he fully supports this initiative. He noted that there has been a lot of misinformation spreading that homeowners are subsidizing businesses.

Mayor Rilling noted that we are in an economic downturn, and will be looking at projects that create jobs. He said he hopes local contractors will be put to work. He said they need to jump start the Wall Street area, that has struggled since the flood of 1955. He said that of all the projects built, three took advantage of the Enterprise Zone and two more will be taking advantage of the Enterprise Zone.

** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE (MR. KEEGAN; MR. KYDES; MR. LIVINGSTON; MS. SMYTH; MR. TSIRANIDES; MS. YOUNG)**

d. Update on the East Norwalk Train Station proposed improvements and additional transit-oriented initiatives. She also presented slides showing short term, medium term and long term opportunities.

Mr. Kleppin gave a presentation on the East Norwalk Train Station proposed improvements. He said the Committee has been working on the plan for over a year. He said that in the areas of Charles Street and Osborne Avenue, they are looking at a façade improvement program and looking to relocate the Public Works garage and repurpose that property.

The idea is to pull the commercial properties closer to the train station. Existing business will be grandfathered, but if they convert to a residential use, they will not be able to go back to a business use.

Mr. Kleppin said that Liberty Square and the Cove Avenue areas will be separate districts. The plan includes installing a promenade to connect South Norwalk to East Norwalk. Mr. Kleppin described other initiatives including the addition of outdoor gathering areas, creating rain gardens and sculptures.

Mr. Kleppin reviewed the designs and guidelines. Mr. Kydes thanked Mr. Kleppin for keeping the public informed.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business discussed this evening.

ADJOURNMENT

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

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 10:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services