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**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 6, 2021
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

ATTENDANCE: John Kydes, Chair; Thomas Keegan; Lisa Shanahan; Barbara Smyth; George Tsiranides (7:10 p.m.); Darlene Young (7:29 p.m.)

STAFF: Sabrina Church, Director of Business Development and Tourism

OTHERS: Brian Bidoli, Norwalk Redevelopment Agency; Tod Kallenbach of Dorenberg/Kallenbach Advertising; Jessica Vonashek, Chief of Economy and Community Development; Michael Yeosock, Principal Engineer, David Huevelman, Council Member

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Kydes called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Kydes called the Roll as indicated above.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public wished to participate this evening.

I. ADMINISTRATION

A. Approval of the Minutes of April 1, 2021 Meeting.

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Mr. Tsiranides joined the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

II. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business discussed this evening.

III. OLD BUSINESS

A. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

1. Update on the Visit Norwalk Tourism initiative by consultant, DKA.

Mr. Kallenbach shared his screen and gave a PowerPoint presentation. He explained the Visit Norwalk campaign started in November. He said they hope to have an official launch of their site in July. He reviewed the Norwalk Destination Branding campaign, including marketing goals and growth measures.

Mr. Kallenbach said they were awarded two contracts – Business/Park promotion in November 2020 and Tourism in January 2021. He reviewed the scope of services for both contracts.

Mr. Kallenbach presented a new City seal and Mr. Livingston asked how that fits with the current seal. Mr. Kallenbach explained they created a legacy seal. Ms. Vonashek

added that there was a lot of work done on the logo and this is a place for the different logo. She said they are not retiring the other logo, but they wanted to be able to brand this effort. Ms. Church said they would see something like this new logo on signage or an event to draw visitors. This was an opportunity to refresh the original seal of the City of Norwalk. Mr. Livingston pointed out that the seal is set by Ordinance and asked if this satisfies the Ordinance. Ms. Church said the seal was not changed, it was just refreshed for social media. Mr. Livingston said he had a problem with that, because it says the Seal of the City of Norwalk.

Ms. Vonashek explained that this started out as an exercise when Stew Leonard's asked to revise the gateway sign at Exit 16 and they needed to add the seal. She said that Mr. Kallenbach sharpened the original seal and created the new seal. She added that Mr. Livingston's point was taken and she will take the new seal through the process. Mr. Kallenbach said the new seal complements the new destination logo.

Ms. Young joined the meeting at 7:29 p.m.

Mr. Kallenbach said he will do whatever he has to do to comply with the Ordinance.

Mr. Kydes asked if they ever saw a collaborative effort with a municipality and a major company. Ms. Vonashek said there have been conversations. She said the gateway signage that was replaced cost approximately \$10,000. She noted that they need to replace other gateway signs and put money in the budget. Mr. Kydes asked if there was any talk about sponsored ads on social media. Ms. Vonashek said that was a good idea, but she hadn't thought of that. Ms. Church said she did not believe the tourism website was ready for that, but it is an option.

Mr. Kallenbach shared screen shots of the new website. Ms. Young pointed out that the website did not indicate Norwalk, CT, since there are several other Norwalks. Mr. Kallenbach said they have not yet established a series of tag lines, but that is something for further thought. He added that they want to create a sense of place so there is no confusion with other Norwalks.

Mr. Kallenbach concluded his presentation and fielded questions from the Committee members. Mr. Livingston said a key to this is to keep the website up to date. He asked who will do that. Mr. Kallenbach said they are on board with their current contract through the end of the year. He added that he hopes to stay involved. Ms. Vonashek said they partnered with Go Nation to help with content and Mr. Kallenbach is building the website. The second piece is that Mr. Kallenbach is managing the social media accounts. He added that they use open source technology that is available to everyone.

2. Update on the activity within the Enterprise Zone since the 2020 expansion.

Ms. Church reviewed this item and said it was signed and ratified in March. She is the Administrator. At this point they had one transaction in the expanded geography. In addition, there is one project in South Norwalk that may use the benefit and three businesses who used the manufacturing zone benefit. Mr. Kydes asked Ms. Church to let them know if there is any activity.

B. REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

**** MS. SMYTH MOVED TO ADVANCE THE FINAL PY47 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN (AAP) TO THE COMMON COUNCIL FOR ITS APPROVAL AND TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SUBMISSION OF THE PY47 AAP TO HUD AND ALL DOCUMENTS CONSISTENT WITH THE APPROVED PY47 AAP.**

Mr. Bidoli gave an overview of this item. He said this is a yearly plan on what they anticipate spending CDBG funds on. He said holding a public hearing was a condition of this and there were no comments.

Mr. Kydes thanked everyone for submitting their choices.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

2. Update on the South Norwalk TOD Study.

Mr. Bidoli provided a brief update. He said the consultant has been working on a number of development scenarios and they expect to have the LDA in July.

Ms. Young thanked Mr. Bidoli for attending the District B meeting. She said she wants to be able to share information in a timely manner. Mr. Bidoli said he wants to be in constant communication.

C. TRANSPORTATION PARKING & MOBILITY

1. Update on the Transportation Master Plan.

Mr. Yoesock provided an update and said they finished the contract and plan to review the existing studies. They are starting to create a list of stakeholders and research some of the problems. Public outreach programs will be scheduled later this year.

Mr. Kydes asked Mr. Yoesock to keep the Committee updated on the progress.

2. Update on the Safe Routes to School initiatives.

Mr. Yoesock reported that they selected a contractor for Highland Avenue to complete the sidewalks. The design is almost done, but the project is on hold because the gas company is doing some work there. The project has not been put out to bid yet. He said he will try to get a better schedule from the gas company.

D. ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

1. Update on the MLK Corridor Initiative.

Ms. Vonashek shared her screen and gave an update on the MLK Corridor initiative. She said they have been working on this initiative and partnering with the faith-based community. She reviewed the history of the initiative. She said the MLK corridor encompasses a lot of South Norwalk.

Ms. Vonashek said when they met with the public, they received well over 200 comments. They used that information and came up with a set of recommendations. They have been working on the recommendations by applying for grants and have been working on adding those recommendations into the budget.

Ms. Vonashek discussed the art initiative and said that three different locations will be decorated with murals through the Arts Commission. She said they identified a \$3 million grant to support public Wi-Fi. She added that it would be great to partner with AT&T to bring Wi-Fi to the South Norwalk area.

Ms. Vonashek said that another recommendation is an education hub. They need to figure out what that looks like. In addition, they need to focus on traffic and mobility improvements; that is a safety piece. She reviewed other initiatives, including open space and green space and playground clean up and beautification of the MLK Corridor. She said that tomorrow she will be meeting with community members to discuss improvements to Ely Avenue.

Another recommendation is the staircase at Hamilton and MLK. One was reconstructed a number of years ago, but they have been trying for the last year and a half to fund a second staircase. Ms. Vonashek said she believes the addition of a second staircase will help with connectivity.

Ms. Vonashek said that moving forward, meetings will be held with sub-groups to discuss the recommendations. She thanked Ms. Young, Reverend Clark and Mayor Rilling for all of their efforts.

Mr. Livingston asked Ms. Vonashek to send a copy of the presentation to the Committee. Ms. Smyth said these are great initiatives and will infuse a great sense of pride in the area. Mr. Kydes said this was a great update.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO ADJOURN
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services