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**PLANNING COMMITTEE
OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
SEPTEMBER 2, 2021
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

ATTENDANCE: John Kydes, Chair; Thomas Keegan; Thomas Livingston;
Barbara Smyth; Darlene Young (7:37 p.m.)

STAFF: Sabrina Church, Director Business Development and Tourism;
Steve Kleppin, Director of Planning and Zoning; Jessica Vonashek,
Chief Economic and Community Development; Michael Yeosock,
Transportation, Mobility and Parking

OTHERS: Steven Ivan, Housing Development Project Manager, Norwalk
Redevelopment Agency

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Kydes called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Kydes called the Roll as indicated above.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE PY46 (FY20) CONSOLIDATED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION REPORT (CAPER) SUBMISSION TO HUD

Mr. Kydes opened the public hearing. No members of the public wished to comment, and he closed the public hearing at 7:04 p.m.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public wished to comment.

I. ADMINISTRATION

A. Approval of the Minutes of August 5, 2021 Meeting.

** **MR. KEEGAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED**
** **MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MS. SMYTH)**

II. NEW BUSINESS

A. REDEVELOPMENT

** **MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO ADVANCE THE PY46 CAPER TO THE
COMMON COUNCIL WITH AUTHORIZATION FOR THE MAYOR TO
SIGN ALL FORWARDING DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED BY HUD.**

Mr. Ivan provided an overview of the first year of the five-year consolidated plan that was included in the backup materials. Mr. Keegan asked about the number of homeless people in Norwalk as identified in the Plan. He noted that 19 children were included. Mr. Ivan explained that this number was provided by a consultant and pulled from the consolidate plan. He said he did not believe the plan has specific information about children. Mr. Keegan said that he would hope whoever is responsible for this would make the children and their families a priority.

** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

D. PLANNING AND ZONING

1. Update on the Industrial Zone Study and the Waterfront Study.

Mr. Kleppin offered to attend next month's meeting to discuss this item, especially the Industrial Zone Study. He reported that the Committee met last week and edits are being made. He added that there will be detailed recommendations.

Mr. Kleppin reported that the Waterfront Study just began. They held four different interviews with stakeholders to try and get a sense of what is working and what is not working. The quick takeaway is that there is significant siltation and the Harbor and the River need to be dredged. He added that they talked to the people doing water quality studies.

Mr. Livingston said it sounds like they are asking the waterfront property owners what they think and asked if they are going to ask the broader population. He said the waterfront is a tremendous asset to the City. Mr. Kleppin said there will be several public hearings held along the way.

Mr. Kleppin said they are constantly learning the properties and added that this is a first step. There is a need to protect the waterfront and find public assess. He said they are trying to interview as many stakeholders as possible. Mr. Livingston asked if members of the Common Council will be included in the discussions. Mr. Kleppin said that Ms. Young and Mr. Kydes are on the Committee overseeing the Study. Mr. Livingston said that the more input from the members of the Common Council, the better.

Mr. Kydes asked Mr. Kleppin to keep the Planning Committee involved and asked to have this item put on the agenda for next month's meeting.

B. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

1. Review of the Arts Commission's MLK Corridor Arts Program.

Ms. Church shared her screen and explained that the Common Council authorized a capital budget for the Arts Commission for \$50,000. The Arts Commission commissioned art for the MLK Corridor. A sub committee was created and their first activity was to hire a Curator for the project. Mr. Julio Pardo, who is a resident of the community, was chosen.

Ms. Church reviewed the steps taken to identify areas where Mr. Pardo and the Arts Commission felt they would be able to bring the community together through art. Two locations were chosen, they sent out an RFP and then facilitated a clean up of the areas.

The submission were showcased and received community input. Ms. Lauren Clayton's proposal was chosen. Ms. Clayton has strong ties to the community. Both pieces will cost \$30,000. They hope to use the remaining funds to have students paint traffic boxes.

Ms. Church invited the Committee members to participate in the ribbon cutting event in November.

In response to Mr. Kydes' question, Ms. Church explained that the State funded the City \$1 million for a multitude of things that were prioritized by the community. A portion of that funding is going to the arts.

Ms. Smyth said she was glad Ms. Clayton has ties to the community. She added that the mural is beautiful and welcoming.

Ms. Young joined the meeting at 7:37 p.m.

C. TRANSPORTATION, MOBILITY AND PARKING

1. Update on Rowayton Sidewalk project.

Ms. Vonashek reported that the contract for the Rowayton sidewalk project was signed. She anticipates having the design concepts by the end of the year. Mr. Livingston expressed his thanks to Ms. Vonashek.

2. Update on Transportation Master Plan.

Ms. Vonashek reported that the Technical Advisory Committee held their first meeting. Community meetings will be scheduled. Mr. Yeosock said an electronic survey will be available.

Ms. Smyth asked if the Technical Advisory Committee will be looking at public transportation. Ms. Vonashek said they will and noted that members of the Transit District were on their call. During their call, they also talked about ensuring that people are able to get to their places of employment. She said that they discussed how people are moving out of their cars and using public transportation.

Ms. Vonashek discussed the Wall Street RFP.

III. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Vonashek reviewed the Main Street Small Business program. She said the program started in November 2019. She shared her screen and highlighted the various programs,

noting she has \$165,000 to spend on the program. Four business have applied for a matching grant.

Mr. Livingston asked if someone is obligated to pay back the grant if they sell their building. Ms. Vonashek said they get the money free and clear. She noted that this money is to be used for basic façade improvement.

Ms. Vonashek reported that she received a lot of feedback about resident's frustration with garbage cans. She said she was able to work with the Department of Public Works and purchased garbage and recycling bins for Wall Street and Washington Street. The existing bins were painted and relocated to Whistleville, where there were no public garbage receptacles.

Ms. Vonashek talked about the holiday lights. She said that soon after they were installed, some of the lights were not operational. They realized the outlets were not strong enough and have been working with SNEW to identify and better address the issue for this holiday season.

Ms. Vonashek reported that 30 small business grants for \$5,000 were awarded. Two thirds of the business were women and minority owned business entities. In total \$150,000 was provided to small business through this program. She noted that over 220 businesses submitted their names for this funding.

Ms. Vonashek reported that they spent \$4,500 to create neighborhood banners in various locations in Norwalk. They installed 35 neighborhood banners and have an additional 35 that need to be installed in various locations.

Through the Arts Commission, \$13,400 was committed to create the custom local art work covering the dining barriers on Washington Street.

Ms. Vonashek said that for the next fiscal year, they are looking at adding six programs, including the storefront façade project, holiday and seasonal decorations, City Ambassadors, neighborhood banners, public art initiative and local programs in the urban core.

Ms. Young asked Ms. Vonashek who they were looking to work with as City Ambassadors. Ms. Vonashek said they talked to some of the non-profits and to the Open Door Shelter to see if they were interested in working with them on this program. Ms. Young said the Open Door Shelter did something like this a few years ago and believes the residents were paid to do some cleaning in the South Norwalk area. She said she would love to know more about the Ambassador program; this is a good initiative to bring back.

Mr. Keegan asked Ms. Vonashek if there are plans for a storefront holiday decoration contest. Ms. Vonashek said she believes the Wall Street Neighborhood Association holds an event around decorating their storefronts. Mr. Keegan suggested that would be something to consider.

Mr. Kydes asked Ms. Vonashek for an update on the Webster Street parking lot. Ms. Vonashek explained that an RFQ was created to get responses from developers.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. SMYTH MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services