

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
MAY 6, 2010**

ATTENDANCE: Douglas Hempstead, Chair; Andrew Conroy, Laurel Lindstrom,
John Tobin, Carvin Hilliard (7:30 p.m.)

STAFF: Norwalk Redevelopment Agency: Timothy Sheehan, Michael Moore

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Hempstead called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and stated that the members in attendance as listed above constituted a quorum.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Hempstead asked those members of the public in attendance were there to speak in the public participation section, and they stated that they were there to observe item 3 on the agenda, Impediments to Fair Housing.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**** MS. LINDSTROM MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM
THE APRIL 1, 2010 MEETING, AS SUBMITTED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

BUSINESS

Mr. Hempstead requested a suspension of the rules to change the order of items in the agenda to make the second item as the first on the agenda, as it was the smaller of the two large documents.

Mr. Moore, of the Redevelopment Agency reviewed the agenda items and stated that as a point of clarification, the only document that was new to the Committee was the Impediments to Fair Housing. He added that the Committee has previously had the complete presentation documents as included in the packets from other meetings, both as draft documents and revised versions.

He added that the most recent documents as included on the CD now reflect changes incorporated from the public information sessions as well as Committee review.

He added that the City's Consolidated 5-Year Plan, and Annual Action Plan are ready to be forwarded to Common Council for their approval, assuming no further substantial changes. Mr. Hempstead asked if the documents can be modified or changed, and Mr. Sheehan replied yes, but that would require another 30 day review period.

A. Community Development Block Grant Program
1. Approval of the Annual Action Plan.

Prior to the review of the plans, Mr. Sheehan asked Mr. Moore to give an overview of the Consolidated 5-Year Plan and Annual Action Plan. Mr. Moore stated that in 2010 the City is faced with a continuing upheaval in the housing market combined with a dramatic decline in the economy which is especially severe for low income households. He added that here are strategies that may be used by the City to stabilize housing costs and create income stability, and support organizations are trying to assist low income residents with the impact of the economic depression on families. He stated that in addition, these programs enable people to find jobs, retain jobs and transition from one career to another, become appropriately trained for jobs, and bring stability to families.

Mr. Hempstead stated that this was probably the third or fourth go-around on this plan and asked the committee members if there were further comments or questions. Ms. Lindstrom asked if there would be more public comments, and Mr. Moore responded that the public comment period ended yesterday. Mr. Conroy asked if phone calls were accepted with questions from the public and Mr. Moore responded that written comments were required.

**** MS. LINDSTROM MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE ANNUAL ACTION PLAN AS SUBMITTED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. Approval of the City's new Five-Year Consolidated Plan.

Mr. Sheehan asked Mr. Moore to give an overview of the Consolidated 5-Year Plan and Mr. Moore stated that as was highlighted in the Action Plan, the strategies used by the City to stabilize housing costs and create income stability, and support organizations are trying to assist low income residents with the impact of the economic depression on families. He stated that in addition, these programs enable people to find jobs, retain jobs and transition from one career to another, become appropriately trained for jobs, and bring stability to families. He added that while most recent studies are national in scope, they also examined regional impacts in the northeast, which support the general conclusions.

Mr. Moore stated that, as presented previously, the Consolidated Plan is required by Congress every five years and is designed to encourage jurisdictions to shape the goals and strategies for expending the CDBG grants they are eligible to receive.

Mr. Moore added that the context in which these five-year plans are developed effect the elements of the plan but at each year in the five year period, there is an annual action plan, that was just approved, which can also be used to change the five-year plan.

Mr. Hempstead stated that again, this was probably the third or fourth go-around on this plan and asked the committee members if there were further comments or questions. Hearing no further questions, he called for a motion to approve.

**** MS. LINDSTROM MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE CITY’S FIVE-YEAR CONSOLIDATED PLAN AS SUBMITTED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. Approval of the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing.

Mr. Peter Stratton of the Steven Winter Associates, Inc. Building Systems Consultants stated that he thanked the group for the opportunity to comment on the Norwalk Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing. He stated that it was important to point out that federal law, including the Fair Housing Amendments Act, requires multi-family housing to be accessible—regardless of recommendations at the local level.

He added that further, the building code of the State of Connecticut includes provisions in Chapter 11: accessibility, which require buildings to be accessible, “visitability” and universal design principles are noble and important, but they must be recommended above and beyond the minimum requirements of the law, not in lieu of them.

Mr. Sheehan stated that copies of written comments were provided from the following organizations:

- Norwalk Fair Housing Advisory Commission, Rev. Jeffrey Ingraham, Chairman
- Norwalk Housing Authority, Candace Mayer, Acting Executive Director
- Norwalk Fair Housing Advisory Commission, Margaret Suib, Esq.
- Nancy and Michael Burke, Norwalk Residents

Mr. Sheehan stated that an extensive review of the Westchester case and legal settlement was provided and suggested that a comparison with Norwalk would be a helpful element to the analysis.

Mr. Sheehan stated that the Consolidated plan is mainly a statement of the conditions facing Norwalk’s low and moderate income community, but it is also a statement of what the community’s priorities are for addressing those conditions, and should become the chief framework for decision-making with regard to CDBG allocations over the next five-year period. He added that the city has drafted a new Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing which represents the City’s efforts in making an objective assessment of the nature and extent of fair housing concerns, and the potential impediments to making fair housing choice available to its residents.

Ms. Lindstrom stated that there was a great deal of information to digest and added that in all fairness to the importance of the issues and comments from the housing agencies, she needed more time to review the documents. Mr. Tobin stated that he was in agreement that more time was needed to evaluate the documents in greater detail.

- ** **MR. TOBIN MOTIONED TO TABLE THE IMPEDIMENTS TO FAIR HOUSING TO THE NEXT MEETING AGENDA.**
- ** **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. Approval of the Permitting the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency's Review of Certificates of Consistency with the City's Five-Year Consolidated Plan.

Mr. Hempstead asked what was done in the past, and Mr. Sheehan responded that for decades the Redevelopment Agency has been handling this without going through the approval process through Committee and Common Council authorization. He added that a formal review and approval of this was an important clarification step in the approval process. Mr. Hempstead stated prior to adding another layer of approvals in the process, he would like a review of past practices by the Redevelopment Agency to determine what was sufficient and insufficient.

- ** **MR. HEMPSTEAD MOTIONED TO TABLE THE PERMITTING THE NORWALK REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY'S REVIEW OF CERTIFICATES OF CONSISTENCY WITH THE CITY'S FIVE-YEAR CONSOLIDATED PLAN TO THE NEXT MEETING AGENDA FOR FURTHER REVIEW.**
- ** **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- B. Housing Strategic Plan for the City of Norwalk.
 1. Consideration of the Revised Housing Strategy for the City of Norwalk.

Mr. Sheehan asked Mr. Moore to present the strategic plan, and Mr. Moore stated that the strategy recommends three specific approaches to utilize resources that are available to the City, including:

- a. Providing access to home ownership.
- b. Improving and preserving existing affordable housing units through historic rehabilitation.
- c. Maximizing energy efficiency.
- d. Directly improving the character and safety of the neighborhoods that have significant affordable housing resources.

Mr. Moore highlighted that the changes were going from a five-year to a two-year plan, and to maintain compliance with the state requirement of 10% affordable housing, recognizing the costs involved with affordable housing development. He summarized that this provides a public policy document that provides guidance with flexibility to change as the City's priorities change.

- ** MR. CONROY MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE HOUSING STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE CITY OF NORWALK AS SUBMITTED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED WITH THREE VOTES IN FAVOR (HEMPSTEAD, CONROY, TOBIN) AND TWO ABSTENSIONS (LINDSTROM, HILLIARD)**

C. Request to Schedule a Public Hearing

1. Certify Neighborhood Assistance Tax Credit Act Applications.

Mr. Hempstead stated that the Public Hearing would be scheduled for June 3, at 7:00 p.m. for the purpose to certify Neighborhood Assistance Tax Credit Act applications.

D. Wall Street Development Plan

Mr. Sheehan provided a background overview on the negotiations and letter of intent then subsequent contract, which provided the framework structure for the agency's representation. He stated that further details would require an executive session and requested the remainder of this item be tabled until the end of the meeting.

E. Creation of Ad-Hoc Committee

1. Discussion – Creation of Committee to Review Development Plans and Approval Process.

Mr. Hempstead stated that the intention of forming an ad-hoc committee was to streamline the approval procedures, incorporating recommendations from the Chamber of Commerce relative to the parallel process. He asked members if they would be willing to serve on the Committee, and Mr. Tobin, Ms. Lindstrom, and Mr. Hilliard agreed. Mr. Hempstead stated that there would most likely only be one or two meetings to determine the process and the next steps for approval.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Hempstead called for a motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing the Wall Street Development Plan.

- ** MR. CONROY MOTIONED TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING THE WALL STREET DEVELOPMENT PLAN.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting went into Executive Session at 9:25 p.m. and was reconvened into public session at 9:45 p.m.

**** MR. CONROY MOTIONED TO APPROVE RESCISSION OF THE AUGUST 12, 2008 AUTHORIZATION FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS REGARDING THE PROPERTY AT 71 WALL STREET.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** MR. CONROY MOTIONED TO APPROVE RESCISSION OF THE AUGUST 12, 2008 AUTHORIZATION FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY TO EXECUTE SECTION 108 LOAN AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT FOR THE PROPERTY ACQUISITION OF 71 WALL STREET.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSL**

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. TOBIN MOTIONED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Knox,
Telesco Secretarial Services

