

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
MARCH 31, 2010**

ATTENDANCE: Douglas Hempstead, Chair; Andrew Conroy, Laurel Lindstrom, Clyde Mount, Kelly Straniti, John Tobin

STAFF: Thomas Hamilton, Director of Finance; Dennis McCarthy, Fire Chief, Norwalk Fire Department; Thomas Kulhawik, Deputy Chief, Norwalk Police Department; Hal Alvord, Director of Public Works Michael Greene, Director of Planning & Zoning; Karen DeVecchio, Director, Information & Technology Dept.; Norwalk Redevelopment Agency: Timothy Sheehan, Director, Norwalk Redevelopment Agency; Michael Moccia, Director, Recreation and Parks Department; Frank Ferro, Library Director;

OTHERS: David Park, Chairman, Norwalk Historical Commission; Kevin Carter, Director, Stepping Stones Museum; Diane Lauricella

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Hempstead called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and announced that the first part of the meeting was a public information session for the purpose of comments on the 2010-2011 City Capital Budget.

Mr. Hempstead reviewed the procedure and rules for those who had signed up to speak, and asked those individuals to state their name, address or affiliation and to comment only as relevant to the Capital Budget items, limited to a maximum of three minutes.

The following comments are not verbatim and represent a summary of statements made.

Mr. David Park, 66 Strawberry Hill, Norwalk, stated that he was representing the Norwalk Historical Commission and presented a letter signed by himself and the following organizations in support of the former police station demolition line item:

Shelley Gerarden, President Lockwood Matthews Mansion Museum
Leslie Nolan, Executive Director, and Susan Jacoby, Founder, Devon's Place
Rhonda Kiest, executive Director, Stepping Stones Museum for Children

Mr. Park stated that the former police station has been vacant since 2005 when the Police Department relocated to their new site in south Norwalk, and the City has postponed the demolition for the past five years to budget constraints, leaving an abandoned, unsightly and unsafe building and grounds. He added that with the following park revitalization initiatives underway, it is more important that the building be demolished and land be converted to open space:

- The launch of the Lockwood Matthews Mansion Museum's master plan

- Stepping Stones Museum for children's expansion
- Pine Island Cemetery state/national register nominations
- Building improvements to the Center for Contemporary Printmaking.

He added that action taken within this timeframe will coincide with Stepping Stones construction schedule and potentially help to realize cost efficiencies for the demolition project. He presented a resolution signed by himself and Peter Bondi, approved by the Historical Commission, dated February 24, 2010 stating that the above activities and the City of Norwalk as a whole will benefit by the removal of the building, and most importantly will add to Norwalk's open space.

Mr. Kevin Carter, 303 West Avenue, Norwalk, stated that he represented Stepping Stones Museum and echoed comments made by Mr. Parks, relative to the demolition of the former police station building. He added that with the previously mentioned park revitalization initiatives underway, it is very important that the building be demolished and land be converted to open space. He presented a letter addressed to the Planning Committee from Doug Adams, Stanley M. Seligson Properties, summarized as follows:

The former police station building has been vacant for many years and is centrally located in Norwalk's "central park". The building portrays a terrible image to the hundreds of thousands of visitors that visit the park year, and is abandoned, unsightly, and unsafe. He added that with the park revitalization initiatives underway, be demolition would serve as an important driver in this process. Action taken during the summer of 2010 would nicely coincide with the work that is being done to improve Stepping Stones and there are tremendous cost efficiencies by combining timing with the Museum's construction schedule.

Mr. Diane Lauricella, 21 Blue Mountain Ridge Road, Norwalk stated that she was here as a city resident and environmental consultant to comment on the proposed Capital Budget. She stated that she is pleased that the Committee is holding this information session and she looks forward to their consideration of her input. She stated that there several items where corporate donations should be secured to make up the capital cost, so tax payers should not have to pay.

1. Police Patrol Vessels: Refurbishing and items used for drug patrols should not have to be a capital budget item, but is a police department expense item
2. Demolition of the former police station: This item should be postponed until a more appropriate time rather than in the year of such extreme budget issues. She added that, it is more important that current open space issues should be addressed, and she is saddened that the speakers who spoke in support of the demolition do not live I Norwalk. She added that tenants should consider helping with money to assist with the demolition.
3. Fire Headquarters: While she is 100% the new Fire Headquarters, the City should look at sustaining heating, lighting and salvage those costs where possible.
4. Sidewalks on Walter Avenue: This should be combined with the plan for bikes and trails and incorporate these plans to reduce accidents.
5. Traffic Calming: This should be addressed, and she stated that she continues to request greater attention be place on the ongoing traffic pattern issues.

6. Waterfront Public Access of \$250,000: Too much has gone into the Waterfront access plan and there should be more dollars dedicated to the bikeway plan, which is a better way to enhance health and wellness of the community. She added that the Fairfield Bike and Pedestrian Alliance is a newly formed group and she is a member of the organization that is dedicated to improve bike paths in the area.
7. Visual Arts should not be funded unnecessarily
8. Vegetated buffers should be funded in a modest effort to improve water quality and reduce storm water run-off.
9. Consultants – There are many free workshops on lead standards and it is not needed to hire consultants. 50 Washington Street could do a community service Green Building design for the Land Use and Building Management Committee.
10. Cranbury Park Masterplan: While she applauds the plan, there are areas that pose a threat to the wetlands and nature pools, there is no prioritization for the master plan to work on trails to prevent run-off from vernal pools. There should be signage for park operation times and directional signs.

Ms. Lauricella addressed the concern about additional wetlands and watercourses on the Property and explained that the definitions of wetlands and watercourses were defined in the City's regulations. She gave a summary of the geology of the site, pointing out that the Silvermine River valley consisted of coarse, porous soil, adding that the site was located at the base of a low point of a hill and that water flowed across the site during rainfalls, but that it was not a permanent watercourse with the conservation value of the wetlands on the property.

Ms. Lauricella added that the Mayor's Water Quality Committee enforcement issues should be added in consideration and evaluation of the budget, and she added that, there are areas off Martin Luther King Drive that are not consistent with the City ordinance relative to storm drainage issues.

There were no other members of the public present to speak for the public participation, and Mr. Hempstead closed the public comments session ended at 7:45 p.m.

Mr. Hempstead asked for the Department Directors to address comments and questions from the public, and Police Deputy Chief Kulhawik stated that in reply to the question on refurbishing the waterfront vessels, they are still pursuing grants. Office Lepak stated that in reply to the comment on getting corporate donations it is not realistic under the economic conditions. Mr. Mount asked if the Thomas Marine aluminum boat and Cigarette Boats were still in operation and what type of work was required for them to be completed. Mr. Fevano replied that the proposed bid is to sandblast, remove and repower and reinstall the engines, and once they are refurbished and upgraded, they will then have two boats. Mr. Fevano added that this will be a good value when work is done and completed.

March 12, 2010

Members of the Board of Estimate and Taxation
Members of the Common Council
City of Norwalk
Norwalk, CT 06856

Ladies and Gentlemen:

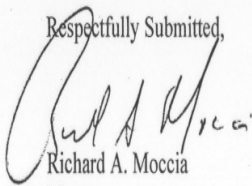
In accordance with the City Code, I have completed my review and herewith transmit my recommendations for the FY 2010-11 Capital Budget.

I am recommending a total capital budget of \$16,675,500. This is \$567,000 less than the amount recommended by the Planning Commission. Of the total recommended amount, \$2,534,914 will be financed from grants and other non-general fund sources, leaving a balance to be financed and repaid from the general fund of \$14,140,586. To place this recommendation in perspective, the amount of governmental activities' debt the City is scheduled to retire in FY 2010-11 is \$15.7 million, so the City's overall level of debt will decline slightly as a result of the recommended FY 2010-11 capital budget.

I have accepted the Planning Commission's recommendations to add \$40,000 for 5" fire hose replacement; \$50,000 for a sidewalk plan; and \$15,000 for repairs to the City's Hungarian Monument.

After the Planning Commission acted on the FY 2011 Capital Budget, we learned that the cost of demolishing the Old Police Facility and removing the Tokeneke Bridge are expected to be less than originally estimated. I have recommended, therefore, reducing the appropriation for the Old Police Facility by \$450,000 to \$1.3 million, and reducing the appropriation for the Tokeneke Bridge from \$340,000 to \$100,000. In turn, I have recommended restoring \$123,000 to fund the following projects: \$24,000 for Public Works Center repairs; \$40,000 to construct a footbridge over the Five Mile River; \$9,000 additional for Fleet Replacement, to purchase a leaf vacuum/shredder; and \$50,000 additional for Sidewalks and Curbing. In addition, I have recommended moving a \$50,000 appropriation for Downtown Parking Analysis from the Planning and Zoning Department to the Parking Authority, since the Parking Authority oversees all parking functions in the City.

Respectfully Submitted,



Richard A. Moccia
Mayor

COMMITTEE REVIEW 2010-2011 NORWALK CAPITAL BUDGET

Mr. Hempstead asked Mr. Hamilton to provide an overview of the Capital Budget and explained that this was the final phase of the adoption of the capital budget, before being moved to the full Common Council for approval by April 13th.

Mr. Hamilton provided an overview of the Capital Budget stating that it represented a gross amount of \$16,675,500 as approved by the Mayor, less \$2.5 million in funding from the grants to be awarded to the Parking Authority, representing a net of \$14.1 million. He added that the overall scope is that the City is paying off \$16million of principal out of the plan which is a slight decline over prior years.

Mr. Hempstead and additional asked about the stimulus funds being used for road paving, and Mr. Hamilton explained that the stimulus funds would supplement the capital budget. He said that the capital budget is separate and apart from that funding. Mr. Hempstead asked if there are any other stimulus funds that are associated with other capital projects. Mr. Hamilton said that they are going to receive funding for energy related projects, such as alternative energy projects. He said that he believes the Mayor is interested in using the funds for energy conservation in City buildings.

Mr. Hempstead asked Mr. Hamilton if he could provide an analysis of where the stimulus money will go. Mr. Hempstead said that he would also like to see funding added to purchase open space. Mr. Hamilton referred to the financial summary statistics section, and stated he wanted to focus less on specifics and more on the overall impact on bond ratios and debt service as a percentage of the Operating Budget. He pointed out on Table 1 that debt service currently at 9.1% is compared to 7.9% which is at or below the 10% per the 5 year plan. The indebtedness of the City is up with the school renovation projects that have doubled versus 2007. He referred to Table 2 and the projections of debt service.

Mr. Hempstead stated that there are two additional projects that should be reflected, which are the Traffic Study, and the changes to the removal of Tokeneke Bridge, which was no longer \$300,000 but was reduced by \$240,000. Mr. Hamilton stated that the Mayor had proposed to move it forward by one year and Mr. Tobin stated that there is zero requested year and dollars appropriated this year. Mr. Hamilton stated that the project is requested in an Out Year of 2011 and that the Mayor approved removal of the old bridge for less and moving the money into the building of pedestrian footbridge. Mr. Hempstead suggested this is a question for Corporation Counsel and that there should be a charter requirement process through a Planning Committee Hearing, approval, then forwarding onto the Common Council within ten days according to section 30.11. Mr. Hamilton stated that based on 30.08 it cannot include any new projects and coincides with the approval of the Capital Budget and any item ready, and should not go back to Corporation Counsel.

Ms. Straniti asked Mr. Hamilton is there is room to add more funding for sidewalks. Mr. Hamilton said that they could agree to spend more money, but the question is what should be reduced or eliminated to fund the sidewalks; the final decision rests with the Common Council.

Fire Department

Mr. Hempstead asked how much was appropriated for building design and appraisal fees and Fire Chief Dennis McCarthy responded that there is an RFP for December 2010 for removal of tanks and demolition of the existing building, assuming new building construction is approved. Mr. Hempstead asked if the entire \$645,000 will actually be spent, and Fire Chief McCarthy responded that it is difficult to project.

Ms. Lindstrom asked if the \$1.6million was just for design, and Fire Chief McCarthy responded that it includes demolition of the old building, design of the new and moving into the new building, and conversion of supply hoses to 5' hose. Mr. Conroy asked what how many stations there were and Chief McCarthy replied five: and listed them as follows:

NFD Station 1 at 90 New Canaan Ave.
NFD Headquarters Station 2 Volk at 121 Connecticut Ave,
NFD Station 3 at 56 Van Zant Street
NFD.4 on Westport Avenue, and NFD 5 on Meadow Street.

Mr. Hempstead asked if the Department heads would present their 2010-2011 Capital Budget requests, and the following budgets were presented.

Department of Public Works

Mr. Alvord presented his budget, and Mr. Conroy asked about the Tokeneke Bridge replacement. Mr. Alvord stated that he was told there was a letter from Darien Selectmen Campbell stating that they will fund it. Mr. Conroy stated he had no knowledge of such letter, and asked Mr. Alvord to forward any letter or e-mails to him.

Ms. Lindstrom stated that in regards to sidewalks, is there a process where residents have an agreement on the preferred sides. Mr. Alvord responded that there is no such survey and a "what do you think" is not good enough, there has to be a demonstrated plan to ensure safety. He added that Lowe Street is an example of upgrading the look and feel of the sidewalks that the neighborhood is happy with.

Ms. Straniti stated that in view of the Safe Routes to Schools there should be definitive sidewalks designated. Mr. Hempstead asked for a definition of a sidewalk. Mr. Alvord responded that it is defined as a pedestrian walkway with a four foot footpath, and does not have a formal definition in the City Code.

Planning & Zoning

Mr. Hempstead asked for more detail on the Traffic Study and if less dollars were spent would it have an impact on the \$200,000 for public access. Mr. Greene replied that zoning will not impact roads, but there are “conclusive presumptions” based on negative traffic impact. He added that you could do an impact study compared to the study done in 2007 Land Use Analysis and Traffic Study. Ms. Straniti asked if they could take the results to challenge development in that area and how the study benefits the City. Mr. Greene responded that Zoning determines with the two expert opinions the maximum development in areas and is a good planning tool in determining areas that should be re-zoned.

Ms. Lindstrom asked if the study should be done first to provide information from the grant, and Mr. Alvord stated that there are so many “what ifs” to determine the best course of action. Mr. Green added that there is \$13,500 for a Waterfront Walkway on the former Gibbs property linked up with St. Anne’s and he referred to that section on the map included in the presentation.

Mr. Mount asked if there are areas over the \$100,000 threshold that can be state study. And Mr. Greene responded that Zoning has the final say based on criteria. Ms. Lindstrom stated that there are many streets that map out to the water, creating a waterfront gap on pavement ends, which is an opportunity to create small city park areas. Mr. Hempstead asked how many of these areas exist, and Mr. Greene stated probably 10-12 park areas, which look like individual properties, but are actually City-owned land areas. Mr. Conroy requested a list of the waterfront-end areas in the City and Mr. Greene responded that he would provide this to the Committee members.

Ms. Straniti asked about the \$50,000 in the Planning and Zoning budget for sidewalks, and added that she has spoken to residents who want sidewalks on Walter Avenue. Mr. Hamilton explained that the intent of the request would be to study areas that are missing sidewalks or have inadequate sidewalks.

Ms. Straniti questioned the approval for \$900,000 under Water Quality, and Mr. Hamilton stated that will be general obligation debt. She asked if the Clean Water debt is what she will request a special bond authorization for if the next phase, which is not included in the capital budget request. Mr. Hamilton said that the Clean Water Fund authorizations will only move forward when something from the State is received committing to the funds.

Recreation & Parks

Mr. Hempstead stated that regarding Cranbury Park Masterplan, the issues are wants versus likes, and the \$220,000 could go down to \$120,000 with \$100,000 covering the maintenance costs of the estate. Mr. Mocciae stated that he did not want to delve into the details of what is actually needed but the \$200,000 is needed for windows on the estate, and costs affect replacement of the windows and building maintenance.

He added that the \$20,000 will serve as a placeholder for plant removal and trail work and he is hoping the Friends of Cranbury Park will provide signage. Mr. Mocciae added that the Hungarian Monument was given to the City to remain in perpetuity and there is an operating funding issue for maintenance. He feels there is an obligation to maintain this statue as it is of significance to the Hungarian population. He added that going forward, there should be a policy on the acceptance of gifts if there is no budget to maintain them. He added that regarding storm damage, there was significant damage done to Fodor Farm and he is dealing with insurance claims on damages to 15 year old trees, the shed and fencing around the gardens.

Information Technology Department

Ms. Karen DelVecchio came forward and Mr. Hempstead asked if there was a breakdown of priorities and she responded that the department assesses and the repair records, meets with all the departments and develops revised plans. She added that she will e-mail it to the committee, but that for example this meeting room is technologically unequipped due to the type of ceiling and wall structure, and the cost to modify this is very high. Ms. DelVecchio added that the room needs much work to make it adaptive and a truly useful meeting room, that can accommodate Channel 79 recording and program viewing. Mr. Hamilton stated that there was narrative and spread sheets provided in the book that outlines these questions.

Health Department

Mr. Hempstead stated that there was no one in attendance representing the department:

Board of Education.

Mr. Hempstead stated that there was no one in attendance representing the department:

Library

Frank Ferro, Library Director came forward and Mr. Hempstead asked if the bathroom replacement at the Children's Library was necessary, and Mr. Ferro said they could just replace the toilet. Mr. Ferro added that they needed office area carpet and ceiling and light replacement as a more warranted priority.

Redevelopment Agency

Mr. Sheehan stated that he had no further presentation beyond what was presented at the last meeting and what would be covered at tomorrow's meeting.

Mr. Conroy asked if there was any Capital funding reserve. Mr. Hamilton replied that there is no excess and reserve funds have been drawn down from previous years, and that the City is going through the exercise of closing old projects and transferring balances to new projects. He explained that the budget reflects bonded dollars versus actual expenditures, or closed out projects versus appropriations, that are not freed up dollars when closed out.

Mr. Hempstead asked if they could have an update on accounts over two years old and appropriations older than two years that have not been fully utilized for the next Common Council meeting.

Mr. Conroy asked if there is a report that could show total dollar balances versus appropriations and Mr. Hamilton questioned if that was possible, since the report shows by year versus appropriation designations for the year. Mr. Conroy clarified that he would like to see a report of the balances of old projects, and Mr. Hamilton agreed to provide the members with copies of reports that are available.

Mr. Hempstead asked the members if they wanted to vote on the Capital Budget tonight or table it for tomorrow, and Mr. Sheehan clarified that this was not an action item for tonight. It was agreed that the members take time to review the supporting documents in details and that this would be put on to the next meeting agenda as an action item for approval on April 1 to advance the item to the Common Council.

Ms. Straniti requested a copy of the full Capital Budget book, and Mr. Hamilton stated that he would provide extra copies at tomorrow's meeting.

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Knox
Telesco Secretarial Services