

**CITY OF NORWALK  
PLANNING COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING  
DECEMBER 3, 2009**

**ATTENDANCE:** Douglas Hempstead, Chair; John Tobin, Laurel Lindstrom, Andrew Conroy, Clyde Mount (7:38 p.m.)

**STAFF:** Tim Sheehan, Redevelopment Agency; Munro Johnson, Redevelopment Agency, Susan Sweitzer, Redevelopment Agency

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Hempstead called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Mr. Hempstead called the roll. A quorum was present.

*Let it be noted that all remarks by the various speakers are summarized and not necessarily verbatim.*

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**September 3, 2009 Regular Meeting**

**\*\* MS. LINDSTROM MOVED THE MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 3, 2009  
\*\* THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 3, 2009 MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED WITH TWO IN FAVOR (HEMPSTEAD AND LINDSTROM) AND TWO ABSTENTIONS (CONROY AND TOBIN).**

Mr. Hempstead said that if a member of the public wants to have something discussed, Mr. Hempstead should be notified at least 10 days in advance so that it can be included in the packet, which is mailed a week in advance. He said that he had received an email the previous evening from a member of the public about an issue, but it would not be discussed at the meeting.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No one was present from the public.

**BUSINESS**

## **WALL STREET REDEVELOPMENT PLAN**

### **1. Mill Hill Master Plan draft Phase 1 (Existing Conditions) Report (For information only, no action required)**

Mr. Johnson explained that the draft that was in the information packet gives the background for the next iteration of the proposal. He said that there were a number of programs at the site, but the programs were constrained by numerous items such as a lack of a handicapped accessible bathroom. He encouraged the Committee to review the plan and ask any questions that arise over the next few weeks.

*Mr. Mount joined the meeting at 7:38 p.m.*

Ms. Lindstrom asked about the last page of the Executive summary. Mr. Johnson explained that this was the overall plan for the Wall Street area. Ms. Lindstrom asked about the statement where it says that the Redevelopment Agency was supporting the Norwalk Historical Society. Mr. Johnson said that he was working with Mr. Park and Mr. Westmoreland on this. Ms. Lindstrom asked about the source of the funding. Mr. Sheehan explained that the Redevelopment Agency regarded Mill Hill as an integral part of the Wall Street Redevelopment and that the funding was included in the Agency's overall project budget.

Mr. Conroy asked about a summary of the projects. Mr. Sheehan said that there was a summary of the projects included in the back of each information packet.

Ms. Lindstrom asked about the work on the Smith Street Jail and the Smith Street Barn. Mr. Johnson said that the Historical Commission had undertaken an architectural review of the barn and the jail, which was different than the study that Mr. Johnson was working on. He added that the Historical Commission was keeping him in the loop as far as information.

Ms. Lindstrom asked about the small parcel of land on Hubbell's Lane that is owned by O&G industries. Mr. Johnson reviewed the details surrounding that parcel, which is used by O&G as a parking area for vehicles.

Mr. Hempstead asked what the timeline for the project was. Mr. Johnson reviewed the various steps of the process with the Committee. Mr. Hempstead asked if he wanted this on the February meeting agenda. Mr. Johnson agreed.

## **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM**

**Allocation of PY35 Community Development Block Grant Program Funds  
Previously Left Un-Programmed.**

Mr. Sheehan explained that information was still be submitted regarding this.

**WALL STREET REDEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**Review and Approve Letter of Intent for Purchase of 71 Wall Street (Executive Session)**

**\*\* MS. LINDSTROM MOVED TO TABLE THE FOLLOWING THE AGENDA ITEMS:**

**IV.B - ALLOCATION OF PY35 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM FUNDS PREVIOUSLY LEFT UN-PROGRAMMED**

**AND**

**IV.E - REVIEW AND APPROVE LETTER OF INTENT FOR PURCHASE OF 71 WALL STREET (EXECUTIVE SESSION)**

**TO THE JANUARY MEETING AGENDA.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**WEST AVENUE REDEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR**

**Authorize the Mayor to request that DECD submit amended language to Bond Commission regarding the uses for the \$5M Waypoint Urban Act Grant.**

**\*\* MS. LINDSTROM MOVED THE ITEM.**

Ms. Sweitzer came forward and gave a brief overview of the Waypointe Mixed Use Development project. The most immediate work that is needed for the project is site acquisition. The Agency has been asked to submit an amendment to the State Bond Commission. Ms. Sweitzer said that the suggested language would be more open and omits the final design survey, and requested that this amendment be forwarded to the full Council. She said that the discussion is ongoing with the DECD.

Mr. Sheehan said that unification of the site was the biggest priority, but the language of Bond Commission is very specific. He said that the DECD did not want to hold up the grant, so the initial resolution was approved. Mr. Sheehan explained that the DECD had actually provided the Redevelopment Agency with the wording and that the DECD was

very comfortable with the language and felt that it would be acceptable to the State Bond Commission. Mr. Hempstead asked what the scope of the language would cover. Mr. Sheehan explained that without a unified site, there is no project. The funding focus would be on the public improvements, the money could not be used for other purposes. Ms. Lindstrom said that it sounded like this was the initial plan to focus on the site acquisition, but apparently the initial wording of the resolution that was submitted from the Governor's Office, not the Redevelopment Agency. This amendment would bring the grant funding back on to the original track. Discussion about the details of the amendment language then followed.

**\*\* THE MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR TO REQUEST THAT DECD SUBMIT AMENDED LANGUAGE TO BOND COMMISSION REGARDING THE USES FOR THE \$5M WAYPOINT URBAN ACT GRANT PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Hempstead then gave a brief overview of the function of the Planning Committee and the relationship of the Redevelopment Agency to the new Planning Committee members. Block Grants are processed through the Planning Agency, along with any large Redevelopment project.

**OVERVIEW OF THE REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

Mr. Johnson then presented a short video about the various projects through Norwalk.

**CONSOLIDATION PLAN – HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**Appointment of Planning Committee Members to Annual Joint Committee for Program Year 36 Annual Action Plan.**

**\*\* MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED THE ITEM**

Mr. Hempstead said that he would like to keep the previous members of the Joint Committee, which were Mr. Hilliard and himself. Mr. Conroy said that he felt that the Committee had already made the decisions about the projects and the Committee would then approve them. Discussion then followed about how this could be better handled. Mr. Conroy said that last year he felt that the applications were poorly summarized, the discussion was truncated and that the overall meeting was poorly chaired. Mr. Sheehan said that he would go back and review the minutes from the last Joint Committee to see where the problems may have arisen. Mr. Sheehan said that it would be important to insure that all the applications were being weighed fairly.

Mr. Sheehan explained that the Master Plan and the Consolidated Plan were two different items and that HUD refers to the Consolidated Plan when referring to funding projects. Mr. Conroy said that he would like to have a more in depth discussion about the process.

**\*\* THE MOTION TO APPOINT MR. HILLIARD AND MR. HEMPSTEAD AS PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS TO ANNUAL JOINT COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAM YEAR 36 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **ENTERPRISE ZONE**

#### **Proposal to Amend the Existing Norwalk Enterprise Zone Boundary.**

Ms. Sweitzer gave a brief overview of the program, which was established in 1982. She said that the map showed the census tracts, which are concentrated in South Norwalk. The program established by the State legislature gives the businesses in this area a tax abatement. An additional incentive is that there is another abatement for property owners who make improvements of an additional tax abatement. The abatement costs are shared with the State. In any given year, there are four to six companies that chose to locate in the enterprise zone. Over any given year, there are most likely several hundred jobs retained. Ms. Sweitzer said that this was an discussion item rather than an action item. 95/7 was excluded from the original zone because it was thought that 95/7 would be enticement on its own. She said that Stamford and Bridgeport both have major projects, like Bridgeport's Steel Point and Stamford's Harbor Point, were included in their Enterprise zones. Adding 95/7 to the Enterprise Zone would level the playing field with similar projects in our neighboring cities.

The other expansion area would be extending the zone in the south, along Woodward Avenue, where a number of tenants have already taken advantage of the urban jobs incentive.

Ms. Sweitzer said that the Diane Knitwear site, which was adjacent to the South Norwalk Train Station was left out of the original zone. This would be presented to the DECD Commissioner with a request for approval. Mr. Hempstead asked if it was possible to get an economic impact statement on this proposal. Mr. Sheehan said that Mr. Hamilton was already working on compiling the information.

Mr. Hempstead asked if it was possible to compile a list of the original beneficiaries and whether or not they have remained. Mr. Sheehan said that the companies are now required to sign a 10 year contract with the State. Ms. Sweitzer said that typically the companies stay longer than the five year tax abatement. She said that one company that had left abruptly had been bought out by another group.

Ms. Lindstrom asked about overlay zones. Ms. Sweitzer said that these were done by census tracts, so it is mixed use. It is a benefit to the local residents because it encourages improvements for the property owners.

Mr. Sheehan said that the criteria indicated the most distressed tracts in the census zone. Ms. Lindstrom said that she was concerned about displacement. Mr. Hempstead asked if the census map could be posted on the website. Mr. Sheehan said that it could, and would be in color.

Mr. Sheehan said that Mr. Hamilton would be coming to the Committee with some numbers for 95/7 and a five year projection.

Mr. Hempstead asked for a timeline. Mr. Sheehan said that he would like to have the Committee look at Mr. Hamilton's review and that he would like to see it then go to Council. Mr. Hempstead said that would mean it would be on the January agenda.

Mr. Conroy had some questions about the requirements, which Ms. Sweitzer reviewed with him.

#### OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to consider at this time.

#### NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Hempstead asked if there were any items for the next agenda. Mr. Conroy said that he would like to have some information on the CDBG grants and its history. Mr. Sheehan said that he was planning on doing a complete review of the program.

Ms. Lindstrom had a detailed questions about Tighe and Bond and the breakout of the funding expenses. Mr. Sheehan reviewed the three funding sources, and how the accounts are handled. Mr. Sheehan said that he would provide the committee members with a breakdown of the funding.

Mr. Hempstead asked Mr. Sheehan about the temporary status of the underpass at Reed Street. Mr. Sheehan said that the top coating was not applied. Mr. Hempstead said that he would like to know when the street would be usable by the public. Mr. Sheehan said that he would look into it.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

**\*\* MR. CONROY MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS LAND ACQUISITION.  
\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Planning Committee and Mr. Sheehan entered into Executive Session at 9:00 p.m. to discuss land acquisition issues.

**ADJOURNMENT**

\*\* \_\_\_\_\_ **MOVED TO ADJOURN**  
\*\* **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting adjourned at \_\_\_\_\_.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes  
Telesco Secretarial Services

