

CITY OF NORWALK HEALTH, WELFARE & PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

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PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
MARCH 27, 2008

ATTENDANCE: Michael Geake, Chair; Rev. Phyllis Bolden; Laurel Lindstrom; Stephen Serasis; Nicholas Kydes 7:50 p.m. (via telephone conference call)

STAFF: Tim Callahan, Health Department Director

OTHERS: Jennifer Lord, Norwalk Hospital; Diane Lauricella, League of Women Voters; Mary Geake

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Geake called the meeting to order at 7:42 p.m.

Mr. Geake said that he wanted this Committee to set goals. He said that he is concerned about Police overtime. He said that he is worried about overtired Police going to work, packing force and that it could cost a life if their reactions were impaired. He said that Police overtime needs to be looked at during the next budget cycle.

Mr. Geake said that he also wanted to discuss environmental issues. He said that he was concerned that the bricks at the Diane Knit building are contaminated. Mr. Geake said that because Norwalk was an industrial city, there are a lot of contaminated sites.

Mr. Kydes joined the meeting via telephone conference call at 7:50 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 24, 2008

**** MR. SERASIS MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES**

It was noted that the approval of the minutes of June 28, 2007 will be on the next agenda

**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (REV. BOLDEN)**

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

- Student Intern Agreement with Southern Connecticut State University

Mr. Callahan explained that the Health Department has had student interns from Southern Connecticut State University for at least the past 15 years. This is the first year that Southern has required a written agreement. He said that this has been a mutually beneficial program to the student and to the Health Department.

Mr. Kydes asked if the interns had to be enrolled in a specific program. Mr. Callahan replied that most of the interns are Public Health majors, although they have had some Biology majors. Ms. Lindstrom said that it sounded like a good program. Mr. Serasis asked if there were any costs associated with this program. Mr. Callahan said that there were no costs.

**** MR. GEAKE MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, RICHARD MOCCIA TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL AGREEMENTS, DOCUMENTS, INSTRUMENTS OR AMENDMENTS AS MAY BE NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THE STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM WITH SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY FOR THREE ACADEMIC YEARS COMMENCING WITH THE SPRING 2008 SEMESTER**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

- Norwalk Children's Foundation Contract

Mr. Serasis described the Fit Kids Olympics. He said that the program was piloted with funding from Commerce Bank. This year the Health Department was able to secure a grant for \$5,000 to expand the program. He said that the Health Department has been wonderful and put a lot of time and effort to developing this. In the future they hope to bring more after school programs to the City.

The program will end with a Field Day at Ryan Park. Rev. Bolden asked how many community centers were involved. Mr. Serasis said Roodner Court Neighborhood Center, South Norwalk Community Center and the George Washington Carver Community Center. Other centers do not have after school programs that involve the same kids everyday. This program requires that the same kids attend every day.

The Committee agreed that this was a great program.

**** MR. KYDES MOVED THIS ITEM TO THE FULL COMMON COUNCIL**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

- Health Department Fees

Mr. Callahan explained that according to the City ordinance that addresses fees, the Health Department should look at fees annually. He said that the fees being discussed are environmental fees. The fees are based on the cost to provide the specific service.

Mr. Callahan reviewed the proposed fees for 2008-2009. Rev. Bolden said that the proposed increases were modest. Mr. Serasis asked if there were additional fees for people who are open seasonally outdoors. Mr. Callahan said that there were no additional fees.

Ms. Lauricella said that 23 Platt Street is on the agenda. It is something that needs a full discussion. There is a way to administer a fee to pay for a review by an expert. Other

towns have experts that monitor certain large projects to protect the health and welfare of that specific town. An outside expert may not be overly expensive.

**** MR. GEAKE MOVED TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED LICENSES AND PERMITS PROPOSED FEES FOR 2008-2009
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

POLICE DEPARTMENT

- Update

Mr. Geake expressed concern that Common Council members were not notified on Friday. He said that he called Ms. DeLuca to set up a reverse 911 to notify them. Chief McCarthy apologized, and said that he asked if they wanted to do a blast, but since they did not know who they were looking for they chose not to.

DISCUSSION – 23 PLATT STREET ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Ms. Lindstrom said that in mid February she found a Legal Notice of Proposed Engineered Control – 23 Platt Street, Norwalk, Connecticut in the Norwalk Hour. This site is located near the turnpike in East Norwalk. She said that she was concerned about environmental issues and if the neighbors were notified. She said that she and Ms. Lauricella met with some of the neighbors and were able to answer some questions.

This is the site of the former Norwalk Barrel Company. A lot of toxic substances would have been in the buried barrels. The idea is to contain them, but not to remove them. There is planned construction at the site, which came to the attention of the Harbor Management Commission. They offered recommendations to the DEP related to water quality.

Ms. Lauricella said that through the League of Women Voters she requested an informational session through the DEP. It is incumbent upon the City to have a way of keeping track of these sites.

Rev. Bolden asked if they were saying that condominiums were building without soil tests being done. Mr. Lindstrom said that they were built in the late 1980's or early 1990's, but there are plans to build new condominiums. She said that she believes they found fragments of barrels. Rev. Bolden said that she remembered playing in that area as a kid and seeing oil filled barrels.

Ms. Lauricella passed around a site plan of the existing condominiums that are located close to East Avenue. When the new owners began digging they ran into barrels and hired a company called Triton who conducted several studies. Ms. Lauricella showed pictures of the Norwalk Barrel Company that was in business during the 1960's and 1970's. She said that they reconditioned barrels and would open barrels and dump the

contents into the ground. The largest amount was found at the eastern side of the site, which is currently a parking lot.

Ms. Lauricella said that the City should not rely on the DEP to manage this. In addition, Triton admitted that they do not know about contamination off-site. Ms. Lauricella said that in the 1970's the City expanded sewer pipes and back filled the pipe with barrel bits.

Ms. Lauricella requested that environmental consultant firm be hired to advise the City. She said that it was important for the City to have help watchdog the current consulting firm for the owner. This site fell through the cracks with the DEP and the EPA. It is the City's responsibility to keep an eye on it to some degree. There are drums in the ground and Triton claims they can't get to them.

Mr. Serasis asked if the condominiums were built on drums. Mr. Lauricella said that when they were built in 1988, they were built back. Mr. Kydes said that they can't develop a parcel without due diligence, but asked if the Committee was overstepping their boundaries. He said that it was not their responsibility to interfere with DEP policies and procedures. Ms. Lindstrom said that they should bring up awareness and discussion on a consistent basis. From that they may be able to change legislation.

Mr. Callahan said that the demand for this specific expertise is not great enough for the Health Department to have an inspector with that skill. If the Committee feels that the DEP does not adequately address a problem then a knowledgeable person should be found.

Mr. Geake asked how much it would cost, noting that it cost the Second Taxing District \$250,000 to study the Diane Knitware building. Mr. Callahan said that he did not know how much this would cost. Mr. Kydes suggested that they need to go before the Conservation Commission and Planning and Zoning to lean what they were doing.

Rev. Bolden said that she was impressed with the legal notice, because they are saying they are going to do what they are supposed to do. She said that this Committee is proposing a watch dog to be sure they actually do what they are saying they are going to do.

Mr. Kydes suggested doing a walk-through of the site with the newspapers in attendance to make a headline issue about this. Ms. Lauricella said that she was not saying that the DEP did not do a good job; they only have a few people to handle the State's toxic sites. Mr. Kydes said that they need to get front page coverage about this. She suggested doing this with a lot of caution so that they do not start a panic.

Ms. Lauricella said that she felt that this is a big enough, bad enough site to get the Health Department Staff, Planning and Zoning and Public Works involved. Mr. Kydes said that this was his district and wants to be involved.

Ms. Lauricella, Ms. Lindstrom and Mr. Kydes will organize a walk through of the site. Mr. Geake asked Mr. Callahan what it would take to find out the cost for a consultant. Mr. Callahan said that it would depend upon the scope of work necessary. Ms. Lauricella said that this could be a good opportunity to have a dialogue with the DEP. Ms. Lindstrom said that this is private property, so they will need to contact the property owner to ask for access to the property.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Trash

Rev. Bolden said that the trash issue has got to get under control. While watching Channel 8, right after Officer Morelli passed, she saw a bloodhound grab a piece of trash. The New York Times described South Norwalk as a “gritty section of town”. Rev. Bolden said that Mr. Callahan has been so good and worked very hard on this. Mr. Callahan said that the trash issue is frustrating for them as well.

Rev. Bolden said that there was trash on South Main Street. She called the DPW to ask them to remove the trash, nothing happened. She called the Mayor and he went there and called Mr. Alvord and told him to have someone remove the trash.

Ms. Lindstrom said that a “Keep Norwalk Beautiful” campaign will be starting soon, but it is to re-educate people. Mr. Lauricella suggested starting a public campaign. Rev. Bolden said that the Health Department is doing their job. Mr. Serasis said that there are a lot of inconsiderate people who have no regard for the environment. Mr. Callahan said that they have yet to find a solution. Rev. Bolden said that people have to take responsibility for themselves.

- Gangs

Mr. Serasis said that there are a number of groups working on gang issues. A lot of the Clergy has met to mobilize and the City has a judicial review board and they had their first case.

The Committee talked about a prevention program to keep kids involved and to take responsibility for their actions. They said that it was disappointing that the School System did not think it was important enough to give it a look. Mr. Serasis said that he feels motivated to write to the Board of Education to ask why they did not want to become involved in the program. He said the response he got from Dr. Corda’s office was that they were under too much stress. He said that when he gets the minutes from the Board of Education he will forward them to the rest of the Committee. Mr. Kydes recommended that Mr. Serasis write the letter to the Board of Education. Rev. Bolden agreed.

Rev. Bolden said that there are not 300 gang members. The few that are out there are influential and dangerous and have no conscience. They are the ones getting the publicity. The goal is prevention and to show kids that life is worth living.

- Norwalk Hospital – Winter Drill

Ms. Jennifer Lord from the Norwalk Hospital said that the winter drill that was scheduled for last week has been postponed. She will let the Committee know once the new date is confirmed.

A review of the emergency management plan will take place on April 3rd at the Bethel AME Church.

** MR. SERASIS MOVED TO ADJOURN

** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services

