

**CITY OF NORWALK  
LAND USE COMMITTEE  
SEPTEMBER 14, 2010**

PRESENT: Fran DiMeglio, Chair; Victor Cavallo; Torgny Astrom;  
Don Nelson; Walter McLaughlin; Michael Chieffalo;  
Anthony Aitoro

STAFF: Mike Greene; Frank Strauch

OTHERS: Alexis Cherichetti; Marnie Smith; Peter Skull; Fred Gilden; Atty.  
Grank Zullo; Tom DeGanges; Munro Johnson; David Park

**I. REFERRALS: Review & recommendation**

Ms. DiMeglio called the meeting to order at 7:40.

**a) Special Capital Appropriation – Norwalk Land Trust – A request for a grant in the amount of \$125,000 for the purchase of real property at 34 Sammis Street (a.k.a the Hart Property)**

Ms. Alexis Cherichetti, of the Conservation Department, explained that any request to use the Land Trust needed to go through the Conservation Commission. She described the permitted uses of a land trust. She gave details about the Farm Creek property in Rowayton.

Mr. Strauch said that the appropriation was supported by the Plan of Conservation & Development.

Ms. DiMeglio asked about how the funds would be replenished for the Capital Budget.

Mr. Astrom asked about grants received and the gap in financing.

Ms. Marnie Smith, representing the Norwalk Land Trust, gave details about the project's private funding.

Ms. Cherichetti commented on D. Seely Hubbard's contributions to the Norwalk Land Trust.

Ms. Smith distributed copies of Forbes Magazine, featuring the Farm Creek project of the Norwalk Land Trust.

Mr. Peter Skull, co-chair of the campaign, explained that the project's funding had come from over 800 families.

Ms. Smith noted that fourth-grade field trips to the property had been particularly successful.

**b) Special Capital Appropriation – First District Water Department – Proposed authorization to issue bonds in the sum of \$8.585 million for capital projects on behalf of the First Taxing District**

Mr. Strauch said that a list of the Department's projects was included with the packets.

Mr. Fred Gliden discussed the bonding ability of various districts.

Mr. Strauch pointed out that lower costs could be passed on through the appropriation.

Mr. Astrom asked about the estimated savings. Mr. Gliden said that it was 3%.

Atty. Frank Zullo discussed the bond period and the pro-rata cost to the City. He discussed the background of taxing districts in Norwalk.

Mr. McLaughlin asked if an increase in water rates was expected? Atty. Zullo said that the rate was still the fourth lowest in the state.

Ms. DiMeglio noted that the documents indicated that rates would not be raised. Atty. Zullo pointed out that they had already been raised.

**c) 8-24 Review – Department of Public Works – Proposed drainage easements and nonexclusive accessway easement between the City of Norwalk and Maplewood At Strawberry Hill, LLC for property at 73 Strawberry Hill Avenue**

Mr. Strauch showed the area on a map. He said that drainage improvements and adjustments to the easement would be made. He added that the proposal had been approved by DPW and the Zoning Commission.

#### **d) Redevelopment Agency – Referral for comment on Mill Hill Master Plan**

Mr. Strauch introduced the item, pointing out that it had come before the Committee in January.

Mr. David Park, of the Norwalk Historical Commission, said that the master plan was a joint effort of the Historical Commission, the Redevelopment Agency, and the Norwalk Historical Society. He gave background about the project and described the public input and the importance of connectivity.

Mr. Munro Johnson, of the Redevelopment Agency, presented a slideshow with maps and features of the area. He described the Head of the Harbor project, as well. Mr. Johnson said that the site was the largest public green space within the Wall Street Redevelopment area.

Mr. Johnson gave details about the cost to maintain the area. He discussed the number of visitors, as well as the projected tax revenue. He explained that this site and the Head of the Harbor site needed to work together to create a cohesive feel for the area. He pointed out that the plan was complicated by the variety of jurisdictions involved.

Ms. DiMeglio asked if a public hearing would be held on the item. Mr. Greene said that a public hearing would involve only the Capital Budget aspect of the project.

Mr. Johnson showed the topography, vegetation, and visibility of the hill on the property. He discussed circulation and parking, noting that this plan called for a pedestrian access to the town green. He discussed the strategic plan and pointed out obstacles.

Ms. DiMeglio asked how the site restoration was complicated by buildings of different periods existing on the same site. Mr. Johnson explained that for heritage tourists, it seemed to be a hodgepodge of historic periods, which atomized and scattered the experience. He also discussed the importance of awareness of the site, even when an event was not underway.

Mr. Johnson outlined the proposal, noting that it was a 20-year plan. He described how developing one area of the site could help fund other proposed parts of the site. He emphasized that the plan was mutually beneficial. He also clarified that

approving the plan was not tantamount to giving away property to the developer.

**e) Zoning Commission referral #5-10R - Zoning Commission - Proposed amendments to require wooden signs with black letters in East Avenue Village District**

Mr. Greene described the proposal from the Zoning Commission. The Committee asked about how it would be beneficial to the City.

**f) Zoning Commission referral #7-10R – Zoning Commission – Proposed amendments to exempt awnings for health care & elderly facilities from lot coverage & setbacks**

Mr. Greene gave background about the amendment, noting that it was a small adjustment to the regulations.

**g) Zoning Commission referral - #2-10M/#9-10R – Norwalk Inn & Conference Ctr – 99 East Av-Proposed change to Building Zone Map to extend East Avenue Village District to 480 ft and Proposed amendments to Building Zone Regulations to allow hotels to 3 stories and 35 ft**

Mr. Greene said that the item would go to public hearing in October.

*Mr. Astrom recused himself and left the room.*

Mr. Greene showed the area on a map. He discussed compatibility with the neighborhood, pointing out that no change in height regulations was being sought.

Mr. Chieffalo asked if other problem sites in the area might seek the same solution. Mr. Greene discussed split zones in the City, stating that he did not anticipate others in this zone seeking the same solution.

Mr. McLaughlin asked if the owner had been pushed into seeking the change by the Historical Society. Mr. Greene said that it was a mutual agreement, pointing out that the owner brought the proposal before the Committee. He emphasized that the owner's intent was to ask for a zone change and that the factors that fueled the owner's thinking were not relevant to land use.

*Mr. Astrom returned to the meeting.*

**h) Zoning Commission referral - #8-10R – Hillside Plaza LLC - Proposed amendments to modify density for multifamily housing that complies with workforce housing requirements**

Mr. Greene said that the site was the former Averick building. He discussed the uses of the building.

The Committee discussed the numbers of affordable housing.

Ms. DiMeglio asked if the change involved only this zone. Mr. Greene said yes.

**i) Zoning Commission referral - #10-10R – iPark – Proposed amendments to permit tenant directory signs for multitenant bldgs of 250,000 sq ft or more**

Mr. Greene discussed problems with directional signs on the site. He emphasized that there would be no advertising on the signs and that they would be purely directional.

**j) DEP/USACE Referral – 15 Rowayton Avenue - Repair seawall, replace groins and conduct substantial maintenance on existing dock**

Mr. Strauch said that the referral involved a water-dependent use.

**k) DEP/USACE Referral – 18 Tonetta Circle - Retain seawall and construct a new dock**

Mr. Strauch pointed out the area on a map and said that the item was straightforward.

**II. CHANGES TO THE BY-LAWS AND RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION - Article V, Section 1. Annual Meeting – Changing the Commission’s annual meeting from June to October – Final discussion prior to public hearing**

Mr. McLaughlin said that the proposed change was a good idea.

Mr. Strauch discussed appointments and re-appointments.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 pm.  
Respectfully submitted by Charlene Smith.