

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 30, 2011**

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

STAFF: Timothy Sheehan, Redevelopment Director; Monro Johnson; Susan Sweitzer, Atty. Robert Maslin

OTHERS: Andrew Kydes, Globe Theater Project ; Frank Rich, Globe Theater Project; Paul Pizio, Globe Theater architect project; Mr. Korizo, Globe Theater project; Douglas Adams, Waypoint project; Paxton Kinol, Waypointe project

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Hempstead called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no one present from the public who wished to address the Committee.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

July 26, 2011 Special Meeting

**** MR. TOBIN MOVED THE MINUTES**

Page 2, paragraph 3, line 1: please change “if the Brownsfield’s property had the Mayor’s support” to “if the brownfields property at 31 Rose Street had the Mayor’s support”

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JULY 26, 2011 SPECIAL MEETING AS CORRECTED PASSED WITH FOUR IN FAVOR (HEMPSTEAD, TOBIN, LINDSTROM AND CONROY) AND ONE ABSTENTION (MOUNT).**

BUSINESS

TRANSIT ORIENTATED DEVELOPMENT PILOT PROGRAM

- a. Approve the language of the Certified Resolution authorizing the Mayor to apply for a TOD Facilitation Grant for design and engineering of South Norwalk**

pedestrian access and streetscape improvements and authorizing the Mayor to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the South West Regional Planning Agency as required by Public Act 07-7

b. Authorize the full execution of the Certified Resolution.

Mr. Sheehan gave a brief overview of the grant and said that the Agency would administer the funds.

**** MS. LINDSTROM MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING:**

A. APPROVE THE LANGUAGE OF THE CERTIFIED RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO APPLY FOR A TOD FACILITATION GRANT FOR DESIGN AND ENGINEERING OF SOUTH NORWALK PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AND STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS AND AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE SOUTH WEST REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY AS REQUIRED BY PUBLIC ACT 07-7

B. AUTHORIZE THE FULL EXECUTION OF THE CERTIFIED RESOLUTION.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Conroy asked what the process was for the coordination with DPW and the Redevelopment. Mr. Sheehan said that it ultimately comes through Tighe & Bond. He added that Dick Lawrence reports back to Mr. Alvord. If there are bid specifications, DPW usually sends the bids out. Discussion followed about the number of studies that were being approved. Mr. Conroy said that he would like some kind of confirmation that DPW had reviewed the project.

WALL STREET

a. The Globe Theater – Review, consider, and act on the developer’s request for a 108 Loan from the City for the redevelopment of the Globe Theater, presentation of request by the developer.

Mr. Sheehan said that originally this project had been part of a HUD program that would allow the borrower to take out a 108 loan for the project. The Section 108 Loan Program is controlled by the City as the HUD identified entitlement CDBG community and as such, the Common Council must review and approve this project along with the associated financing before the application can be submitted to HUD.

Mr. Kydes came forward and passed around a photo of the Globe Theater from the early 60's. He reviewed some of the projects. He then introduced the architect for the project. The architect

was responsible for the Stamford Theater. The architect said that he specialized in theaters. He said that the Globe was a sound building and gave a brief overview of the project. He said that by making it more of a community arts center and theater, it would provide the cross section that is needed to support the business. Sketches have been done, but the structural engineers have not yet been inside the building.

Mr. Korizo, a financial consultant, came forward and introduced himself. He explained that he was experienced in international banking, mortgages, and now is doing financial consulting. He said this was a work in process. He said that this would help revitalizing the downtown area.

Mr. Korizo said that a corporation was in the process of being formed and the ownership would be transferred to it. He also reviewed the projections on the increased value of the building and reviewed the current mortgage terms with the Committee. He added that it would be important to find the proper mix of revenue producing programs and programs that are for the benefit of the community.

Discussion followed about tax credits.

Mr. Sheehan pointed out that this was a preliminary financial picture and said that the Committee needed to indicate whether this should advance into a 108 loan application, which would be much more detailed.

Mr. Mount asked whether or not the amount would be viable in this economic climate. Mr. Kydes said that Norwalk does not have a performing theater. He then listed a number of neighboring towns and cities that do have performing arts centers. This would help regenerate and rejuvenate the downtown area. Mr. Mount said that he would like to have some type of contingency plan available. Mr. Kydes said that if the project came up short financially, he would apply for private funding.

Mr. Rich pointed out that 35 million had been spent on revitalizing the Waterbury Palace, which has been very successful. Some of the potential programs for the theater were then given. The final seating capacity would be between 400 and 500. Mr. Conroy asked how many parking spaces were required. Mr. Kydes said that there were 150 parking spaces.

The discussion then moved to where the restaurant would be located along with details about the third floor utilization.

Mr. Hempstead asked about the CDBG funding and the assumptions about this funding that were being made. Mr. Sheehan reviewed the process with the Committee. Discussion followed. Concerns about tax credits, the creation of the organization. Mr. Sheehan said that he would have some correspondence completed within the next two weeks because of the holiday week-end involved. This will allow the Committee to be prepared for the October meeting.

WAYPOINTE

a. Review and discuss Phase II of the Waypointe project as submitted by the developer for consideration by the Zoning Department and Redevelopment Agency.

It was stated that this project was still in flux. Mr. Douglas Adams reported that the application had been submitted on the 12th, a week before the due date.

Mr. Hempstead expressed concerns about the public spaces and gathering spots. One of the staff members said that he believed that Norwalk could become a gathering space for Fairfield County.

Mr. Adams and Mr. Paxton Kinol, the developer for the project, then gave an updated PowerPoint presentation of current plans for the development.

15 Merwin Street would be one of the primary focuses of the project. It is the old Bigelow Tea building. The residential building will be in the front and the parking garage will be hidden behind it. The outside facade will resemble older factory buildings. The development representative then displayed a site plan for the project. Color renderings will be available in a few weeks.

The discussion then followed about the demographics. Mr. Sheehan stated that Avalon had contributed a total of seven students to the public school system. Mr. Kinol explained that the families with children in the Stamford Avalon he was involved with tended to move to other locations when their children reach school age.

A question was asked about the parcels between the river and the current back of the development. Mr. Kinol said that there had been some discussion about having rowing clubs on the flood plain with a high rise hotel on the upper plateau.

CONNECTIVITY

a. Regional examples of proposal within Connectivity Plan

b. Schedule bus tour discussed at last meeting.

Mr. Johnson reported that he had been in touch with Mr. Schulmann about a bus tour. Mr. Conroy said that he was more interested in videos of the roundabouts. Discussion about the types of roundabouts and the difficulty of merging into the flow of traffic followed. It was agreed that there would not be a bus trip to visit a roundabout. A video of traffic patterns from a driver's perspective would suffice.

WALL STREET Cont'd

b. Landmark Square Safescaping - Presentation by Agency consultant and DPW

The Landmark Square Project is moving forward. Mr. Johnson said that the intersection where Knight Street meets Wall Street is Landmark Square. He then introduced Ms. Susan James who displayed pictures of the intersection as it is today. She said that the goal was to reclaim some of the asphalt and also create an intermodal space. One important aspect is indicating to the various users how they are to move through the space. She indicated where the pedestrian areas would be. This will be done through the use of different paving materials, improved curbing, and the installation of green spaces.

Mr. Johnson said that there had been meetings with DPW about the plans and have been involved in the planning of this reconfiguration.

Mr. Hempstead asked about the maintenance issues such as pruning trees. Mr. Conroy suggested that Annapolis and Alexandria be contacted and asked how they maintain their projects.

Mr. Mount asked why this particular spot was chosen. Mr. Johnson said that it was part of the Master Plan for Mill Hill. Ms. James said that there were safety issues for the pedestrians who park in the municipal lot and cross the street to the southern side of Wall Street.

The discussion then moved to porous pavement options for the trees that are planned for the project.

Mr. Conroy said that the regulations stated that once the work is done, the owners of the businesses are responsible for maintaining the trees. Mr. Sheehan said that the owners were responsible for clearing the sidewalk and keeping it clear, but the trees would be City property because the City would be removing the current trees and replanting.

CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS

a. Review and act upon the propose option agreement on the Day Street properties as developed by Corporation Counsel.

This was not discussed at this time.

SMALL BUSINESS LOAN GUARANTEE PROGRAM

a. Update

This was not discussed at this time.

WALL STREET PLACE

a. Review and discuss with Corporation Counsel the Land Disposition Agreement by and between: the City of Norwalk, Connecticut, the Redevelopment Agency of the City of Norwalk and POKO-IWSR Developers, LLC.

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS LEGAL ISSUES REGARDING THE LAND DISPOSITION AGREEMENT BY AND BETWEEN: THE CITY OF NORWALK, CONNECTICUT, THE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF THE CITY OF NORWALK AND POKO-IWSR DEVELOPERS, LLC.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Committee members and Atty. Robert Maslin entered into Executive Session to discuss the legal issues involved with the Land Disposition Agreement at 9:30 p.m.

The Committee returned to public session at _____

ADJOURNMENT

**** A MOTION WAS MADE TO ADJOURN.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at _____

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services