

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE OF
THE COMMON COUNCIL
JULY 2, 2012**

ATTENDANCE: Nicholas Kydes, Chair; Michael Geake, (by phone); Douglas Hempstead;
Carvin Hilliard; David McCarthy; Matthew Miklave;
Warren Pena (7:38 p.m.)

STAFF: Timothy Sheehan, Executive Director; Munro Johnson

OTHERS: Tod Bryant, Norwalk Preservation Trust; Frank Farricker, Globe Theater;
Bruce Kimmel, Common Council member

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Kydes called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m. and called the Roll.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JUNE 7, 2012

The following corrections were made to the minutes:

Page 2: Correct the spelling of Mr. Kydes' name.

Mr. Miklave said that he did not take part in the public hearing for the Neighborhood Assistance Act Tax Credit Program to avoid the appearance of impropriety, but will vote on the minutes.

**** MR. MIKLAVE MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Mr. Pena joined the meeting at 7:38 p.m.

BUSINESS

A. REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT UPDATES

Mr. Sheehan provided the Committee with an update on the Redevelopment projects. He said that Mr. Olson provided the Committee with a synopsis of the Wall Street project at last month's meeting. Mayor Moccia has requested a meeting with Commissioner Smith in order to continue discussions with the DECD.

Demolition took place at the Waypoint project site. Hidden basements were discovered to contain asbestos and they had to file a remediation plan with the State before moving forward. Phase I and II will be taken as one project and they anticipate it will be completed in 27 months. It is expected that they will file a site plan with Zoning for Phase III.

Casey's Sheetmetal is staying in place and he has been provided an allowance to improve their property. There have been ongoing conversations with the developer.

Spinnaker has been in discussion with their bank trying to advance forward with the southern end of the property. To date they have been unable to obtain a release. The challenge to the bank is to understand the implications of releasing the southern piece.

Mr. Sheehan reported that a bank is interested in the parcel with the yellow brick Methodist Church on West Avenue. He said that the Church is not advocating for pricing the property for historical preservation.

Mr. Bryant said that the owners turned down another buyer who wanted to close by the end of this year. Mr. Miklave asked if the Common Council had any role in the purchase or sale of the property since it is a Redevelopment property. Mr. Sheehan said that its location is deemed a preservation zone. Mr. Miklave said that he would be interested in what that entails. Mr. Sheehan noted that there will be Zoning implications and traffic. Mr. Kydes asked if the bank plans to keep the exterior of the structure. Mr. Sheehan said that his sense is that they are going to demolish the building.

Mr. McCarthy said that he talked to Mr. Bryant and others and said that his personal feeling is that if the transaction has not proceeded to a binding agreement, he would be in favor of exploring the nature of the historical building and if possible encourage its preservation. Mr. Hempstead asked if the property was eligible for anything. He said that he has been inside the building and it is beautiful. He said that there are not many yellow brick buildings left and asked what could be done to preserve the building. Mr. Sheehan said that the issue of the City's interest in preserving the building will go a long way.

B. WASHINGTON STREET DESIGN DISTRICT II URBAN RENEWAL PLAN

1. Review status of the 20 North Water Street Brownfield Grant and related mitigation requirements

Mr. Sheehan said that there are issues with regard to the building. He said that there are components that need to be incorporated. Mr. Bryant said that he is doing documentation and photographing the building. A discussion about the requirements ensued.

Mr. Miklave asked Mr. Sheehan to find out if he sees any Common Council involvement with approvals for the project. Mr. Sheehan said that at this point he does not see anything. They have pulled the demolition permits and Zoning is in place. He said that the only thing that will come back to the Common Council will be to accept the enhanced underpass improvements. He said that there is nothing to stop the demolition from going forward.

Mr. Sheehan reported that the Housing Authority project is moving forward and they have selected a developer and architect. The Zoning modifications are moving forward with the Planning and Zoning office.

C. CONNECTIVITY

1. Review RFP for Downtown Norwalk Wayfinding System

Mr. Johnson explained that the Connectivity Master Plan was approved in March and that wayfinding was an implementation step under that Plan. He provided the Committee with a sense of the RFP's components and said that the project will come back to this Committee for other approvals. Mr. Hempstead asked for an updated time table in the RFP. Mr. Miklave wanted bike friendliness emphasized as much as possible.

Mr. Kimmel asked about the cost of the project. Mr. Johnson said that there are funding sources in place. A ballpark estimate for the cost for the entire project is approximately \$100 - \$200,000 which includes labor and installations. Mr. Hempstead asked if there is a provision to allow for sponsorships to underwrite the cost of signs. Mr. Johnson said that there is a technological component that would lend itself to sponsorship. Mr. Miklave said that he would not be opposed to non-obtrusive signage.

D. NORWALK TOD DISTRICT

1. Review potential zoning modifications

Mr. Sheehan explained that the Committee approved this plan and this is the first stage of the implementation of that plan. He said that the Zoning issues are extremely complex and there are issues to consider. He said that there are concerns about the percentage of affordable housing units being three times the required amount. He said that he is working with Mr. Greene and the Planning and Zoning staff.

Mr. Kydes suggested holding a special meeting so that Mr. Sheehan and Mr. Greene could provide a presentation.

Mr. McCarthy said that he feels there should be a reduction in parking requirements based on the concept of people not using cars in a TOD community.

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The Committee discussed the percentage of affordable housing units. Mr. Sheehan said that the City would probably want more than 10%, but does not feel the City wants a number that would scare off private investors. The City currently maintains 11% of its housing inventory as affordable.

Mr. Hilliard noted that this project has been discussed and discussed and there has been meeting after meeting on this project. He said that this project goes back several years.

Mr. Sheehan said that this item will come back to the Committee in August.

Mr. Kydes left the meeting at 8:40 p.m. and turned the meeting over to Mr. Hempstead to chair.

Mr. Hempstead said that it came to his attention after the last meeting that there was some discussion from Poko that the City does not support them. He distributed a copy of minutes from September 3, 2009. Mr. Sheehan said that he will forward that information to Mr. Olson.

E. CDBG

Action: Advance to the Common Council the Globe Theater Resolution supporting the redevelopment concept and directing the Redevelopment Agency to begin work on the Section 108 Loan Guarantee Application

Mr. Kimmel asked what the worst case scenario would be for the City. Mr. Sheehan said that it would be for a call on the City to repay the loan. Mr. Kimmel asked Mr. Sheehan if he has seen a project like this go forward without an in-depth market study. Mr. Sheehan said that he shares the Committee's concern. Mr. Miklave said that he finds the structure to be interesting and exciting for the Globe Theater, but isn't sure about using Section 108 loan funds. He suggested language changes to the resolution. Mr. Hempstead said that everyone is uncomfortable with risking \$2 million.

Mr. Miklave said that the concept is great, but he wanted a legal opinion and a market study; he said that he does not want to put the funds at risk. Mr. McCarthy told Mr. Miklave that he would be comfortable moving forward if they get a personal guarantee and letter of credit from an A rated bank. Mr. Hempstead asked Mr. Sheehan to revise the wording. Mr. Miklave said he was not prepared to vote on this item tonight.

Mr. Geake said that he was concerned that they are spending months and months on this and getting nothing done. He said that he would like to see the plan referenced and attached. He said that he was not ready to commit to anything unless all of the guarantees were in place. Mr. Hilliard said that he had no problem with the resolution.

Mr. Miklave said that he did not support the resolution in its current form because it does not accurately reflect the intended use. Mr. Pena said that he was prepared to support the resolution.

Mr. Miklave asked Mr. Farricker why the Committee could not see the market study before it commits funding. Mr. Miklave suggested that the Committee not enter into an agreement until they see the market study. He said that his job was to protect the fiscal purse of the City. He said that he wants some protections and guarantees.

Mr. Kimmel said that this is his third go-around since November and does not understand why there is no market study. He asked Mr. Farricker why he was so intent on going forward without an in-depth market study. Mr. Farricker said that the market study was very expensive and will take a lot of time. He said that he would be prepared to begin the market study as soon as the Committee moves this item forward. He said that he fears that the market study will open the application process and create a risk that may delay it to a new Common Council. Mr. Miklave said that until an acceptable market study is provided, he is not prepared to commit the City of Norwalk.

Mr. Sheehan said that the previous agency 108 was approved by HUD, but the City can say it wants a market study.

Mr. Farricker said that he needs some kind of security from the Committee to be sure they will move forward if he has an acceptable market study. Mr. Hempstead said that he wants to mitigate the City's risk.

Mr. Miklave told Mr. Farricker that he was not prepared to vote for this project. He said that it is a good concept if everything works out the way he says it will and there is no risk or minimal risk to the City. He added that he reserves the right to look at any documents. Mr. Sheehan said that the City has to apply for the loan guarantee and the Committee is the access to the Common Council.

Mr. Hempstead said the concept sounds great, but no one is moving forward without a market study.

**** MR. PENA MOVED THE ITEM TO THE FULL COUNCIL SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY THE LAW DEPARTMENT
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Mr. Geake was in agreement with the vote.

F. WALL STREET REDEVELOPMENT PLAN AREA

**** MR. MCCARTHY MOVED TO ADVANCE TO THE COMMON COUNCIL THE WALL STREET PLACE RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE PROJECT RELATED URBAN ACT APPLICATION TO THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT**

The Committee reviewed the resolution.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** MR. PENA MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services