

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 2, 2012**

ATTENDANCE: David McCarthy, Carvin Hilliard, Michael Geake, Bruce Kimmel, Matthew Miklave, Doug Hempstead, Warren Pefia, Nicholas Kydes, Chair (7:35 p.m.)

OTHER: Timothy Sheehan, Redevelopment Agency Director; Munro Johnson Redevelopment Agency; Bruce Kimmel, Common Council, Mr. Ray Sullivan, Mr. Alan Webber

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Hempstead called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. He explained that Mr. Kydes was delayed at another meeting.

ROLL CALL

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES - JULY 2, 2012

**** MR. MCCARTHY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JULY 2, 2012.**

The following addition was noted:

Page 5, paragraph 7, line 2: please add: "Further discussion followed."

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JULY 2, 2012 AS AMENDED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

BUSINESS.

Day Street Parcels

1. Approval of the Option Agreement between the City of Norwalk and the Norwalk Housing Authority for the acquisition of 13 and 20 Day Street.

Mr. Sheehan said that this agreement has been before the Committee numerous times since 2009. A developer, Trinity Financial, has been selected by the Housing Authority and the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency.

Mr. Kydes joined the meeting at 7:36 p.m.

The option agreement has to advance to the Council. The project cannot move forward without the Council's approval.

Mr. McCarthy asked who owned the current structures at Washington Village. Mr. Sheehan said that it was the Housing Authority. He said that in order to accomplish the Choice Neighborhood project, ownership would ultimately shift over to Trinity Financial. The full project encompasses 400 units on all the parcels involved. There are 136 public housing units on the site now. Phase 1 involves 51 units. The residents of Washington Village who choose to stay will transition into the new development. The final residency composition will be roughly 1/3rd public housing residents, 1/3rd affordable housing and 1/3rd full market value. Ultimately 2/3rd of the housing will be equally distributed between affordable housing and public housing.

Mr. Kydes asked what the zoning was for the area. Mr. Sheehan said that it was I-1, but there had been a recent change to the zoning to include housing. Mr. Kydes expressed strong concerns about this. He said that he wanted to bring this issue out for discussion and debate. Mr. McCarthy pointed out that in earlier years, locating industry near water and railroads was practical, but now things have changed. In 2012, people want to live close to the water and within easy reach of transit. Mr. Hilliard said that it would be very similar to one of the projects in Stamford that was mixed income.

Mr. Peña asked about the mix of residents of one third from each of the income groups. He asked if the residents would be segregated by income into different areas. Mr. Sheehan said that it would be truly integrated. He stipulated that some of the market units might have different types of finishes inside, such as the counter tops. Mr. Sheehan then reviewed the details of Phase One and how the demolition of the existing public housing units would be phased.

Mr. Peña then asked about the fact that Washington Village was 100% public housing, and what would happen to the current residents. Mr. Sheehan said that those residents who want to stay in Norwalk and move into the new project would be able to do so, while those who preferred to take a Section 8 voucher and move elsewhere would be able to do that instead.

Mr. McCarthy then asked about the economics of having 2/3rd of the units with restricted use in perpetuity and how this would affect the developer's profit on the project. Mr. Sheehan said that it would not be appropriate to look at it just from the finances because it would open up the area for development. Mr. Johnson said that there was a significant positive effect to commercial areas from strengthening their residential components.

Mr. Miklave asked what the value was for the two parcels. Mr. Sheehan said that the parcels had been independently appraised. Mr. Miklave asked about the tax rates. Mr. Sheehan pointed out that all the buildings would be generating taxes since they would no longer be owned by the Norwalk Housing Authority.

Mr. Hempstead asked about maintenance of the property until the closing of the sale. Mr. Sheehan said that this had been worked out between the two attorneys and the Housing Authority. He pointed out that the Housing Authority does not have ownership until the grant money is approved. Mr. Hempstead said that he believed that Public Works would need to be notified about the property's maintenance needs.

Mr. Sheehan gave a quick overview of how the City was granted the property from the State.

Mr. Hempstead had a question about the five-year term for the Implementation Grant. Mr. Sheehan replied that this was the language that Corporation Counsel had developed.

Mr. Hempstead asked about the previous plans. Mr. Sheehan said that Trinity Financial would be coming in to speak to the Committee on the project before the plans go to the Zoning Commission. Mr. Sheehan said that the Choice Neighborhoods program looks at elements such as available parks, education, and counseling, along with resources for job placements. The goal is to transform the neighborhood both economically and physically.

Mr. Kydes asked if the developer had the plans ready. Mr. Sheehan said that the developer had just been selected three weeks ago. The developer will have to have a presentation ready for CHFA on October 1st. The developer has a good relationship with both CHFA and HUD. Mr. Hilliard said that he believed this project will provide an economic boon for the City because there will be training available for the residents who need it. It is a very comprehensive HUD plan. The Housing Authority will propose a "transformation plan" to HUD with identified funding resources or written commitments. Typical grants have been about 30 million dollars.

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO APPROVE ADVANCING THE PROPOSED OPTION AGREEMENT BETWEEN NORWALK HOUSING AUTHORITY AND THE CITY OF NORWALK FOR THE PURCHASE OF 13 AND 20 DAY STREET AS PREPARED BY CORPORATION COUNSEL.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Geake pointed out that the wording of the motion needed to be amended.

**** MR. GEAKE MOVED TO RECONSIDER THE ITEM.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

It was pointed out that the resolution should read "approve advancing to the City Council the proposed Option Agreement between Norwalk Housing Authority. . . .", etc.

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO APPROVE THE FRIENDLY AMENDMENT CHANGING THE WORDING OF THE MOTION FROM:**

“APPROVE ADVANCING THE PROPOSED OPTION AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE NORWALK HOUSING AUTHORITY AND THE CITY OF NORWALK FOR THE PURCHASE OF 13 AND 20 DAY STREET AS PREPARED BY CORPORATION COUNSEL.”

TO: “APPROVE ADVANCING TO THE COMMON COUNCIL THE PROPOSED OPTION AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE NORWALK HOUSING AUTHORITY AND THE CITY OF NORWALK FOR THE PURCHASE OF 13 AND 20 DAY STREET AS PREPARED BY CORPORATION COUNSEL.”

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Wall Street Redevelopment Plan

Review of the Head of the Harbor project, the related appraisals and the Tighe and Bond public improvement cost estimates.

Mr. Sheehan said that there was no action needed on the item. This was just to keep the Committee updated on the proposals.

Mr. Hempstead indicated that Mr. Sullivan works for Stew Leonard's.

Mr. Sullivan and another developer staff member came forward with updated site plans. The larger building will have 45 units and sits over parking. The smaller building will have office space on the ground floor and an additional 15 units. There will be an open plaza between the two buildings.

Mr. Kimmel asked about the public access to the area and also to Mill Hill from the project. The representatives indicated where the access would be located.

Mr. Kydes said that he had concerns about the benefits to Mill Hill and would like to see more in-kind development for Mill Hill. He asked how this could be done. It was explained that some of the parking was located on property owned by the City. If the City abandons a part of Smith Street, the developer will take over the street, grant a public right-of-way, and provide maintenance. Zoning requires that there be 105 parking spaces for the project.

Mr. Kimmel said that Mill Hill has very limited parking. He asked how long it would take someone to walk up to Mill Hill from Smith Street. He was told it would take 2 minutes.

Mr. Miklave asked if the developer had site control. The developer has owned the private property for the last six or seven years. Prior to this, there was a two story building there that had a collapsing roof. The retaining wall along Smith Street is unstable and is the reason why

the road has been closed. Mr. Miklave then asked when the project could start and said that the view along the river is spectacular. This needs to be developed as soon as possible.

Mr. Geake asked about handicap accessibility. The locations of the handicap access were indicated and Mr. Geake was assured that there would be handicap parking. Mr. Geake informed the representatives that the City is perpetually working on cleaning up accessibility issues.

Mr. Hempstead had several questions about the figures on the financial sheet from Tighe & Bond. Mr. Sheehan said that these numbers had been requested by the Redevelopment Agency. He went on to explain that these numbers had been based on the Stamford South End project. Discussion followed about the Mill Hill staircase, the barn and the jail.

Mr. Hempstead asked whether Smith Street would be opened. It was stated that the owners would only be responsible for maintaining the road to the end of their property, not to Hubbell's Lane. Discussion followed about whether this street could be a two-way street.

Mr. Hempstead said that it appeared to be a fair trade off. He then asked about the timeline for the development. The representatives said that while they would like to start in the spring, some of the authorizations from the City had not moved as quickly as expected.

Mr. Kydes said he had asked for a second appraisal. Mr. Sheehan said that the appraisal from O'Neill, Duffy and Co, LLC had been done and was in the information packet. Mr. Miklave said that what the developer was getting in the trade-off was a closed street, a collapsing wall and a rock strewn parking area. What the City was getting was a public esplanade, a river plaza and a re-opened street.

Mr. Kydes said that he did not want to throw out all the statements without getting all the facts and figures because he did not want to have the City and the taxpayers subsidizing the developer. He reiterated that he would like to understand what kind of improvement in kind there would be for Mill Hill. He then said that he would like to hear from the Planning Commissioners as to whether this was going to be approved or not.

Mr. Hempstead suggested that Mr. Sheehan draft up the following conditions:

- Public plaza be as public/pedestrian friendly as possible.
- Stairway near jail/barn be included in approval.
- Agreement of donation for improvement of the outside of the jail and barn.

Mr. Geake said he liked the plan. One concern he had was the smell at low tide. Mr. McCarthy and Mr. Hilliard said that they would approve the plan.

Mr. Peña said that it was time and agreed with Mr. Miklave's comments. The Committee needed to do what they could to help this project move forward. He said that there was enough public restoration included and added that Mill Hill was a separate project.

Mr. Miklave said that in order to have a Redevelopment Agency project requires a public subsidy. This is a modest subsidy with great rewards for the City.

Mr. Kimmel reminded everyone that the Historical Society already has a plan for Mill Hill.

Mr. Hempstead asked for a draft agreement by the next meeting. Mr. Sheehan said that a document would be ready but it would only be a draft. Mr. Hempstead then asked for a timeline. Mr. Sheehan then outlined the steps. Mr. Hempstead suggested combining the presentation with the other committees who would need to approve it. Mr. Kydes said that he was a strong proponent of streamlining the process in order to get the shovels into the ground.

CDBG

Approve scheduling of the public hearing to be held during the regular meeting of the Planning Committee meeting on September 6th at 7:30 p.m. to review CDBG program performance during the FY11-FY12 program year.

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO APPROVE SCHEDULING OF THE PUBLIC HEARING TO BE HELD DURING THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 6TH AT 7:30 P.M. TO REVIEW CDBG PROGRAM PERFORMANCE DURING THE FY11-FY12 PROGRAM YEAR.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PROJECT UPDATES

95/7 - Mr. Sheehan reported that there was nothing to report regarding 95/7/

Waypointe – Demolition has started and the project is moving forward.

Wall Street Place - Wall Street place has received a favorable report and now it is up to OPM to schedule it for State Bond Counsel.

Mr. Kydes left the meeting at 8:56 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Hempstead said that he had received a phone call from an Atty. Sean Richardson stating that there would be a major lawsuit if the Globe project moves forward. Mr. Hempstead said that it was important to keep the Committee apprised of this issue. Discussion followed.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. PEÑA MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MR. MCCARTHY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services