

**CITY OF NORWALK
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
JUNE 24, 2009**

ATTENDANCE: David Park, Chairman; Peter Bondi; Eric Chandler; Joe DiIorio;
John Kurtzman; Steven Serasis; David Westmoreland

GUESTS: Chris Cooke, Patsy Brescia, Lockwood Mathews Mansion
Museum; Susan Jainchill, AKRF Consultants

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Park called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. He welcomed Mr. Westmoreland to the Commission and noted that Common Council had approved his appointment at their meeting last evening.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES – MAY 27, 2009

The following correction was made to the minutes:

Page 2, next to last paragraph: sentence should be corrected to read - *for restoration of the Pine Island Cemetery*

**** MR. BONDI MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED
** MOTION PASSED WITH (2) ABSTENTIONS (MR. CHANDLER AND
MR. WESTMORELAND)**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

**A. MILL HILL PARK MASTER PLAN PRESENTATION BY AKRF
CONSULTANTS**

Mr. Park explained that AKRF Consultants are doing the master plan for Mill Hill. Ms. Jainchill explained that they are holding Stakeholder interviews at the Mill Hill site on June 30th and July 1st. Mr. Park added that the Historical Commission is one of the primary stakeholders of Mill Hill,

Ms. Jainchill explained that Museum Insights was hired to look at the site from various perspectives and then create a master plan, taking into consideration all of the various stakeholders. Ms. Jainchill reviewed the proposed schedule for each day of the interviews.

B. REVIEW AND APPROVE PRESERVATION PLAN PROPOSAL OF JOHN MILNER ASSOC, FOR \$65, 000.

Mr. Park explained the item and said that the preservation plan is for all of the City owned buildings. Eleven proposals were received and a selection committee was created. Of the eleven proposals, six were eliminated and the committee saw five presentations. Following the presentations, the selection committee agreed to recommend hiring John Milner Associates. Mr. Park said that all of the prices were the same. If this item is approved this evening, it will be forwarded to the Land Use and Building Management Committee, the Common Council and then to the Law Department to be written into a contract.

**** MR. CHANDLER MOVED TO APPROVE THE PRESERVATION PLAN PROPOSAL OF JOHN MILNER ASSOC, FOR A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$65,000**

**** MR. BONDI SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

REPORTS – BOARDS

A. NORWALK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mr. Westmoreland distributed his written report. He added that he is working actively on the Mill Hill Burial ground RFP. The Committee discussed problems with trash removal at the Fitch Law Building.

B. LOCKWOOD MATHEWS MANSION MUSEUM

1. Discussion of LMMM capital accounts

Mr. Cooke distributed a written report to Commissioners in order to bring them up to date on current happenings,

Mr. Park told Mr. Cooke that both of their commissions need to work together. Mr. Cooke said that they are clearly focused on LMMM and there has been a lot happening since the arrival of Mr. Gerarden, Ms. Gelgore and Mr. Fischer. He said that they just concluded a successful membership drive where they signed up 66 new members. The membership drive resulted in an additional \$10,000 that he said can be used for operations. Mr. Cooke noted that the entire first floor is gorgeous.

Mr. Cooke addressed the event that took place at a rental two weeks ago. He said that it is a dead issue and the first time they had a hiccup in a rental. They have since made changes to their rental policies.

Mr. Park told Mr. Cooke that when things like that happen he should be notified right away. Mr. Cooke said that it was a private event and the family was mortified after the event, therefore, they wanted to keep the communications to a minimum. Mr. Park explained to Mr. Cooke that the Historical Commission is the landlord and if something like this happens at the Mansion, it is appropriate to call him. He said that he is the one who has to answer to the 15 members of the Common Council and was put in a position of not knowing what had taken place. He said that he was in the dark. Mr. Cooke told Mr. Park that his comments were duly noted.

Mr. Chandler asked about their liquor policy. Ms. Brescia explained that if a client asks for permission to bring liquor to the site, they have to have a liquor permit. She explained that part of the problem with the recent event, was that the family did not use a caterer; in addition, they were not supposed to have liquor at the event.

Photographs of the damage from that event were shown to the Commissioners. Mr. Park told Mr. Cooke that he would have appreciated seeing the pictures beforehand. Ms. Brescia said that all of the rooms were closed during the event. Mr. Serasis asked if people are allowed to bring in alcohol if the party is catered. Ms. Brescia said that someone has to have a liquor permit. She explained that they had insurance and a liquor license with the previous executive director, but have since done away with that because they did not want that responsibility.

Ms. Brescia said that the damage came to less than the \$700.00 security deposit. She added that they kept the entire \$700.00.

Ms. Brescia said that they had a tour bus stop at the Mansion yesterday and the visitors said that the Mansion was much more impressive than other structures they had seen. Mr. Cooke said that during the Party in the Park event, the rain drove people into the Mansion and they raised \$850.00.

Mr. Serasis asked if there were any discussions about creating a discount ticket for people visiting all of the local attractions. Mr. Park said that there have been discussions about creating a tenants group connecting the various local attractions.

Mr. Serasis said that it would be great to have a relationship between the Mansion and Stepping Stones Museum for Children. Mr. Cooke said that the Mansion Board was in favor of the addition at the Stepping Stones Museum.

Ms. Brescia asked if anyone has thought about getting the air conditioning mechanicals off of the old Police Station site; it is an eyesore.

Mr. Park discussed the \$400,000 that is earmarked for the Mansion. He said that each year the Historical Commission creates a wish list and the question always comes up about the money sitting there. He said that the City is reluctant to give the Historical Commission funding because they feel the Commission is sitting on the money. He said that his understanding is that if the money is not spent after two years, the City can take it back without first talking to them. Mr. Park said that this question keeps coming up year after year. He said that he believed that this capital funding was appropriated in 2005 or before.

Mr. Park said that with the current economic conditions, the City is looking for money and he said that he does not think they can go through another capital budget without the City taking the money back. He said that he and Mr. Bondi met with Mr. Hamilton and that may happen. Mr. Serasis told Ms. Brescia and Mr. Cooke that he was adamant that they spend the money. He added that there are some rumblings about this. He said that he does not want to see the funding lost so they have to move quickly on this.

Ms. Brescia said that they received a State match for the \$75,000 they spent on the elevator. If the City did something with the funding, they may have to give that money back to the State. Mr. Park said that part of the discussion with Mr. Hamilton was about re-appropriating fund balances related to the same building. However, there is a process that needs to be addressed.

Ms. Brescia explained that they were under instructions to move ahead with the sprinkler system and went out to bid. She said that the Mansion volunteers raised funds to pay for the initial master plan, but were then told by Mr. Foley that they had to create an RFP. Mr. Park said that he explained the process to Mr. Gerarden over a year ago. He said that the Historical Commission does the RFP, approves the contractor and takes the project through to the Common Council. He said that the Historical Commission has to be part of the process to get approvals. Ms. Brescia said that they worked hard to get to this point and everyone at the Mansion now understands. Mr. Park told Ms. Brescia that the Historical Commission was there to help them through the process. Mr. Serasis recommended that they start the project immediately.

Mr. Cooke said that he had been concerned about losing City and State funding. He said that they finally had a plan, but there was a setback because they did not understand protocol.

Mr. Westmoreland asked about the current plan. Ms. Brescia said that they are writing an RFP for everything they can do; the list has been prioritized. Mr. Westmoreland suggested that they hire someone to help write the RFP. Mr. Bondi noted that they will

need to get three bids if the costs come in over \$500,000. Ms. Brescia said that there are very few people who are capable of doing the work, or who want to do this work.

Mr. Park suggested that they contact him to discuss how to proceed.

Mr. Serasis said that this needs to be moved on. This is the first time in a long time when the Mayor has taken the recommendation of the Board of Estimate and Taxation over the Common Council's Finance Committee. It is unheard of and they are talking about taking away the funding. The sooner anything is done and a press release is sent out the better. He said that everyone here wants the money to be spent. He said that there is a sense of urgency. Mr. Cooke said that he was mindful of the problem. Mr. Serasis told Mr. Cooke to keep Mr. Park in the loop.

Ms. Brescia said that the Mansion was special and there is nothing clean or easy about it. Mr. Park told Mr. Cooke that the Historical Commission meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Ms. Brescia said that the volunteers have raised money and put that back into the Mansion. Mr. Cooke said that he believed that there was an understanding now between everyone. It was noted that Ms. Gunn explained this matter before the Board of Estimate and Taxation.

Mr. Park told Mr. Cooke that he would appreciate getting a report once a month. Mr. Cooke said that he will be sure to have a report for the Commission.

REPORTS – SUB-COMMITTEES

A. BUILDINGS

1. Review and Approve painting contractor for Mathews Park buildings

Mr. Bondi explained that an RFP was put out for painting the Mathews Park buildings. He said that the low bidder was Forino USA, LLC. They had six references for historical work and have worked for some municipalities. All of the references were excellent.

- ** MR. BONDI MOVED TO APPROVE THE HIRING OF FORINO USA, LLC TO PAINT THE MATHEWS PARK BUILDINGS FOR A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$43,700**
- ** MR. CHANDLER SECONDED**

Mr. Bondi said that the Lockwood Mathews Mansion had a team select the colors and chose the best paint possible. Mr. Park said that all of the buildings were tested for lead. Mr. Bondi said that the paint chosen is compatible with the existing paint. Mr. Park said that the specs for this were quite detailed.

- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Mr. Park said that he will notify Mr. Lo and Mr. Hempstead that they are moving forward with this and ask that it be placed on the July agenda for the Land Use and Building Management Committee along with the approval for John Milner.

Mr. Bondi said that he had hoped to have a report from Contemporary Printing about the stair railing. They have not responded to his call. Mr. Mauro is working on the Gate House and has done work at Mathews Mansion. Mr. Bondi said that he is a good worker. He is doing a lot of window sill prep work for the painting project. Mr. Bondi said that Mr. Mauro caulked the windows at the Little Red Schoolhouse. Mr. Park said that he went and made a site visit during the rain.

B. CEMETERY

Mr. Park reported that he will help Mr. Westmoreland with the RFP for the Mill Hill Cemetery. The Pine Island Cemetery tour on Saturday as part of the Party in the Park event was a great success. There were hundreds and hundreds of people coming from the trail. They were able to collect \$150.00 in donations for cemetery restoration, which was taken to the Comptroller's office yesterday. Mr. Bondi played a character at the Party in the Park event.

C. FINANCE

1. Discussion of NHC capital accounts

Mr. Park reported that he and Mr. Bondi met with Mr. Hamilton last Friday to talk about capital accounts in general. Part of that discussion was about the Lockwood Mathews Mansion Museum and the balance in the account. Mr. Park said that the balance in the Pine Island Cemetery account can be used for cemetery restoration without getting a special appropriation. In addition, they talked about the Rogers Ritch Merritt House and need to get answers from Mr. Maslan about that.

D. NORWALK MUSEUM

Mr. Chandler read his written report. Mr. Kurtzman mentioned that the family of the owner of the Minuteman Cleaners in Westport used to make all of the hat boxes for Norwalk. Their factory was on South Main Street in South Norwalk.

MUSEUM CURATOR'S AND ASSISTANT TO THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION REPORT

There was no report presented this evening.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Bondi distributed a flyer announcing the 230th Anniversary of the Battle of Norwalk Connecticut. The event will take place on July 11th and 12th at Taylor Farm. He said that there will be about 150-160 people involved in the event.

- ** MR. BONDI MOVED TO ADJOURN**
- ** MR. WESTMORELAND SECONDED**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services

