

**DRAFT
CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMISSION
February 1, 2017**

PRESENT: Frances DiMeglio, Chair; William Dunne; David Davidson; Walter McLaughlin; Steven Ferguson; Nora King; George Tsiranides

STAFF: Steven Kleppin; Mike Wrinn

OTHERS: Mike Mocciaie; Alan Webber; Stephanie Pelletier; Joseph Squollo; Joe Bruno; Christian Byrnes; Derrick Shuhart; Tim Sheehan; Anthony Parsione; Bruce Chimento; Deborah Goldstein; Mr. Kleppin; Barbara Meyer Mitchell; Brian Meek; Heather Sneider; Amy Ableman; MJ Corona; Rob Schultz; Kirk Weatherstone; Bernard Thomas; Megan Hopkins; Mike Barbis

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. DiMeglio called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Kleppin called the roll. After that Ms. DiMeglio went over the agenda and asked if there were any members of the public that wanted to speak to those departments. If not, the department head was dismissed.

a) Capital Budget – 2017-18 to 2021-22

I. Recreation & Parks

Ms. DiMeglio asked questions of Mr. Mocciaie about the visitor's docks. Can it be part of the Walk Bridge negotiations? He said it could be but they have just started and he was recently asked to be a part of them.

Ms. King had questions about the ball fields at West Rocks and Broad River. He explained that they would be done in the off-season. There was a discussion about the cost. Mr. Mocciaie said that based on Nathan Hale costs, they were able to determine what the cost would be for this one. He noted that Nathan Hale took long because they did not receive all of the money at first. This time he was asking for funds for design only. There was a discussion about the Oyster Festival and what else could be done on Veteran's Park if it was not there. There would be more time

to take care of the fields. There was a discussion about the geese and how there would be less at Veteran's Park and Calf Pasture Beach.

II. Redevelopment Agency

Alan Webber, of DiScala & Co., 10 Wall Street, asked about the traffic calming project. He said they hoped it would go forward because they were invested in that area. It would help it to be safer for the residents that would be living in the area. It was a project that was overdue to be done.

Stephanie Pelletier spoke in support of the park improvement at 50 Washington Street. She said that it would be a beautiful, green space with water features. It would be welcoming to the neighborhood. She also submitted 15 letters of support to the commissioners. She also spoke in support of the public art program.

Joseph Squollo, owners of 1416 North Main Street, spoke in support of the park improvement at 50 Washington Street. The other owner also said it was important for it to be completed.

Joe Bruno, owner of 20 Main Street, also spoke in support of the park improvement at 50 Washington Street.. He did not think the sketch should be more thoroughly researched. It does not seem clear how it would be developed. There is no seating on the sketch. It is important corner.

Christian Byrnes, 99 Washington St., 1012 South Main Street, spoke in support of the park improvement at 50 Washington Street. He said that they had worked on it for 4 years. It would be impactful for the neighborhood. He said that he would also invest in his property so that people will see the park. He wanted it to be the anchor of SoNo.

Derrick Shuhart, representing Eric Raines' firm, showed the commissioners the plans for the park at 50 Washington Street. He described the plans and handed the commissioners copies of the plans. He also faced the plans toward the public so they could see it. There was a description of the materials to be used. There would be a more decorative sidewalk. He left the plans so that the public could view them later.

Christian Byrnes noted that he had not seen the plans that Mr. Shuhart had shown. He asked if he could have input on these revised plans.

Tim Sheehan, the Director of the Redevelopment Agency, said that the revised designs for the park at 50 Washington Street would be vetted with those in the area. He also said that this was the start of the process. There would be community involvement. There was a discussion about how this new design would affect the Capital Budget request. There was then a discussion about the approval process for the public art in the park. He said that the art commission had developed a new

process to advance public art before it showed up in the community. There was a discussion about the irrigation system to be used at the park. There would be a maintenance plan which might be maintained by the city with some financial input from the surrounding owners. There was a discussion of lighting, sidewalks, etc. as well as whether the SONO sign on Washington St. was not working.

III. Department of Public Works (includes WPCA/Pkg Authority)

Anthony Parsione, 15 Emerson St., noted that the sidewalks off Gregory Blvd. stopped in this area. He had concerns about the safety on Gregory Blvd. He said he would have to walk from the train station in the street because there is no sidewalk here. There has been a petition to have a sidewalk constructed. Neighbors were willing to cooperate with the city to have it completed.

Bruce Chimento spoke about the sidewalk program. He explained how they would connect the sidewalk to connect to the East Norwalk train station and Calf Pasture Beach. It should be installed in the spring of 2018. There was a discussion as to which Capital Budget fund this would come out of. Since they received a petition they decided to add it to the 2017-2018 work program. There was a discussion about the cost.

Ms. DiMeglio discussed the East Norwalk design review which was tied into the Walk Bridge as well as outreach to the Third Taxing District. She hoped to see many East Norwalk business owners on the committee.

IV. Planning and Zoning

Deborah Goldstein asked that the Department's request be handled earlier rather than later because the department is about to prepare the Plan of Conservation and Development ("POCD"). She asked that the Capital Budget be tied to the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Mr. Kleppin addressed her comments by saying that the request was for furniture for the department. He appreciated the fact that Ms. Goldstein thought that the new design would help with the planning of the POCD.

V. Board of Education

Barbara Meyer Mitchell, 10 Allen Road, said she was actively involved with the Board of Education's plan. She said that the school district was overcrowded, especially in Jefferson. Since school buildings had been shut in the past, new schools must be built. She had concerns at the Cranbury school which needed an electrical report done. She is proud to live in Norwalk because of the diversity. There were questions about how she volunteered for the city's schools. There was a

discussion about the Cranbury school because there was abatement that had to be done this summer.

Brian Meek, a member of the Board of Education as well as a resident of the city, spoke in support of the Board of Education's plan. He acknowledged that there was a lot of work that went into the plan. He gave a brief history of the school district's construction of new school buildings. He handed out copies of the school district's Consolidated Annual Financial Report ("CAFR"). He said it showed that the city could afford it. School debt and city debt, except for certain departments is down which showed that the city has been spending less on schools.

Heather Sneider, 32 Arnold Lane, was a parent of children in the elementary school and middle school in Rowayton. She thanked the commissioners for the redesign at the cafeteria in Rowayton. She described the changes that were made. It is much less institutional. There are round tables now and boards that absorb sounds. She hoped that this cafeteria would be the pilot program for the remaining schools. There was a discussion about allergy-free tables. The program had been shown to the superintendent.

Amy Ableman working with Ms. Sneider on this program and passed out pictures to the commissioners of what the cafeteria looks like in the elementary school in Rowayton. She has 2 children in this school. She explained the process of how they developed this program with the help of the superintendent and Mr. Hamilton, who both came to lunch in the cafeteria to see the problems. She thanked the commissioners for their support.

MJ Corona, 21 Geneva Road, who also has 2 children in middle school, spoke in support of the Board of Education's request for capital funds.

Rob Schultz, 10 Granite Drive, spoke in support of the electrical upgrade at the Cranbury school. He was concerned because of the heat in the schools during the warmer months. He would like to see air conditioning in the school because of allergies and asthma. He noted that there were other parents who would echo his sentiments.

Kirk Weatherstone, 1 Ox Lane, spoke in support of the electrical upgrade at the Cranbury school. There were concerns about the breakers being tripped at this school. He asked Cranbury parents to stand up and about 8 parents stood up.

Bernard Thomas, principal of Columbus Magnet School, spoke in support of the Board of Education's plan.

Megan Hopkins, 1 McAllister, spoke in support of the Board of Education's plan. Her children attend Columbus Magnet school and said that the school desperately needed remodeling. She explained how some programs are run at the school. There

are rooms that are used for many different things such as cafeteria, gym, etc. She said they needed more space. She described the different programs at the school including a produce stand.

Mike Barbis, 1 Covewood Drive, spoke in support of the Board of Education's plan by explaining the need for new schools since 2007. He explained how the enrollment numbers were filed by October 1. He explained that the commissioners could go to a website, Edsight, to find the actual numbers. He also said that the way to tell if there were children in those units was the fact that there were bus stops near these complexes.

There were discussions about the number of students that were in the new units that are built in Norwalk. Mr. Barbis said that there were children living in those units, who were attending schools in Norwalk.

Mr. Hamilton addressed the Rowayton cafeteria project which the Board of Education sees as a pilot program. He then explained that there was a long term goal of having separate cafeterias from gyms. He noted that there was a strategic plan in the Board of Education's plan. He also described the school governance councils in each of the schools. They would like to implement this program first in schools with separate cafeterias. There was a discussion about the requests for teaching materials and technology for students.

A concerned parent from Fox Run Elementary School said that she had done some fundraising for wall air conditioners. They had the same problems with the electrical upgrade for their school as did Cranbury.

Ms. King recommended a special appropriation of \$25,000 for the electrical assessment for these 2 schools. Mr. Davidson explained that it is not a lengthy process. There was a discussion about how the process would work. Ms. King said that in the next year's Capital Budget cycle there could be funds for this.

Ms. DiMeglio left the public hearing open for written public comments to be delivered to the Planning and Zoning office by Friday, February 3, 2017 at 4:30 or via electronic mail.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. McLaughlin made a Motion to Adjourn

Mr. Tsiranides seconded.

Frances DiMeglio, Chair; William Dunne; David Davidson; Walter McLaughlin; Steven Ferguson; Nora King; George Tsiranides voted in favor.

No one opposed.

No one abstained.