

**FINANCE/CLAIMS COMMITTEE and
LAND USE AND BUILDING MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEARING
JUNE 27, 2017**

ATTENDANCE:

Land Use and Building Management Committee

Thomas Livingston, Chair, Faye Bowman; Bruce Kimmel; Richard Bonenfant (6:30 p.m.);
Nicholas Sacchinelli (7:21 p.m.)

Finance/Claims Committee

Bruce Kimmel, Chair, John Ignieri; John Kydes; Shannon O'Toole Giandurco; Douglas
Hempstead (6:41 p.m.); Travis Simms (6:52 p.m.); Nicholas Sacchinelli (7:21 p.m.)

Common Council

Michael Corsello; Eloisa Melendez; Steven Serasis

STAFF: Mario Coppola, Corporation Counsel

PUBLIC HEARING

**Public hearing on acquisition of a 6 year Parking Rights and option to buy land and
building next to the Norwalk Public Library at 1 Belden Street Norwalk, Connecticut**

Mr. Livingston opened the public hearing at 6:22 p.m. and asked all speaker to keep their
comments to three minutes.

Mr. Alex Knopp, President Library Board acknowledged the tremendous turnout of library
patrons. He said that this fall, every family with children in the entire Norwalk public school
system will receive an application for a library card. He questioned whether or not the library
will have the capacity to accommodate these patrons

Mr. Knopp said this is an unusual and complex agreement. It allows the City to have the property for six years with no increase in cost. If the cost is spread out over the 30-year life span, it comes at a modes cost over that period of time.

Mr. Bonenfant joined the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Ms. Barbara Kinn said she was surprised the City has not acted before to obtain this property. She said the City needs to move forward with the main library to serve the needs of the community. Once this land is gone, the ability to expand the library is lost.

Mr. Ralph Bloom, Trustee said that the City finally has an opportunity to fix a problem that has been going on for decades. Moving forward would be in the best interest of the City.

Ms. Christine Bradley, Library director said there is a tremendous increase in the use of the library. She read a letter of support from Mr. Les Kozerowitz, former director.

Ms. Patsy Brescia, Vice Chair spoke in support of the purchase of the property. This proposal is about the ability to expand the library and its functions. She noted that the Norwalk and South Norwalk libraries are a City of Norwalk department. She said it is important to understand that the First and Second Taxing Districts turned those properties over to the City in June 1970. There is a covenant in the deed that if the building is not used as a library it will revert back to the First Taxing District. Ms. Brescia said she was on the Common Council when the merger took place in 1970.

Mr. Hempstead joined the meeting at 6:41 p.m.

Ms. Brescia submitted signed petitions by people using the library.

Ms. Betty Bono said she supports the agreement. Parking near the library is essential and the agreement will prevent the construction of the 69 unit apartment building and allows for future expansion.

Ms. Susan Luchars, Co-president Rowayton Library said it is important to have parking for the library. She added that the staff is fantastic; they deserve parking and a great library.

Ms. Jalina Jaeger said the library needs the parking lot; a lot of people with children use the library.

Ms. Carol Solheim, Trustee, Cornerstone Community Church said they are in support of this. Their concern is that Mott Avenue is so difficult for parking. There is a lot going on that street and she would like the stakeholders on Mott Avenue to have a say and think about this comprehensively to find a way that they could access parking without having to pay when the library is not in session.

Ms. Sherelle Harris, Assistant Director read a letter from Mr. Stan Siegel in support of the agreement.

Mr. Todd Bryant, President, Norwalk Preservation Trust read a letter of support . He described the historical design of the library.

Mr. Ben Otis addressed the comment “who even reads anymore.”. He said that he hoped Norwalk would develop the library into a place that is easy to visit. Plenty of people do read books and libraries have gained popularity with the younger generation.

Mr. Dennis Bradbury spoke in support of the agreement. He said that libraries are safe for children and placed children go. Books are reliable and fixed and gives a child confidence and stability.

Mr. Jim Clark said he performs at the library and has fans contact him after an event to tell him they wanted to attend, but could not find parking. Successful libraries now tend to have areas that can be utilized for various uses.

Ms. Laurel Peterson, said he job is to promote poetry in Norwalk and without the help of the staff at the library, her job would be harder. She said that she has had to park a distance from the library for every event. The library is an essential resource, but only if people can access it.

Mr. Michael Diamond said that throughout history, the library was the center for learning and progress. Today the role of the library is the hub of information. Access to the library means access to opportunity. Libraries represent something about the community in which we live. The library is a gateway that should be available to all its users.

Mr. Eric Chandler spoke about what the library means to him personally. He said the library offers programs, but he is sometimes unable to attend because of the lack of parking. Parking at the Yankee Doodle garage is often more than a person is physically capable of doing.

Ms. Wendell Livingston said the library is a big part of children’s lives. When she had three small children, she headed out to other libraries because of the parking. Libraries are the heart and soul of any community.

Dr. Stuart Garrelick said quality of life is important. He said there are fabulous things in Norwalk and the library is as necessary as the air we breathe.

Mr. Sacchinelli joined the meeting at 7:12 p.m.

Ms. Mary Oster, Early Childhood Coordinator said children who read and have access to books come to school ready to learn and ready to read on grade level. Additional parking will allow young families access to the library.

Ms. Marjia Bryant said she has been watching and waiting for Wall Street to bloom and sees a glimmer of hope. The library is a cornerstone of the area and the parking plan is an immediate fix. The eventual plan to expand the library would be an important part of Norwalk.

Ms. Mary Theresa Conrad talked about the round rooms in both libraries that were removed.

Mr. Ted Byrd said that from the time he could read, he was a junkie for libraries. His mother in law uses a wheelchair, and he would like to be able to bring her to the library without having to push her chair for a block.

Ms. Ellen Tully said this is an opportunity for children to read a lot of books; more parking is beneficial.

Mr. Jason Mulligan said he was encouraged to see so many people here this evening. He said he is a personal fan of the. He said he is satisfied with the agreement and very happy about the possibilities.

There were no other members of the public who wished to speak and the public hearing was closed at 7:22 p.m.

Mr. Livingston explained that the next step is that this item will be on the Land Use and Building Management agenda next Wednesday. Mr. Kimmel said the Board of Estimate and Taxation will take up the special appropriation at their July 10th meeting.

The Common Council will vote on the option agreement and special appropriation at their July 11th meeting.

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO ADJOURN
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services