

**DRAFT  
CITY OF NORWALK  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
February 7, 2018**

**PRESENT:** Fran DiMeglio, Chair; Nora King; David Davidson; Steven Ferguson; Tami Langalis; Mike Mushak; Brian Baxendale

**STAFF:** Steven Kleppin; Mike Wrinn

**OTHERS:** Lisa Wilson; Jack Couch; Doug Marchetti; Ken Hughes; Bob Foschino; Dan Mallia; Ed Abrams; Ralph \_\_\_\_\_; Tom Hamilton; Brian Mead; Susan Wallerstein; Albert \_\_\_\_\_; Joseph \_\_\_\_\_; Tim Sheehan; Christian Burns; Judith Bacall; Deborah Goldstein

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. DiMeglio called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Mr. Kleppin called the roll.

**III. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Ms. DiMeglio asked the public if anyone was speaking for certain departments and dismissed some department heads.

**a) Capital Budget – 2018-19 to 2022-23**

**I. Police Department (Combined Dispatch) –** Ms. DiMeglio sent the representative home because no member of the public wished to speak to their Capital Budget request.

**II. Fire Department –** Ms. DiMeglio sent the representative home because no member of the public wished to speak to their Capital Budget request.

**III. Department of Public Works (includes WPCA/Pkg Authority) –** Ms. DiMeglio sent the representative home because no member of the public wished to speak to their Capital Budget request.

**IV. Recreation and Parks –**

Lisa Wilson, 377 Highland Ave., a commissioner on the Historical Commission as well as Daughters of American Revolution, handed in a packet of

information. She read a statement about the Nathan Hale Memorial Fountain which is in front of the Nathan Hale Middle School. She found out that some parts were in different parts of the city as well as some being lost. She said she had written several books and gave a brief history of Nathan Hale. She also described the journey this fountain has taken over the years. One part of it was in Wilton and then she and her husband brought it to Fodor Farm. She has started a Go Fund page to help fund the restoration of the fountain. She raised \$3400. She also reached the grandson of the creator of the fountain who helped with plans. She has been collaborating with the Historical Society. She spoke in favor of the Capital Fund request. The Daughters of the Revolution had given the fountain to Norwalk so she believed that the City should help fund it. She was encouraged that it had been kept in the Capital Budget by Bob Barron. It was originally a drinking fountain but it would probably be a recirculating fountain.

Jack Couch, 6 Rowling St., Norwalk Lacrosse association, who was speaking in support of the re-surfacing of the field at Norwalk High School. It is now over 10 years and cannot withstand 2 more years of play on it, if the Capital Budget request is not passed. He explained that a piece can come off the field which could injure players. It is a shared use field. There are 6 sports that are played on it. It is an intense use.

Doug Marchetti, the Athletic Director of Norwalk High, spoke in support of the resurfacing of the field at Norwalk High School. He explained all of the trainings, games, practices, etc. were held on that field during the year. He also explained that parts have already been replaced. Ken Hughes explained how the old turf is changed. He said that there is a lot less work since a lot of parts are already in place, including drainage. He was confident in the bid that he had received.

Bob Foschino, 206 Ponus Ave., chairperson of the Norwalk Junior Soccer Association, who spoke in support of the resurfacing of the field at Norwalk High School. He noted that his daughter was 1 of 6 Norwalk students who had received been picked to play soccer at Iona College and other colleges. He then stated statistics about the benefits to students that play sports. Ms. King asked for copies of these statistics which he would submit to the Zoning Officer. He then explained how improving athletic facilities would help Norwalk students. There was a discussion about where games were played and what camps were at these fields. There was then a discussion about the lack of bathrooms at the Nathan Hale fields. Instead there are only port-a-potties. Ms. DiMeglio was surprised that no one had mentioned that bathroom facilities should be added to some of these parks, instead of the port-a-potties. Mr. Foschino noted that there are further ahead than they were 5 years ago because they had no fields. He described how they rotated to different fields to give certain fields a rest. Mr. Hughes noted that water and electricity had not been brought to the some parks. There was a discussion about events being cancelled because the fields are not as good as other towns. They could not start practicing for 2 weeks because they did not have turf. Mr. Foschino was asked to provide information about how many children are part of his program. He said they were one of 5 soccer organizations in Norwalk, but his was the

largest. There was a discussion about the lack of bathroom facilities and how tournaments were held in neighboring towns because of this.

Dan Mallia, president of Norwalk Little League, spoke in support of the funding of Broad River because it was a baseball facility. He explained that many games were there because Veteran's Park gets flooded when there is rain. He asked for bathroom facilities and concession stands at Broad River. Other sports play on these fields as well so that they are overused. He also asked about having lighting so they could only have games during the day. Surrounding towns have lighting at their facilities. Some children go to other towns as part of their traveling teams because of better facilities. Games are lost because of the maintenance of the field. There was a discussion about how many more games could be held if lighting was added. There was also a discussion about the dugouts and the bleachers. The roofs are over 20 years old. Some sports, like soccer, would bring in portable lighting. He said that they would be on until about 10 p.m. There was a discussion about having locked gates so that there would be less broken bottles and possibly some other illegal activity. Mr. Mallia noted that they were considering locking up the dugouts as well as the press box. It would not be the whole park. There was a discussion about a nearby parking lot which Recreation and Parks rents to a veterinary business. Since it is rented then it cannot be used by those using the park. Mr. Hodges would look into whether Recreation and Park or Fire Department owns it. There was a discussion about bids that were received for this project and how the design part of the project would be handled. Ms. Langalis suggested hiring a security guard to patrol so that kids would not continue to use the park.

**V. IT** – Ms. DiMeglio sent the representative home because no member of the public wished to speak to their Capital Budget request.

**VI. Historical Commission** – Ms. DiMeglio sent the representative home because no member of the public wished to speak to their Capital Budget request.

**VII. Board of Education** – Ed Abrams, 20 Morgan Ave., president of Norwalk High Marching Band, thanked the members of the Board of Education for adding the item for new uniforms. Bianca Randazzo, a Norwalk High School Marching Band member, began by thanking everyone to be allowed to speak. She explained how the program helped her and what it meant to her. It gave her life skills and helped her to manage her time. It is an award winning program. Mr. Abrams then explained that about 20% of the uniforms are at the end of their useful life. He expected that the new uniforms should last another 10 years. He expected that the program would continue to grow and that was why they were asking for 200 new uniforms. He explained how much news coverage they received and that they had been asked to perform in a Disney World parade in 2019. Ms. King noted that Mr. Barron had left this item in the Capital Budget. There was a discussion about when they would receive the new uniforms. He was asked whether lighting other field would help them practice which Mr. Abrams said it would.

Ralph \_\_\_\_\_, part of the technology of Board of Education, asked to speak on his own budget and how the cuts would affect it. He explained that these cuts would affect the One to One program which helped technology equity. He explained that they had recently received a grant from Sprint. He said that he could not receive it without the funding which had been cut by Mr. Barron. He explained what was needed for the students. The other area that was cut was security. There is WiFi in every classroom in the district and these systems needed to be refreshed. The ones with higher usage would be replaced first and would keep the system secure. There was a discussion about whether the Finance Director had specific budget cuts. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ said that it was a cut. He was also asked to resubmit his budget in priority order. He estimated that 7-10% of the student population did not have Internet access so they would be receiving a Chromebook in order to be able to work at home. He did not want to be behind on refreshing security but if they had to cut something that would be one of them. He explained that there was a correlation of those that did not have Internet access and not being on grade level. There was a discussion about students taking the Chromebooks home. Norwalk is the first district in Connecticut to receive a grant from Sprint. There was a discussion about why Mr. Barron had cut their budget but Mr. Hamilton was unsure. There was a discussion about how the paving budget was cut as well. Mr. Hamilton said that they would have to pave only 2 schools, rather than 3 as originally planned. He noted that the district was behind in paving and that this quote had been approved last year. There was a discussion about the Facilities Management Plan and some costs that were in it. There was also a discussion about shifting some requests next year. Mr. Hamilton noted that he had not spoken with Mr. Barron about his cuts.

Brian Mead, on the school board \_\_\_\_\_ said that he agreed with Mr. Barron on his Capital Budget recommendations. He was also concerned about the cuts in the technology portion of the Capital Budget recommendations. He explained that the city received investment from International Baccalaureate for that school at Brien McMahon. He was also concerned about security risks from phishing attacks and how it could affect the students.

**VIII. Human Relations and Fair Rent** – Ms. DiMeglio sent the representative home because no member of the public wished to speak to their Capital Budget request.

**IX. Library** – Ms. DiMeglio sent the representative home because no member of the public wished to speak to their Capital Budget request.

**X. Redevelopment Agency –**

Susan Wallerstein, Norwalk Arts Commission, spoke in support of the 50 Washington St. plaza project which did get eliminated by the Finance Director. She was happy that she was now working collaboratively with other departments such as Historical Society, Redevelopment Agency. She explained how she was pleased that they were now an official commission. She explained the docent led tours. She

explained that the condition of the plaza has been a bit embarrassing. She also explained how they were also handling maintenance of the areas where there is art. She was also concerned about moving from Phase 1 and Phase 2 because some money had been appropriated but that it needs to continue moving forward.

Albert \_\_\_\_\_, one of the owners of 1416 North Main St., the Avrick Building, spoke in support of the 50 Washington St. Plaza park which he said he also cleaned up. There was a discussion about opening a restaurant in this area to bring life to the area. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ said there is now a small coffee shop and another restaurant that is going to open in May.

Joseph \_\_\_\_\_, the co-owner of 1416 North Main St., said that the federal government had given \$49,000 to the city for the park 50 years ago. He said that the city should invest in the park because they had not in many years. He explained that their restaurant tenant would like to open a rooftop bar and are waiting for approvals. Many letters of support and petitions had been received about funding for the plaza. Ms. DiMeglio asked business owners in the area to step up and match the funding by the city. Mr. Davidson requested that information from the Redevelopment Agency before the February 20, 2018 Planning Commission Meeting.

There was a discussion about the cost of the plaza from last year's Capital Budget process. Last year the Redevelopment Agency had requested a total of \$500,000 but only \$300,000 was approved in the Capital Budget. Mr. Sheehan said that he had provided the budget to the Finance Department but he assumed that the Finance Department would have given it to them. Then there was a discussion about this year's request for \$800,000. Mr. Sheehan said that the whole project was under \$1 million. After extended discussion, Mr. Sheehan acknowledged that he had asked for \$500,000 for 2017-18 and no additional funds in the subsequent years. There was then a discussion about partnering with companies to help rebuild the park. Mr. Sheehan thought that it was not appropriate for the city to change the policy of donating to the parks if it did not apply to all the parks in the city. There was then a discussion about how to collaborate with the private sector and that it had to be done carefully. Mr. Mushak addressed the fact that he thought that the Capital Budget request for \$1 million was appropriate because the plaza would need new plumbing, drainage, electrical, etc. Mr. Sheehan said there was no ongoing maintenance of the plaza so he would privatize that. There was a discussion of the use of the plaza such as summer programming, outdoor dining, etc. There was then discussion of what could be done with \$300,000, if that was budgeted. He noted that if they were fully funded then they could start construction in the summer. He thought the project should be done in one Phase. It was listed under the Wall St. project because it was an urban core one. The commissioners spent time going over the Redevelopment Agency's budget requests, some of which had been cut by the Finance Department.

Christian Burns, who leases space on 1416 Main St. and is opening a Mexican restaurant, spoke in support of the revitalization of 50 Washington St. Plaza park. He

noted that there has been a lot of growth in the area. There was more activation of buildings in this area. The park is a necessary part of it. He did not think the progress would continue without the improvements to the park. He noted that the area may be losing start-ups especially if the park is not improved. There was a discussion about how they were working to put murals on the walls to help activate the park. There was then a discussion about major improvements to West Washington St. The city had received grants. If they were able to begin construction this year, they could work together with these improvements.

Judith Bacall spoke in support of the 50 Washington St. plaza because she thought that the city should invest in it because of all the growth going on in the rest of the city.

Ms. DiMeglio said the public hearing would be continued until Feb. 14 for written comments only.

**XI. Health Dept –** Ms. DiMeglio sent the representative home because no member of the public wished to speak to their Capital Budget request.

**XII. Planning & Zoning –**

Deborah Goldstein thanked Mr. Mushak for donating his landscaping services to the city. She also noted that Redevelopment Agency had access to other fundings that the city did not. She noted that there are other projects that the commissioners could look to for funding. She then reminded the commissioners that they should review the POCD codes that were used in the Capital Budget process. She hoped that they would change the process and asked them to look at an outcome based budget. She explained the process. She thought the current process was antiquated. She suggested that several areas that should be changed including paving, snow management, etc. She was requested to send in the statement that she made.

**IV. ACTION ON CAPITAL BUDGET**

**a) Action on Item III a**

Ms. DiMeglio made a motion to move this item back to the Planning Commission, which Mr. Mushak seconded, and the commissioners all voted in favor.

**V. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR**

Mr. Kleppin noted that there were several other items on the Planning Commission and suggested that they start at 6 p.m. One meeting would start at 6 p.m. and then the Capital Budget meeting would start at 7 p.m.

## **VI. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS**

Ms. King asked to learn more about public funding and private investment. Mr. Kleppin said that Mario Coppola could be asked to come before the commissioners. She said that she would like to find out the policy from the city for partnerships to fund the city's parks. There was a discussion about possible naming rights for city parks.

Mr. Davidson asked for an item to be on the April agenda for outcome based budgeting. There was also a discussion about the request for the Highpointe project to be extended. There was a discussion about the project at 230 East Avenue.

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Ferguson made a motion to adjourn.**

**Mr. Mushak seconded.**

**Fran DiMeglio; Nora King; David Davidson; Steven Ferguson; Tami Langalis; Mike Mushak; Brian Baxendale voted in favor.**

**No one opposed.**

**No one abstained.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero