

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMISSION
February 4, 2015**

PRESENT: Torgny Astrom, Chair; Frances DiMeglio; Joel Zaremby; Victor Cavallo; Steven Ferguson; William Dunne

STAFF: Mike Wrinn; Frank Strauch; Adam Carsen

OTHERS: Diane Lauricella; Chief McCarthy; Susan Sweitzer; Bryan Meek; Hal Alvord; Joe Madaffari; John Cross, AJ Albano, Bob Fosino; Josh Lander; Kristen Goldstein; Gene Horn; Edwin Wallo; Mike Mocciae

I. CALL TO ORDER

Torgny Astrom called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Wrinn called the roll.

III. PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Astrom explained the rules of the public hearing. Ms. DiMeglio read the legal memo into the record. Mr. Astrom opened the public hearing. Before members of the public spoke, he asked if there were any members of the audience who wished to speak with regard to a certain departmental budget. If no one did, the head of the department was allowed to leave the meeting since there would be no comments to rebut.

a) Capital Budget – 2015-16 to 2019-20

I. Fire Department

Diane Lauricella began the presentation. She asked about underground oil tanks and whether there are any other left on City property. She also asked whether those who could not get to the meeting could have a chance to submit written questions. Mr. Astrom said that they could send questions until Friday, Feb. 6 at 3 p.m. to Mike Wrinn.

Chief McCarthy said that the remaining tank is at 100 Fairfield Avenue. It had been kept because of the volatile oil market but now it was determined that it should be removed.

II. Historical Commission

Diane Lauricella began the presentation. Her concerns were whether the capital budget funds that were requested were really needed. Mr. Westmoreland gave further details to some of the items that his department was requesting funds for.

III. Redevelopment Agency

Diane Lauricella began the presentation. She noted that since there were hearings at the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection ("DEEP") regarding flood management, the Transit Oriented Development ("TOD") project should be placed on hold. She thought it would waste millions of tax payer dollars to construct these buildings in a flood plain.

Susan Sweitzer continued the presentation by answering Ms. Lauricella's concerns. She explained the funding requests.

IV. Board of Education

Bryan Meek began the presentation by requesting that the commissioners not cut the funding for much needed improvements to the Cranbury School.

No one from the Board of Education was in attendance to respond.

V. Department of Public Works (includes WPCA)

Diane Lauricella began the presentation and said that she would be submitting more detailed questions in writing by Friday. She was concerned about the vehicles that were being chosen because they were not that efficient. She said that she had mentioned this for years. She also suggested that instead of filtering out pollutants from water at the end of the pipes, go to the source of the pollution. She cares about the run-off because she wrote some of the regulations for the city. She also discussed the renovated kitchen that was to be in City Hall and believed that a corporation would want to donate the equipment. She thought that her ideas would save the city a lot of money. There was a discussion of the task force that Ms. Lauricella is on.

Mr. Alvord explained the vehicle replacement program as well as what happens in a snow storm with his employees. His staff has dwindled in the last 5 years. There are some vehicles that are over 20 years old and gas guzzlers. He also explained that there is a huge infrastructure to convert the equipment to ones that are more fuel efficient. It would be a huge cost factor for the city. He discussed the end of pipe solutions that had been Ms. Lauricella's concern. As for the kitchen in the community room, his department was asked to put it in the capital fund and they did.

VI. Recreation & Parks

Bryan Meek, 11 Cranbury Woods Road, spoke in support of the capital budget funding request for a playground at the Cranbury Elementary School. He also spoke in support of funding of the boat launch. He explained that it is a wonderful resource for the city.

Joe Madaffari, Athletic Director for Brien McMahon High School, spoke in support of replacing fields for baseball with turfs. He showed the commissioners pictures of the fields. He said the City could use a turf field with lights.

John Cross, baseball coach at Brien McMahon, spoke in support of the turf fields. He said that other towns have more fields than Norwalk. He discussed several reasons why turf is better than grass. He thought that other towns that had more fields would have a competitive advantage over Norwalk.

AJ Albano, head football coach at Brien McMahon, spoke in support of the turf fields. He thought it was not fair that kids in Norwalk do not have the same advantages as kids in neighboring towns when it comes to their fields.

Bob Fosino, president of the Norwalk Junior Soccer Association, spoke in support of the artificial turf fields. He explained how practices were cut short as well as the fact that the spring trainings started later than other towns because of the grass fields.

Josh Lander, vice president of Norwalk Babe Ruth League, spoke in support of the artificial turf fields. He believed that Norwalk's fields did not look as nice as other towns especially when they were hosting a tournament.

Kristen Goldstein, principal of Cranbury Elementary School, spoke in support of the capital funding for the playground to be installed at her school. She explained that the playground had been so old and dangerous that it was removed. Now the children have 4 swings to play on.

Diane Lauricella gave suggestions for other types of turf until the money could be found for the artificial turf. She also spoke of the environmental problems of grass fields vs. artificial turf. She was concerned about the health risks for the young people that would be using these fields. She then made a suggestion about using Taylor Farm or Bryant Park as soccer fields.

Gene Horn, member of the Norwalk Athletic Association, spoke in support of the artificial turf fields.

Edwin Wallo, the captain of the baseball team, Brien McMahon High School, Class of 2015, spoke in support of the artificial turf fields.

Mike Mocciae, the director of Recreation and Parks, said that he also relied on vehicles since their staff had been cut to 17 employees. He also explained that his department could not grow grass when the teams would like to start practicing in the middle of March. He agreed that they could try to use Taylor Farm but that they had been turned down in the past. If it could be used then there would be extra fields. He spoke about breaking down the launch ramp project. Some of the costs would be doubled because they would have to be done twice and it would take twice as long.

There was then a lengthy discussion about the artificial fields, the health concerns, using other fields including the ones at All Saints School and which fields were more important to fund.

IV. REPORT OF LAND USE COMMITTEE, Fran DiMeglio, Chair

a. Action on Item III. a.

- * MS. DIMEGLIO MADE A MOTION TO SEND ITEM III.A. BACK TO COMMITTEE.**
- ** MR. ZAREMBY SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

This item was sent back to committee.

V.COMMENTS OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

There were no comments from Mr. Wrinn.

VI. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

There were no comments from the commissioners.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

- * MR. MCLAUGHLIN MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN.**
- ** MR. ZAREMBY SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Diana Palmentiero