

**CITY OF NORWALK
LAND USE AND BUILDING MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 6, 2023**

ATTENDANCE: Barbara Smyth, Chair; James Frayer; Greg Burnett;
Nicol Ayers; Heather Dunn; Dajuan C. Wiggins Sr. (7:15)

STAFF: Alan Lo; JoAnn Acquarulo- Assistant

OTHERS: Darlene Young, Common Council (8:01); Nora Niedzielski-Eichner,
Common Council (8:26); Robert Stowers, Parks and Recreation;
Denise Brown, Oak Hills Park; Jim Giuliano & Dan Phillips, CSG Consultants

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Smyth called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no one from the public who wished to address the Committee at this time.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- **October 4, 2023**

**** MR. BURNETT MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 4, 2023 MEETING.
** THE MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 4, 2023 MEETING
PASSED WITH FOUR (4) IN FAVOR (SMYTH, FRAYER, BURNETT, AYERS) AND ONE (1)
ABSTENTION (DUNN)**

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Request for the naming of the tennis facilities at the Oak Hill Park in honor of Mr. Arthur Goldblatt, local attorney, long-time Norwalk resident and dedicated supporter of tennis in the community with special interest in promoting tennis and education with urban kids. Subject to Committee's review and support, scheduling of a Public Hearing is required per Ordinance.**

****MR. BURNETT MOVED TO APPROVE ITEM A.**

Ms. Smyth shared she is excited for this request and supports wholeheartedly. Mr. Goldblatt is well known in the community, the founder of grassroot tennis that has helped many kids in the community.

Mr. Lo wanted to add on a personal note that he met Mr. Goldblatt back in the 80's to help him put in the tennis courts in the Colonial Village and he also helped with the tennis center.

Ms. Brown spoke on the proposal. In 2019, Mr. Goldblatt began a small committee called tennis friends of oak hill which was a drop in tennis clinic on the weekend, welcoming those from all over. Initially began with 125 players with over 200 players now. The group meets on the weekends from May to November. Mr. Goldblatt also started a Labor Day tournament to enhance the program. Something that is favored about. Before Mr. Goldblatt passed away, they were raising funds for a patio at the tennis site, the goal was completed last summer in his honor. They would like to honor the area by calling it "Arthur's Court".

Mr. Burnett had a question about what exactly was going to be named, the patio area or the tennis facility. Ms. Brown responded it would just be the patio area that would be the dedication to him. Mr. Burnett mentioned the request states naming the tennis facilities at Oak Hills Park, not the patio area specifically.

Mr. Lo said he would change the language to the proposal once they issue the public hearing notice.

Ms. Ayers asked if the plaque was still going to be built as there was mention of it. Ms. Brown responded there will be a plaque installed in memory, which would be donated for memorials and other gatherings. Ms. Ayers asked if they would be working with the Park and Recreation's new guidelines for statues, monuments, and memorials. Ms. Stowers responded with yes, they can work together to make sure everything falls to standard.

**** THE MOTION WAS PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO MOVE THE ITEM TO THE PUBLIC MEETING IN JANUARY.**

Mr. Lo wanted to welcome Ms. Dunn and other attendees to the meeting. He wanted to share the three basic responsibilities of the Committee that go along with his office: municipal building operations and maintenance, building construction of municipal buildings including schools, and acquisition and City of Norwalk

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disposition of city properties. Mr. Lo introduced Ms. Acquarulo as his assistant and Jim Giuliano as the consultant on the contract.

Mr. Giuliano introduced himself as the president of the Construction Solutions Group; they were hired in 2017 for four projects. After the first contract was completed, they won the next contracting bid with Norwalk. He introduced Dan Phillips as the project manager who works closely with Mr. Lo and Ms. Acquarulo for the project of Cranbury Elementary School, Norwalk High School, and South Norwalk Elementary School.

Mr. Giuliano provided project overview for Cranbury School, Norwalk High School and South Norwalk School projects.

Mr. Lo added locally there is about another 6.5 million available for Norwalk High School. He mentioned this project will not impact the education but the remaining on-site outdoor athletic sports will need to be relocated off site. They will be meeting with the school building advisory committee tomorrow to go over the project updates. The project is currently out to bid with bid opening in early January then the approval process will begin. The construction should take a little more than five years, with the building construction taking approximately three and a half year and another year and a half to finish the demolition of the existing school building and start the construction of the athletic facilities.

Mr. Phillips shared a more recent update on the projects and that South Norwalk elementary is expected to go out to bid in late December. They should receive bids back for the construction manager to review during the month of January to prepare a GMP(guaranteed maximum price) amendment. Any construction activity would occur late February or beginning of March 2024. The new school is scheduled for occupancy in fall of 2025.

Ms. Ayers had a question about the design. She said compared to the most recent design for other projects this design looked lacking. She wanted to know if this is the final design and Mr. Phillips and Mr. Lo indicated that this is the final design, however, additional aesthetic enhancement can be incorporated. Mr. Phillips provided additional rendering for review.

Mr. Frayer shared that he understood what Ms. Ayers had said. He suggested sharing different views and interior design rendering as the initial drawings were more dramatic and in line with other schools.

Ms. Smyth added she wasn't on the South Norwalk school project committee but she acknowledges what Ms. Ayers is saying and moving forward they can continue the conversation offline.

Mr. Lo added when designing school buildings the architects incorporated elements from the site and community which have urban brick buildings. Curves don't function well, add a lot of cost, and construction is more difficult. The architects created this design to fit the semi-industrial style of South Norwalk. Ms. Ayers comments that the brick/industrial style is not appropriate for a school building. She recommended adding more greenery or different windows.

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Ms. Dunn added she agreed with Ms. Ayers, looking industrial for an elementary school is very different than looking industrial for a high school. As a teacher, they should bring some kind of joy to the building and not create a factory system setting.

Mr. Phillips also provided update on Norwalk High school/ P-Tech update. The project was advertised for bids on November 20th and bids are due in early January. The construction manager will review bids and prepare GMP that will be put forth in the month of February for approval.

B. School construction project update

- 1. Land Use and Building Management Committee, acting at the State recognized Norwalk School Building Committee, to review and approve construction documents for the new South Norwalk School project to be submitted to the State for approval to proceed with public bidding. (Common Council action is not required). Said action shall be as follows:**

“Authorize the Chairperson of the Norwalk Land Use and Building Management Committee, acting in their capacity as the City of Norwalk’s designated School Building Committee, to certify the Land Use & Building Management Committee’s approval of the final plans, specifications and cost estimate for the NEW South Norwalk Elementary School Project - State project: 103-0264 N.”

****MR. FRAYER MOVED TO APPROVE ITEM B.**

Mr. Phillips shared what they are asking of the Committee is to approve the final plans, specifications and cost estimate for the South Norwalk elementary school as this step is required to move forward with the approval by the State and from there allow the City to proceed with bidding.

Mr. Burnett asked how this motion would take into account the discussion raised by Ms. Ayers. He explained if they vote yes then Ms. Ayers' concerns will not be addressed. Mr. Lo responded that major changes to the design will have significant cost and schedule impact while aesthetic enhancements can be incorporated. Mr. Phillips provided additional building renderings.

Ms. Ayers added she appreciates the advice from the consultants. She believes the renderings do not look like a school, more like a downtown building. She is not in support of sending the plans to the State but she is in support of the project.

Mr. Frayer mentioned he wasn't at all the meetings until the beginning of July but he recalls everyone involved at the meetings to be in favor or impressed by the designs. He asked Mr. Lo what would be the cost if they don't submit the drawing for approval and what would be the cost to redesign.

Ms. Smyth acknowledged Ms. Young and asked her to weigh in on the conversation.

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Ms. Young asked what the concerns were. Ms. Ayers responded that personally the building looked very warehouse-ish, it did not promote a place of education. The school is going to be an anchor of the neighborhood.

Mr. Wiggins asked what the timeline would be if they pushed the project back.

Ms. Dunn added for clarification that what they are sending to the State is the design. Is it possible to change the color pallet in the front?

Mr. Lo responded by changing the design for example with metal, then it would take it back a year. Color won't be an issue. The state is looking at the design and shape of the building.

Ms. Young mentioned they changed color and have softened the trim because it looked more industrial. Maybe they add more color but holding this project up wouldn't be in the best interest of the City or community.

Ms. Smyth thanked Ms. Young for her input.

Ms. Ayers added in for clarification she didn't ask for a redesign, she asked if they could take the existing design and soften it up. She was asking for an improvement of the design. She asked if it is possible for them to make cosmetic changes as they are sending in the designs for State approval tomorrow then she would vote in favor.

Mr. Wiggins asked cosmetic changes as in color? Ms. Smyth responded yes.

Mr. Burnett asked do the proposed alterations inquire additional cost to the budget or would they be absorbed in the current budget. Mr. Giuliano replied it depends on how much the building will be enhanced but he believes there's a possibility for it to get absorbed in the current budget.

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- 2. Review and recommend request to apply for State School HVAC grants for Brien McMahon High School, Brookside School, Marvin School, Silvermine School, Naramake School and Rowayton School and refer recommendation to the common council for approval:**
 - “a. Resolved that the Norwalk Common Council authorizes the Norwalk Board of Education to apply to the Commissioner of Administrative Services and to accept, or reject a grant for the HVAC IAQ Grant at the Brien McMahon High School.**

RESOLVED that the Land Use and Building Management Committee of Norwalk Common Council is hereby established as the building committee about the HVAC IAQ Grant at the Brien McMahon High School.

RESOLVED that the Norwalk Common Council authorizes, at least the preparation of the schematic drawings and outline specifications for the HVAC IAQ Grant at the Brien McMahon High School.

b. **RESOLVED** that the Norwalk Common Council authorizes the Norwalk Board of Education to apply to the Commissioner of Administrative Services and to accept or reject a grant for the HVAC IAQ Grant at the Brookside Elementary school.

RESOLVED that the Land Use and Building Management Committee of Norwalk Common Council is hereby established as the building committee about the HVAC IAQ Grant at the Brookside Elementary School.

RESOLVED that the Norwalk Common Council authorizes at least the preparation of the schematic drawings and outline specifications for the HVAC IAQ Grant at the Brookside Elementary School.

c. **RESOLVED** that the Norwalk Common Council authorizes the Norwalk board of education to apply to the Commissioner of Administrative Services and to accept or reject a grant for the HVAC IAQ Grant at the Marvin Elementary School.

RESOLVED that the Land Use and Building Management Committee of Norwalk Common Council is hereby established as the building committee about the HVAC IAQ Grant at the Marvin Elementary School.

RESOLVED that the Norwalk Common Council authorizes at least the preparation of the schematic drawings and outline specifications for the HVAC IAQ Grant at the Marvin Elementary School.

d. **RESOLVED** that the Norwalk Common Council authorizes the Norwalk board of education to apply to the Commissioner of Administrative Services and to accept or reject a grant for the HVAC IAQ Grant at the Silvermine Elementary School.

RESOLVED that the Land Use and Building Management Committee of Norwalk Common Council is hereby established as the building committee about the HVAC IAQ Grant at the Silvermine Elementary School.

RESOLVED that the Norwalk Common Council authorizes at least the preparation of the schematic drawings and outline specifications for the HVAC IAQ Grant at the Silvermine Elementary School.

e. RESOLVED that the Norwalk Common Council authorizes the Norwalk board of education to apply to the Commissioner of Administrative Services and to accept or reject a grant for the HVAC IAQ Grant at the Naramake Elementary School.

RESOLVED that the Land Use and Building Management Committee of Norwalk Common Council is hereby established as the building committee about the HVAC IAQ Grant at the Naramake Elementary School.

RESOLVED that the Norwalk Common Council authorizes at least the preparation of the schematic drawings and outline specifications for the HVAC IAQ Grant at the Naramake Elementary School.

f. RESOLVED that the Norwalk Common Council authorizes the Norwalk board of education to apply to the Commissioner of Administrative Services and to accept or reject a grant for the HVAC IAQ Grant at the Rowayton Elementary School.

RESOLVED that the Land Use and Building Management Committee of Norwalk Common Council is hereby established as the building committee about the HVAC IAQ Grant at the Rowayton Elementary School.

RESOLVED that the Norwalk Common Council authorizes at least the preparation of the schematic drawings and outline specifications for the HVAC IAQ Grant at the Rowayton Elementary School.”

****MR. FRAYER MOVED TO APPROVE ITEM 2.**

Ms. Smyth asked Mr. Lo to speak as the State doesn't usually reimburse for HVAC projects. This was a special state legislative action that allowed towns to apply at the current 60% Norwalk reimbursement rate. These projects are upcoming requests from Norwalk Public Schools and will need to be done regardless whether the City receives reimbursements.

Mr. Lo mentioned that the State does not reimburse for replacing or maintenance of existing equipment. The grant came out last year. The grant application was very complex, not many applications were approved so they made it available again for this year. The grant application process started in September but since the City knew of the grant coming back, the City hired a mechanical consultant for design and an estimator for cost estimates back in May. The projects were submitted to Planning and Zoning Commission for special appropriation because the State requires the City's allocation of its shares of 40% on each project. Proof of funds must be shown before submitting an application to the State. The State City of Norwalk

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will probably not fund all 6 projects, whatever the State doesn't approve, he suggests deleting the appropriation and adding said projects back onto future capital budget requests.

Ms. Smyth added this will go to a special meeting of the Financial Committee tomorrow.

Mr. Burnett responded that is correct.

Mr. Frayer said part of the resolution states the BOE can accept or reject any grant money, would there be any reason for them to reject the money? Mr. Lo responded that if State approves the application, there really is no reason that the City/BOE would reject the approval. However, the actions are standard language by the State as required action, it cannot be changed.

****THE MOTION WAS PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

C. Review actions required for the deck Grant for the proposed Norwalk Community Recreation Center at 98 South Main Street And refer the following Resolution to the Common Council for action:

“WHEREAS, the State of Connecticut through the Department of Economic and Community Development is authorized to extend financial assistance to and the City of Norwalk for the development of the proposed Norwalk Community Recreation Center at 98 South Main Street: and

WHEREAS, it is desirable and in the public interest that interest that the City of Norwalk makes an application to the State for \$1,200,000 in order to undertake the Norwalk Community Recreation Center development project.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Common Council of the City of Norwalk:

- 1. That it is cognizant of the condition and prerequisites for the State financial assistance imposed by the State of Connecticut, Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD); and**
- 2. That the filing of an application for the State Financial assistance by the City of Norwalk in an amount not to exceed \$1,200,000.00 is approved; and**
- 3. That Harry W. Rilling, Mayor, City of Norwalk is authorized to execute and file such application with the Connecticut Department of Economic (DECD), to provide such additional information, to execute such other documents as may be required, to execute an Assistance Agreement is offered, to execute any amendments, decision, and revisions thereto, and at act as the authorized representative of the City of Norwalk, including all documents relating to the implementation of the project.”**

****MR. BURNETT MOVED TO APPROVE ITEM C.**

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Mr. Lo said there was more information in the packet. It is a project that has been going on for a while. The City acquired the remaining shares of the property a number of years ago. They would like the building to serve as a community center before COVID. As they were working with the YMCA to create the proposal for approval, during COVID it was mutually agreed to end the relationship. Since nine months ago the City has been developing plans for a recreational community center for the building. They have obtained designs and estimates done pro bono. The project cost was projected to be 10.5 million to renovate and add a gym space. They currently have 9.5 million funding package which consists of 1.2 million from the City, 1.2 from the State, and less than 2 million (possibly 1.75 million) coming from HUD and about 5.5 million from ARPA funds. He mentioned the problem with the HUD and state money is that the money was being allocated to the YMCA. With the State money they just got approval from the state Bonding Commission that the City would be the direct recipient of the money which would require City approval tonight. They are currently in the middle of interviewing architects. The construction documents should be ready by August/September 2024 then they will go out to bid. They must show commitment of the APRA funding before the end of December.

Mr. Wiggins asked is the ten million is what is needed, and seven million is what was raised. Mr. Lo explained the estimate they got was \$10.5 million. Additionally, they must remediate the soil which would be around seven hundred thousand as well as the restorations to the site around the new gym, modification of existing storm, drainage and modification of the parking lot. The revised cost estimates is approximately \$12 million. They currently have \$9.5 million and need about \$2.5 million additional funds. He mentioned Mr. Stowers will be requesting money from the Park and Recreation department budget.

Mr. Stowers added they submitted the capital budget for the department with \$2.5 million for the community recreation center. The community uses will be different from what the YMCA had in mind, they wanted multi organizations to become tenants of the building. This location will be a community recreational center for families and children to have recreation. From exercising, enrichment programs, after-school activities, STEM, E-sport, and music programs. Hours will be for families, toddlers, seniors, and after school. They would like to work with Human Services to host at risk prevention programs to keep people off the streets. There will be an integration with the YMCA program since they have 2 million dollars awarded to them so they will host a STEM program and E-sport program.

Mr. Wiggins mentioned one of his worries with the building coming into the community, how intentional are they going to be with hiring Norwalk residents. How will they ensure the community has a say.

Mr. Stowers responded there will be an advisory council from that area., The intent is to hire from the community. With the advisory council they will work with management of the community center. The advisory council will share their input of recommendations regarding programs. The programs will run Monday to Saturday, and Sunday will be dedicated to celebrations like birthdays, weddings, etc. Mr. Wiggins asked will Sundays be free and Mr. Stowers replied no, they will be using a rate scale, meetings for non-profits will be possibly free since they don't have a place to meet.

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Mr. Burnett asked if any money was going to parking. Mr. Lo said no, they don't have any more land than what they have now. There have been discussions on reaching out to the church to use their parking.

Mr. Wiggins asked for a time frame of completion for this project. Mr. Lo responded in the Spring they will be designing and complete the designs by August-September of next year, to start bidding contracts then go for the approval process and secure the contracts before the end of the year. Construction is 15 months, putting the completion date to spring 2026.

Mr. Stowers added they will need to hire a center manager, the position is included in the current budget request. One year before opening they will hire this person to develop policies, procedures, training, hiring, ordering equipment, and furniture. This person will go through the Recreations and Park Committee, taking referrals and talking to the community and council to find someone.

Mr. Frayer added when he thinks of this project, it seems like a money pit. He initially would go against it but with Mr. Stowers on this proposal, he has faith in the project and would vote in favor. Ms. Smyth added with the YMCA there was a lot of hope which did not materialized. Thanked Mr. Stowers with his vision and plans, the project, once again is moving forward.

Ms. Wiggins responded he would definitely help and can get community members involved.

****THE MOTION WAS PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

D. Review Construction Management (CM) proposal for the Cranbury Park/ Gallagher Improvement Project and refer the following to the Common Council for approval:

“Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to execute an agreement with Downey Construction Company, LLC as the Construction Manager (CM) for the Cranbury Park/Gallaher Mansion Improvement Project. Terms of the agreement shall include:

- **Pre construction Services - \$49,300**
- **CM Fixed Fees- 2.5%**
- **CM Contingency - 5% (balance revert to the City at project completion)**
- **General Condition fee- \$581,539 (actual amount to be determined at the time of GMP)**

Subsequent to trade contractor's bidding, final GMP amendment will be submitted to the Common Council for approval. Funds for this agreement are available from the State DECD grant. Acct #09236030 5782 C0831”

****MR. FRAYER MOVED ITEM D.**

****THE MOTION WAS PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

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E. Review bid summary for the Animal Control Facilities Improvement Projects and refer recommendation to the Common Council for action:

“a. Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to execute an agreement with VAD Construction Corp, for the Animal Control Facilities Improvement Project for a total not to exceed \$24,889.25. Funds are available from account #430000 5765

b. Authorize the Office of Building Management to issue change orders on the contract for a total not to exceed \$24,889,25. Funds are available from account #430000 5765”

****MR. FRAYER MOVED ITEM E.**

Mr. Lo shared the funding was a donation from an individual who passed away. The donation is around three hundred thousand dollars to the city police department. The animal control center is under a division of the Police Department. The Police Department worked together with Mr. Lo’s team created a list of items they needed, they have drawings prepared, advertised, and went out for bid.

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

MISCELLANEOUS/DISCUSSION ITEMS

There was no discussion to be addressed at the time.

ADJOURNMENT

****MR. BURNETT MOTIONED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE VOTE PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Vianca Rivera,

Telesco Secretarial Services