CITY OF NORWALK
REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 14, 2020

ATTENDANCE: Felix R. Serrano, Chairman, Commissioners Lisa Cooper and John Igneri.

AGENCY COUNSEL: Marc J. Grenier, Esq.

STAFF: Brian Bidolli, Executive Director, Tami Strauss, Deputy Director; John Slovak, Comptroller; Lori Guttman, Director of Community Development Planning.

CALL TO ORDER
Chairman Serrano called the Regular Meeting of the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency of January 14, 2020 to order at 5:30 PM.

ROLL CALL
Chairman Serrano noted that a quorum was present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
There was no one present from the public who wished to comment.

I-A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
**** MS. COOPER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 10, 2019 REGULAR MEETING.**
**** MR. IGNERI SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

I-B. FINANCE
1. Approve NRA Fund 100 Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for Year-To-Date November 30, 2019.

Mr. Slovak reported on the NRA Fund 100 Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for Year-To-Date November 30, 2019 as follows:
- Operating Fund 100 had revenues of $592,065 versus budgeted revenues of $619,903 with an unfavorable variance of $27,838.
- Operating Fund 100 had total expenditures of $621,743 versus budgeted total expenditures of $625,719 resulting in a $3,977 favorable expenditure variance.
- There is an actual operating deficit of $29,678 versus a budgeted operating deficit of $5,816 resulting in a $23,862 unfavorable net operating, which is mostly due to legal fees for the Wall Street litigation.

**** MS. COOPER MOVED TO APPROVE THE NRA FUND 100 STATEMENT OF REVENUES AND EXPENDTURES FOR YEAR-TO-DATE NOVEMBER 30, 2019.**
**** MR. IGNERI SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. Budget Amendment:
   a. Approve budget amendment for Consultants in the amount of $15,000.
   b. Approve the Executive Director to execute a contract with Operations, Inc. for an amount not to exceed $15,000 over a 12-month period.

Mr. Bidolli said this is a request to approve a budget amendment to add $15,000 to our consultant budget and to authorize the Executive Director to execute a contract with Operations, Inc. in an amount not to exceed $15,000 to review the Agency's internal HR practices, personnel and operations policies to standardize them and make any recommended changes for Agency consideration. The Agency received multiple quotes and staff is recommending entering into an agreement with Operations, Inc. based on their local presence and the services they provide. Ms. Strauss and I met with a representative from Operations, Inc last week, and determined it really is an hourly basis contract that we need. The initial task would be to look at the Agency personnel policy, which encompasses personnel, operations and benefits policies all in one document. Operations, Inc. recommended to update the same and further to provide ongoing support should on an as needed basis.

Chairman Serrano said the heavy lift and the dollars would be front ended because of what we need to do right now, but going forward it would be on an as needed basis.

Mr. Bidolli said the $15,000 is the initial lump sum, which he is going to try to minimize as much as possible by doing internal viewing and flagging things and as much outsource as needed.

Ms. Cooper asked if this will be better than hiring an HR firm on a regular basis? Mr. Bidolli said the Agency's volume is small, so the Agency would benefit the most with this type of out sourcing.

Ms. Strauss said it would cost a lot more to hire somebody, and what's nice about Operations, Inc. is that they have people who specialize in benefits and policy and people who do different specialties, so you are getting a whole team of experts who each have their specialty areas. Mr. Bidolli noted that it will be more cost effective and we will get better quality.

****	MR. IGNERI MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUDGET AMENDMENT FOR CONSULTANTS IN THE AMOUNT OF $15,000, AND TO APPROVE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH OPERATIONS, INC. FOR AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED $15,000 OVER A 12-MONTH PERIOD.**
****	MS. COOPER SECONDED.**
****	THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Chairman Serrano noted that that will be coming from the operating fund, Fund 100.

II. A. LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE SERVICES
Mr. Bidolli said the Agency currently maintains a three-year agreement with Meticulous Landscaping to provide landscaping services throughout the urban corridor. The last time this agreement was approved, the Commissioners asked that each year staff talk about the

apportionment and the scope of the services to be provided. Staff met with Meticulous last week, and nothing is going to change in terms of the cost. It is going to be the same dollar amount, $111,250. However, there are other indirect expenses that are required to implement this budget, and staff wanted to make sure that the Agency has coverage and that the Commissioners are aware of those costs.

Ms. Strauss said that the Agency does not get charged for water, so it's really the cost for the police and buying the plants from Western Growers to put in the islands. Meticulous waters them, and oftentimes staff will ask them to clean up some street furniture or do some extra work just to improve the overall look and leverage the investment that we're making in the landscape. Last year those extra costs totaled about $50,000, so this year staff is asking that the Agency encumber $65,000 for the additional expenses that come with the landscaping contract, which was approved in 2019.

Chairman Serrano said while the Commissioners approved the contract for a three year period, the Commissioners did want it to come back on an annual basis to have these type of discussions. Western Growers is fantastic, and Chairman Serrano noted that the Agency does not want to diminish the quality of their product because that's the investment that Agency is making in the urban corridor, but wonders if the landscaper would be able to do this in a more cost effective way. Ms. Strauss said Western Growers was the most cost effective and least expensive provider of the plants.

Mr. Bidolli said that Staff can definitely follow up with Western Growers. When staff talked to Joe Tamburro at Meticulous, he mentioned other vendors versus Western Growers, but he was more favorable to Western Growers quality and not having to buy replantings, which is important because it could drag out the cost. Mr. Tamburro is into high quality and very into his work. He clearly knows what he's talking about, and so he has confidence in that.

Chairman Serrano said that's the Agency we get tremendous kudos during the summer and during the holidays and everything looks great, and he doesn't want to diminish that.

Mr. Igneri said it seems like a lot of money, and he is just wondering if there could be some savings.

Ms. Strauss said if you look at the scope of work that is attached to her memo, you'll see there are about 20 different properties that are in this report which range from Wall Street and West Avenue all the way down to South Norwalk, and there are the islands, the exit ramps, Freese Park, the Clocktower Island, the Art Park and turning on and off the irrigation systems for the Clocktower and the islands. This is the fifth year we had Meticulous and this is the same price that we paid him last year, so he didn't increase his price.

Attorney Grenier said plus Joe Tamburro is a member of the Exchange Club, which is always giving back to the community. When the Agency started the project it was for the properties located in the urban core, which is what the Redevelopment Agency covers and that's what the appendix shows. The Scope of work is not outside the core area that the Agency serves, and that was important for the Commission at the time the agreement was approved .

Chairman Serrano said, again, this will come back next year because it's on an annual basis.

**** MS. COOPER MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO APPROVE ENCUMBERING $65,000 FOR ANCILLARY COSTS FOR THE URBAN CORE LANDSCAPING PROGRAM FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2020.**
**** MR. IGNERI SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

B. 55/77 NORTH WATER STREET PROPOSED CHANGES IN USE/DESIGN

1. Find that proposed changes to the first floor uses at 55 North Water Street are consistent with the Reed Putnam Urban Renewal Plan.
2. Find that proposed changes to the first floor uses at 77 North Water Street will substantially change the Urban Renewal Plan and will require a modification to the Plan in accordance with State Statute.

Ms. Strauss said last month Redniss and Mead presented to the Commissioners the proposed change in use for the ground floor of 55 and 77 North Water Street in the Reed Putnam Urban Renewal Plan area. The Commissioners found the proposed change for 55 North Water Street to be consistent with the Urban Renewal Plan. However, for 77 North Water Street, Redniss and Mead proposed changing 100% office on the ground floor to 100% residential use, and that was determined by the Commissioners not to be consistent with the Urban Renewal Plan and that the requested change would require a modification to the plan in accordance with state statute. Rather than go through a substantial amendment to the plan, Redniss and Mead met with staff and have now come back with a revised plan for 77 North Water Street which brings the mix to 25% commercial and 75% residential. Staff is recommending that the Commissioners find the proposed changes to be consistent with the Reed Putnam Urban Renewal Plan.

Ms. Strauss said the northern half of the building is elevated off the side, and people living there are going to have a really nice terrace and be able to sit outside and watch people go by, so they will see more activity than they would if there were commercial use elevated off the street, so this is consistent with a mixed use. Also, this project will have to come back to the Agency, as the Agency has design review, since 77 North Water is in the Urban Renewal Plan Area.

Chairman Serrano said what is being proposed is consistent with the mixed use component, not what it is going to look like. That's why we have the design review process.

**** MR. IGNERI MOVED TO FIND THAT PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE FIRST FLOOR USES AT 77 NORTH WATER STREET ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE REED PUTNAM URBAN RENEWAL PLAN.**
**** MS. COOPER SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

III. <u>EXECUTIVE SESSION</u>

A. Discussion and update on litigation titled City of Norwalk and City of Norwalk Redevelopment Agency vs. ILSR Owners, LLC and Wall Street Opportunity

Fund LLC, which is currently pending in the Stamford-Norwalk Judicial District at Stamford.

B. Discussion related to Agency personnel matters.

** **MR. IGNERI MOVED TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 5:54 PM TO (A) DISCUSS AND UPDATE THE LITIGATION TITLED CITY OF NORWALK AND CITY OF NORWALK REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY VS. ILSR OWNERS, LLC AND WALL STREET OPPORTUNITY FUND LLC, WHICH IS CURRENTLY PENDING IN THE STAMFORD-NORWALK JUDICIAL DISTRICT AT STAMFORD, AND (B) DISCUSS RELATED PERSONNEL MATTERS.**
** **MS. COOPER SECONDED.**
** **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Whereupon the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency meeting went into Executive Session at 5:55 P.M. and came out of Executive Session at 6:54 P.M. No action was taken on items III. A and B.

IV. Agency Organizational Structure

a. Discussion of Proposed Structure
b. Possible action on IV.a

Mr. Bidolli provided a general overview on the proposed agency organizational structure as developed through his internal review of current projects and coordination with agency staff. He described how he believed that the new agency organizational chart would support new program development and the preparation of a strategic plan for Commissioners to review later in the year. He described numerous redundancies in staff assignment, and his approach to streamline agency operations to optimize both project and financial management for the Agency. Mr. Bidolli indicated the organizational chart if approved by the Commissioners would be effective immediately.

** **MR. IGNERI MOVED TO APPROVE THE NORWALK REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY ORGANIZATIONAL CHART AS PRESENTED BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.**
** **MS. COOPER SECONDED.**
** **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

V. Possible action related to III.b.

This item was tabled as no action was required.

III. **NEW BUSINESS**
(None.)

IV. **OLD BUSINESS**

(None.)

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Mr. Igneri and second of Ms. Cooper the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency regular meeting of January 14, 2020 was adjourned at 7:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Pacchiana