

**NORTH WALKE HOUSING
CORPORATION
REGULAR MEETING
JULY 12, 2016**

ATTENDANCE: Felix R. Serrano, Chairman; Commissioners Lori Torrano,
Lisa Cooper, and LaTanya Langley

AGENCY COUNSEL: Marc Grenier., Esq.

STAFF: Timothy T. Sheehan, Executive Director; Tami Strauss, Director
of Community Development Planning,

CALL TO ORDER

The Meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M by Chairman Serrano.

ROLL CALL

Chairman Serrano noted that a quorum was present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No one came forward to speak.

I. NORWALK TAX SALE / PROPERTY ACQUISITION (EXECUTIVE
SESSION)

- a. Authorize up to \$500,000, for the acquisition of properties in the upcoming
Norwalk tax sale.

**** MS. TORRANO MOVED TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS
THE POTENTIAL PURCHASE OF REAL PROPERTY.**

**** MS. COOPER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

(Whereupon the North Walke Housing Corporation meeting went into Executive
Session at 6:31 P.M. and came out of Executive Session at 7:01 P.M., after which
the following action was taken.)

**** MS. TORRANO MOVED TO APPROVE A BUDGET OF UP TO \$665,000,
INCLUDING DEPOSITS, FOR CERTAIN PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS AT
THE UPCOMING CITY OF NORWALK TAX SALE, WITH THE BID PRICE
PER PROPERTY NOT TO EXCEED 60% OF THE ASSESSED VALUE OF
EACH PROPERTY.**

**** MS. COOPER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further Old or New Business, upon motion of Ms. Torrano the North Walke Housing Corporation meeting was adjourned at 7:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Pacchiana

**CITY OF NORWALK
REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
REGULAR MEETING
JULY 12, 2016**

ATTENDANCE: Felix R. Serrano, Chairman; Commissioners Lori Torrano, Lisa Cooper, and LaTanya Langley

AGENCY COUNSEL: Marc Grenier, Esq.

STAFF: Timothy T. Sheehan, Executive Director; John Slovák, Comptroller, Susan Sweitzer, Senior Project Manager, Tami Strauss, Director of Community Development Planning, Elizabeth Stocker, Director of Economic Development

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Serrano called the meeting to order at 5:40 P.M.

ROLL CALL

Chairman Serrano noted that a quorum was present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Sue Wallerstein said, first, she wanted to give the Commissioners an update on their \$2,000 investment to help fund the development of the *Norwalk Cultural Tourism Mobile App*. The Arts Commission did an inventory of the contemporary public art collection in Norwalk and is in the process of developing a mobile app, which is an audio guide to over 50 assets in Norwalk. You will be able to download the app onto your SmartPhone, and then click, for example, on the Norwalk Motor Inn and have Maria Handrinos tell you about the restoration of the historic house, or click on The Green and hear Frank Zullo narrate what's going on there, and hear David Westmoreland at Mill Hill, etc. With the help of Elizabeth Stocker, they produced a marketing flyer which will be put in hotels and other locations around town, and they have also engaged students from 20 West Norwalk Housing Authority to give tours and help people download the app.

Ms. Wallerstein said with regard to the 50 Washington Street Plaza agenda item, the Arts Commission is starting to use 50 Washington Street as a launch pad for public art walking tours and is very glad that the Redevelopment Agency is investing in that. They would like to partner with the Agency to make sure that appropriate attention is given to the sculptures as well as the aesthetics of the plaza. There are two pieces of sculpture at 50 Washington Street. One is a primo piece by Reubin Nakian called Juno that the city purchased back in the 80s and the other is a piece by Carol Eisner, a Weston and New York City sculptor. The Arts Commission is also interested in the little plot of land across the street known as Bill Peters Art Park, and when Eric Rains begins his work, hopefully they will have a chance to look at the drawings for the plaza and the pocket park and maybe submit concept proposals as well. Perhaps they could do a call for artists in the Greater Norwalk area, or even nationally or internationally.

In response to a question by Ms. Langley, Ms. Wallerstein said the Arts Commission is an advisory commission to the Mayor and is interested in contemporary art, whereas David Westmoreland and the Historical Commission are under Charter and ordinance and have

specific jurisdiction and stewardship over the City's historical assets. The Arts Commission along with a half a dozen people representing various constituencies in Norwalk got together and identified 60 points of interest, all of which are city owned or managed cultural assets. None of them include commercial enterprises, with the exception of The Norwalk Motor Inn, as they felt the house there was historical and should be part of cultural tourism. As to the underground railroad that is underneath the gazebo, they would defer to the Historical Commission as they have ownership over identifying which historical assets should be included. The nice thing about the app is that it can be added to and changed, but right now it is contemporary art for the most part.

Ms. Torrano asked, besides the marketing cards, what else are they doing to promote the app so it will get downloaded. Ms. Wallerstein said they have a project manager, and, for example, they handed out the cards at the Norwalk Arts Festival and at the walking tour for CT Open House Day. They plan to roll it out gradually at events over the course of the summer.

Liz Stocker said she has been working with Susan also on promoting the app, and once it is fully built they will do a lot of promotion and marketing on social media, etc. In April when they had the familiarization tour of attractions for all of the hotels in the city, they talked about the different points, so it is actually part of the Economic Development Action Plan that they adopted last year.

Chairman Serrano said it is good to know that the Arts Commission is interested in 50 Washington Street as well, and it is important to have that factored in with the work they will be doing there. Ms. Wallerstein noted that one of the two sculptures is on loan to the City, and Carol Eisner has said that she will come and power wash it and seal it at her own cost.

Diane Lauricella said, with regard to agenda item III-A, the South Norwalk TOD Plan, she very much encourages the Agency to consider expanding the TOD southerly beyond Lexington Avenue as there has been a clash of incompatible uses there where some people's properties have two zones on them. They wish it had happened years ago, but at the time there was not a huge spotlight shining on AMEC Carting and some of the other industries, but now they are all working together as a team of citizens from all across the city who want to have compatible uses and want to make sure that the businesses are complying with the law. As she had asked at one of the TOD public meetings, she would like the Agency to consider reviving the Brownfields Task Force and help prioritize which sites have contamination on them and which sites have the benefit of redevelopment. She would like to see whether any of those sites which have been cleaned up should be removed from the list and other sites brought in, because there are some federal monies available. Just today EPA announced several northeastern states and towns that have these Brownfield funds, and she would like to see Norwalk get them so they can redevelop and bring into taxable use again some of their properties. She looks forward to working on the TOD, as she thinks it is a great document.

Chairman Serrano said they are just updating the Commissioners on what the Planning Committee had proposed at its meeting last week, and there will definitely be an opportunity for the public to further address the Commissioners. Mr. Sheehan noted that they are going to have to do another public hearing on the document.

There being no one else who wished to speak, the Public Participation portion of the meeting was closed.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. June 14, 2016 Regular Meeting

- ** MS. COOPER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 14, 2016 REGULAR MEETING OF THE NORWALK REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY.**
- ** MS. LANGLEY SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED. (Ms. Torrano abstained.)**

II. ADMINISTRATION

A. Election of Redevelopment Agency Officers

- ** MS. COOPER MOVED THAT THE CURRENT SLATE OF OFFICERS REMAIN THE SAME AS THEY ARE CURRENTLY, WHICH IS FELIX SERRANO, CHAIRMAN; LORI TORRANO, VICE CHAIRMAN; AND LATANYA LANGLEY, SECRETARY/TREASURER.**
- ** MS. LANGLEY SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

B. Regional Plan Association Technical Services

Mr. Sheehan said as the Agency is doing substantially more planning work in the urban core, both staff and he felt it would be helpful to have some outside third party assistance, and the thought was to bring in the Regional Plan Association to assist with technical services with those plans. They have been talking about the potential of having the CT director of the RPA and a planning person associated with the CT office work with the Agency on a fairly regular basis, somewhere around 40 hours a month. The RPA provides planning expertise within the tristate area, and is the oldest planning association in the country. They are a wealth of data that would make it much easier for the Agency to begin to understand market trends and how their plans are responding to those. It would be similar to the technical assistance that Kevin Gremse and the National Development Council provided the Agency, and he thinks the Agency would benefit from the assistance as they are expanding their role in advancing planning within the corridor.

In response to a question by Ms. Torrano, Mr. Sheehan said they anticipate the cost would be in the area of \$80,000 to \$100,000. RPA has experts in various fields, so they are really getting the biggest bang for the dollar by operating in this way. He doesn't think that there is anybody that can question the experience and qualifications that RPA brings to the table, and they come to it as a non-profit.

Chairman Serrano noted that they would be bringing in a consultant and a whole backed organization rather than just one person, and it would allow them to adjust to market conditions. He wanted to bring this item forward for information only at this point. They will have something more formalized for next month and they will talk more about it then.

II. FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

A. NRA Operating Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for Year-to-Date May 31, 2016.

Mr. Slovak reported on the financial statement as follows:

- Operating Fund 100 had actual revenues of \$1,397,026 versus budgeted revenues of \$1,435,808 for a \$38,783 revenue deficit.
- Actual operating expenditures are \$1,335,768 versus a budget of \$1,429,208 resulting in a \$93,440 favorable expenditure variance.
- There is an actual operating surplus of \$61,257 versus a budgeted operating surplus of \$6,600 resulting in a \$54,657 favorable net operating variance.

**** MS. TORRANO MOVED TO APPROVE THE FINANCE REPORT AS PRESENTED.**

**** MS. LANGLEY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

III. BUSINESS

A. SOUTH NORWALK TOD PLAN

1. Expansion of the plan area to include Lexington Avenue corridor

Mr. Sheehan said at its meeting last week the Planning Committee approved the advancement of the TOD Plan to the Common Council but in so doing they increased the geography of the plan area, so the Agency is making modifications to the TOD Plan in response to the enlarged geography. Originally the expansion area had been included in the Plan, but later it was thought that that area would benefit more as a Village District, but then the neighbors pointed out that there would be a greater level of protection with the TOD rather than the historic Village District. Whether it is in a redevelopment plan or there is a modification in zoning, the uses that are there now will be allowed to stay there. They will be grandfathered, but they will not be able to expand the footprint, nor will they be able to have a change of use and then come back to an industrial use.

In terms of the expansion of the geography, they would be looking at specific zoning for this neighborhood and their review of existing conditions will be specific to this neighborhood and brought into the TOD Plan. The proposed zoning would reduce the height of the buildings and also reduce the density, which would help keep the neighborhood in character, but they wanted to bring this forward so that the Commissioners understood that there was a modification. The next step in the process is it will go back to the Planning Commission for review to determine consistency with the City's Master Plan of Conservation and Development, and then the Common Council will take action. Once the Common Council takes action the Agency will be filing the zoning modifications to support the plan with the Zoning Commission. That will take a process in and of itself for review and public comment, and then once the requisite zoning is in place, the entire document will come back to the Redevelopment Agency for its approval and finalization, and as part of that they will have to do their own public hearing on it. In terms of timing, the Commissioners probably won't be seeing the plan back at the Redevelopment Agency in terms of taking finalized action until sometime in the fall.

Chairman Serrano said this was part of the overall review that was done originally, and now because of the concerns that have been raised in the community, they are bringing this piece back in. As the plan is expired and they don't have a governing document for this area, there is a concern that the process continues to move forward so that they can get a governing plan in place.

A. 50 WASHINGTON STREET PLAZA

1. Approve proposal from Eric Rains Landscape Architecture, LLC for 50 Washington Park design

Mr. Sheehan said for years the plaza has not looked the way it should look. The improvements that were made years ago have outlived their useful life and it is time to undertake a new updated design of the plaza with a focus on getting the funding to implement those improvements. To that end, Eric Rains has put forward a very modest contract request to provide us with concept drawings as to how the plaza can be improved.

Chairman Serrano said making the area more appealing will help to activate the plaza and allow people to realize that it is a public park.

Mr. Sheehan said the City is still working through the National Park Service in trying to remove some of the restrictions to do outdoor dining and things like that that would activate the park. Public improvement is being planned for the whole western end of Washington Street, which also incorporates the pocket park that is opposite Klaff's. The plan calls for doing new street trees in front of the Washington Plaza and new street lighting, so it is the right time to do the whole improvement of the park.

Ms. Stocker noted that a Farmer's Market is going to be starting this coming Saturday from about 10:00 to 2:00 at the plaza, which will also activate the area.

**** MS. TORRANO MOVED TO APPROVE THE EXECUTION OF A CONTRACT WITH ERIC RAINS ARCHITECTURE, LLC FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF DESIGN CONCEPTS FOR THE 50 WASHINGTON STREET PARK IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$5,000 AND AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE SUCH CONTRACT.**

**** MS. COOPER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IV. NEW BUSINESS

None.

V. OLD BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further Old or New Business, upon motion Ms. Torrano, the meeting was adjourned at 6:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Pacchiana