

**CITY OF NORWALK
REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 12, 2018**

ATTENDANCE: Felix R. Serrano, Chairman; Commissioners Lori Torrano, Lisa Cooper (via teleconference) and Tom Devine

AGENCY COUNSEL: Marc Grenier, Esq.

STAFF: Timothy T. Sheehan, Executive Director; John Slovak, Comptroller; Susan Sweitzer, Senior Project Manager; Tami Strauss, Director of Community Development Planning; Sabrina Church, Community Development Planner

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Serrano called the Regular Meeting to order at 5:36 PM

ROLL CALL

Chairman Serrano noted that a quorum was present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Former Mayor Bill Collins asked if there was any provision with any of the contractors involved in the items listed under Contracts and Programs & Projects aimed specifically at retail activation on the lower floors of buildings that are being built. All over the country new multi-story buildings with dwellings upstairs are having a very difficult time activating the first floor, but there are specialists in that sort of thing and he asked if they are seeking out anybody who has expertise on that. There are different kinds of construction regulations you can put in place, such as set a limit on how big store fronts can be, making them closer together and providing some kind of cover over the sidewalks like awnings or arcades, or requiring developers to subsidize some amount of first floor activity, or the City to subsidize some amount of first floor activity, and he is wondering if the Redevelopment Agency is pursuing any specialized activity for retail activation on the lower floors of their buildings.

I-A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. May 8, 2018 Regular Meeting

**** MR. DEVINE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 8, 2018
REGULAR MEETING OF THE NORWALK REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY.
** MS. COOPER SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED (MS. TORRANO ABSTAINED.)**

I-B. FINANCE

Mr. Slovak reported on the NRA Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for Year-to-Date April 30, 2018 as follows:

- Operating Fund 100 had revenues of \$1,276,980 versus budgeted revenues of \$1,463,246 with a variance of \$186,266. This is due to \$64,517 in revenue not received for the Economic Development Director in City Positions. There is also \$89,265 not needed to be drawn down from NRA Grants for City Projects.

- Actual operating expenditures are \$1,198,800 versus a budget of \$1,455,821 resulting in a \$257,022 favorable variance of which \$64,517 is due to no Economic Development Director salary expenses with the remaining favorable balance due to lower expenditures.
- There is an actual operating surplus of \$78,180 versus a budgeted operating surplus of \$7,425 resulting in a \$70,756 favorable net operating variance.

Mr. Sheehan noted that because of a staff position that has not been filled for almost half a year, we have a larger surplus than we otherwise would have.

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

**** MR. DEVINE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

II. CONTRACTS

1. Approve CERC Contract for Wall / West Redevelopment Plan Market Analysis

Ms. Strauss said last year the Redevelopment Agency began the process of restating the redevelopment plans for the Wall Street and West Avenue area. We have combined those two areas into one redevelopment plan and expanded the boundary, and we released a draft plan in January for initial public comment. We would now like to advance the Plan for further economic analysis and have asked CERC, the Connecticut Economic Resource Center, to look at it for economic and demographic feasibility as well as housing demand, retail trends and other driving forces in order to ascertain if what we are recommending is actually implementable and feasible. CERC has developed a comprehensive scope of work. We did not put it out to bid as CERC is a Department of Administrative Services approved vendor with the State, so municipalities have the ability to enter directly into contracts with CERC without putting them out to bid. The first phase of the market report will cost \$27,000 and it will look at demographics, housing and economic trends within the geography and a half a dozen opportunity sites that we have identified. They will have that completed in a 13 week timeframe and will give us periodic updates so that by the end of the 13 week period we will have a final report rather than a draft to look at.

We would like to have the Plan approved after the POCD is approved, because the first step in the approval process is getting the Planning Commission to agree that the redevelopment plan is consistent with the POCD and asking them to do it based on a 10-year old document seems futile, so that is going to put us out six months to February or March. After the plan is approved we will go out with recommended zoning.

Ms. Torrano said she can't wait to see what CERC thinks will be suitable uses for the sites, and asked if they could do their review in a shorter timeframe. Ms. Strauss said that is what they told her they needed to do a good job, which is why she insisted that they send us periodic reports.

**** MS. TORRANO MOVED THAT THE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY COMMISSION, AFTER REVIEWING AND DISCUSSING THE SCOPE OF WORK, AUTHORIZES THE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT AND ALL OTHER RELATED DOCUMENTS WITH CERC, FOR A FEE NOT TO EXCEED \$27,000 PAYABLE OUT OF CAPITAL BUDGET ACCOUNT C0277 (NORWALK CENTER).**

**** MS. COOPER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. Approve Marketing and Communication Contract Amendment with the Silver Creative Group for Micro-Transit Pilot

Ms. Church said last month the Commissioners were introduced to the Micro-Transit Pilot program that Norwalk got approved for and received a lot of information that explained how it works and how it is going to be deployed. The public will also need to know that information, so we need to pair the pilot program with a marketing campaign that essentially will tell people what this is and how to use it, so in partnership with the Transit District we are asking to engage Silver Creative Group, who did our website, our Urban Highlights and our Innovation District pamphlets. They are the Agency's current marketing consultant, so instead of starting a new contract we are just adding this onto their current contract for \$25,000. Mr. Sheehan said the Agency actually went out on the bidding process for the website and the initial marketing as a whole.

Chairman Serrano noted that this funding source is going to be through GGP, so they are aware of it as well.

**** MS. TORRANO MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONTRACT AMENDMENT WITH SILVER CREATIVE FOR THE MICRO-TRANSIT PILOT IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$25,000; EXPENSES TO BE ASSIGNED TO FUND 115.**

**** MR. DEVINE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

III. PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

- a. Approve Stepping Stones \$2,000 grant for *Sabor Together* event

Ms. Sweitzer said this is a new event for Stepping Stones and is part of their Food Shed program. They are interested in the issues surrounding healthy eating and it has been a pretty big component of their programming. They are looking for a grant in the amount of \$2,000 under the individual event category for this event that will take place in September. There is an Arts & Culture Sponsorship Grants budget update at the end of her memo in terms of the budget that was approved in April, and the amounts to date approved in this category are \$2,000 for the NICE Festival and now this \$2,000 for the *Sabor Together*.

Chairman Serrano said he likes it because it is straightforward and we have the revised guidelines and backup and everything he needs.

**** MR. DEVINE MOVED TO APPROVE THE *SABOR TOGETHER* REQUEST FOR AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$2,000 FROM THE ARTS AND CULTURAL SPONSORSHIP GRANT PROGRAM TO HELP FUND THE CELEBRATION OF CULTURE THROUGH FOOD ON SEPTEMBER 23, 2018 AT STEPPING STONES MUSEUM FOR CHILDREN IN MATTHEWS PARK IN NORWALK.**

**** MS. TORRANO SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- b. Approve Norwalk Parking Authority / Norwalk Now grant

Mr. Sheehan said the Norwalk Now program has been brought before the Commission by the Parking Authority the past couple of months, so the Commissioners have had a fairly in-depth presentation at this point as to what Norwalk Now is all about. The Parking Authority is looking for support from the Redevelopment Agency to assist with the Norwalk Now efforts.

Chairman Serrano thanked the Parking Authority for getting them the information, and he appreciates Chairman Brescia coming himself and answering the questions. They have gotten a lot of information, and from what they have seen so far, it has been a very successful program. It is definitely hitting the area and the businesses that need it, and in anticipation of what they heard today about the Walk Bridge and the impact that is going to have to the area, he thinks it is important that they support initiatives like this.

Ms. Torrano said she is really excited about the project because it is going to benefit the businesses and enhance Norwalk's image and attract people to the area, and she personally feels it is very important that we provide sustained support for this effort so that the businesses realize that we are in it for the long haul, especially with all of the construction that is going to impact the area, and it is going to be imperative in her opinion that we do everything we can to continue to help so people want to come to the area. This is really enhancing Norwalk's image and elevating the perception of our community as a great and interesting place to go, and she is really encouraged by what the Parking Authority has been doing and happy that we can support them to the degree that we can.

Ms. Hebert said this is an economic development type of initiative and the more businesses that are engaged, the more community involvement engagement we have, and that is what they are trying to achieve. Their thoughts and their concept is to sustain this in the long term. They are thinking it is going to take five years for it to be standing by itself, and they are looking to the Redevelopment Agency to join them in that support to promote Norwalk. Eventually Norwalk Now will be under the Economic Development Department and become the marketing arm of the City of Norwalk. And the Walk Bridge is going to be critical, and it is really important that Norwalk Now be ready on that sustainable route to help the businesses during the construction.

**** MS. TORRANO SAID THE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY HAS CONSIDERED THE NORWALK PARKING AUTHORITY'S REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE AS A SPONSOR OF THE NORWALK NOW BUSINESS MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL EFFORT ESTABLISHED BY THE PARKING AUTHORITY. THE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY IS WILLING TO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO THE NORWALK NOW EFFORT THROUGH ITS NON-PROFIT ENTITY IN THE AMOUNT OF \$25,000 FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019. SAID SUPPORT WILL BE DESIGNATED BY NORWALK NOW FOR THE PLANNING AND COORINDATION OF COMMUNITY EVENTS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC THAT HIGHLIGHT NORWALK'S URBAN ENVIRONMENT AND THE BUSINESSES THAT POPULATE IT. IT IS THE POSITION OF THE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY THAT SUCH EVENTS WORK AS TRIGGERS FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT AND BRING TANGIBLE ADVANTAGES TO THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT. SUCH EVENTS ARE CATLYSTS FOR ECONOMIC TRANSFORMTION, AND HELP TO STRENGTHEN THE OVERALL IMAGE OF THE CITY. IN CONSIDERING FUTURE SPONSORSHIP OF NORWALK NOW, THE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY WILL REVIEW NORWALK NOW'S CONTINUED SUCCESS IN THE PRODUCTION OF SUCH EVENTS AND ITS ABILITY TO ATTRACT OTHER MAJOR SPONSORS ALONG WITH THAT OF THE CITY OF NORWALK THROUGH ITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT.**

**** MS COOPER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- ** MR. DEVINE MOVED TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 6:02 PM TO DISCUSS LEGAL STRATEGY INVOLVING THE LAND DISPOSITION AGREEMENT FOR WALL STREET POKO-IWSR DEVELOPERS LLC, IWSR OWNERS LLC AND JOHN DIAS VERSUS THE CITY OF NORWALK AND THE NORWALK REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY.**
- ** MS. COOPER SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

(THE COMMISSION CAME OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 7:30 PM.)

- ** MR. DEVINE MOVED TO APPROVE THE RETENTION OF WELLSPEAK DUGAS & KANE, L.L.C. BY AGENCY COUNSEL TO APPRAISE REAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT 61 WALL STREET AND 20-26 ISAACS STREET FOR A PRICE NOT TO EXCEED \$14,000 IN THE AGGREGATE.**
- ** MS. TORRANO SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IV. NEW BUSINESS

None.

V. OLD BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further New or Old Business, upon motion of Ms. Torrano, the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency meeting was adjourned at 7:32 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Pacchiana