

**CITY OF NORWALK
REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 10, 2018**

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

AGENCY COUNSEL: Marc Grenier, Esq.

STAFF: Timothy T. Sheehan, Executive Director; John Slovak, Comptroller; Tim Carney, Housing Development Project Manager

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Serrano called the Regular Meeting to order at 5:32 PM

ROLL CALL

Chairman Serrano noted that a quorum was present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Diane Lauricella, 21 Mountain Ridge Road, said the Agency often deals with folks in the development community that have outstanding violations – zoning, health and noise violations – and a lot of the sites they are contemplating including in the Innovation District have violations on them, and she feels there is a need for zoning enforcement reform, and while it is not under the Agency’s purview, she would like them to consider for their operating budget for next year setting aside money so they can hire a consultant to help develop more aggressive zoning regulations and basic standards, such as this Agency won’t do business with people that have outstanding violations, and then offer that to the Planning and Zoning Department for enforcement, because when you have a lack of enforcement, it really disengages potential developers from coming in and makes Norwalk less attractive for development and reduces the value of homes.

As to the sponsorship request for Norwalk Now, while she understands that the Parking Authority has something to do with marketing, she thinks it is important that they are making sure that the selection process is open for other small business people to participate in.

As to the South Norwalk Farmers’ Market proposal, she has been a big proponent of farmers’ markets in Norwalk and thinks it would be terrific to have a farmers’ market in South Norwalk, however, she does not feel that there was an open process for selecting the management company, so in interest of fairness and open transparency, she asks that the proposal be sent back for further discussion and RFQ.

Lynn DeTroy said she has been involved in the Norwalk farmers’ markets since 2014 and is the market manager for about six different markets. She started with the First Congregational Church on the Green in 2014, then opened St. Paul’s on the Green, the Norwalk Community Health Center and Good Shepherd on New Canaan Avenue. In 2016 she opened in South Norwalk at 50 Washington Street, but couldn’t have it there last year because they are reconstructing the plaza. They had live music and cooking demos and the community came out and talked with each other and shared recipes, and it was a great event. Last year her organization, Food Access Coalition, handed out over \$13,000 which they raised during the year. They take Wic vouchers, which most farmers are registered for, and Snap, which is the food stamp program. She has the equipment and does that at all the markets. They have Seniorland FCC at St. Paul’s on the Green, and their

newest program is to take doctors' scripts for fruits and vegetables. Last year the state cut the seniors' coupons with farmers' markets, which was a big disappointment. They used to come in buses and brought chairs and sat out on the lawn and it was an event, so she opened her own table with 6" pies that she sold for \$6 and the seniors would get a \$6 voucher to spend on fruits and vegetables. Her big concern with this 30 vendor event on Sundays is that the low income people are not forgotten, that there are some provisions that will enable them to purchase food. She would encourage the Agency, if they are going to approve this program, to consider her for a seat at the table, but also be able to have the Food Access Coalition present so they can continue the program for everybody who comes to the market.

The public participation portion of the meeting was closed.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 13, 2018 Regular Meeting

- ** MS. TORRANO MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 13, 2018 REGULAR MEETING OF THE NORWALK REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY.**
- ** MS. COOPER SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

II. FINANCE

Mr. Slovak reported on the NRA Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for Year-to-Date February 28, 2018 as follows:

- Operating Fund 100 had revenues of \$1,076,807 versus budgeted revenues of \$1,170,597 with an unfavorable variance of \$93,790. This is due to \$39,577 in undrawn salary because of vacancy. There is also \$28,996 in allocated funding that currently does not need to be drawn down from NRA Grants for City Projects.
- Actual operating expenditures are \$963,218 versus a budget of \$1,155,732 resulting in a \$192,514 favorable variance of which \$39,577 is due to unexpended salary due to vacancy and the balance due to lower expenditures.
- There is an actual operating surplus of \$113,589 versus a budgeted operating surplus of \$14,865 resulting in a \$98,724 favorable net operating variance. This variance will be aligned to the budget going forward reflecting recent staffing adjustments and other anticipated costs and transfers.

- ** MS. TORRANO MOVED TO APPROVE THE FINANCE REPORT AS PRESENTED.**
- ** MS. COOPER SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

NORWALK REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY OPERATING BUDGET FOR FY 6/30/19

Mr. Slovak went through the line items on the operating budget. Mr. Sheehan explained that the expenses relative to the CDBG program can either be dealt with in the administrative budget or as straight salary and benefits for the people that run the CDBG program, and from HUD's standpoint it is simpler to allocate that to salary and benefits.

- ** MS. COOPER MOVED TO APPROVE THE OPERATING BUDGET AS PRESENTED.**
- ** MS. TORRANO SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

II. APPROVE RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION LOAN TO ROWAYTON SENIOR HOUSING

Mr. Carney said the loan committee approved forwarding this loan of \$500,000 to the Commission for approval. The loan was underwritten by the National Development Council. Staff also obtained a favorable credit report and Dun and Bradstreet report. Funding for this loan comes from the Revolving Loan Fund of the Residential Rehabilitation Program and from CDBG Multi-Unit Rehabilitation Program #598.

Chairman Serrano noted that the loan was underwritten and meets all the criteria. The units involved are all Section 8.

Attorney Grenier said he would amend both the actions so they are consistent with the underwriting terms because they are releasing a mortgage on the property.

**** MS. TORRANO MOVED TO APPROVE THE RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION LOAN TO ROWAYTON SENIOR HOUSING CORPORATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF FUNDING HVAC IMPROVEMENTS AND BATHROOM RENOVATIONS AT HILL TOP HOMES CONSISTENT WITH THE LOAN UNDERWRITING TERMS**

**** MS. COOPER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** MS. TORRANO MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRPERSON, FELIX R. SERRANO, TO EXECUTE THE COMMITMENT LETTER FOR THE ABOVE REFERENCED LOAN TO ROWAYTON SENIOR HOUSING CORPORATION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$500,000 FOR A TERM OF 25 YEARS AT AN INTEREST RATE OF 2% AND OTHER COMMERCIALY REASONABLE TERMS CONSISTENT WITH THE LOAN UNDERWRITING TERMS.**

**** MS. COOPER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

III.-A APPROVE THE ARTS & CULTURAL REVISED GUIDELINES

Mr. Sheehan said they have been discussing several changes that the Commissioners would like to see and the first one is that the grant request for a single event, performance and/or concert series not exceed the lesser of 20% of the project budget or \$2,000, and second is that the project would have a sustainable impact and/or permanent installation, which is looking for more sustainable installations than just one day events. Also, applications will not be accepted from projects/organizations previously funded within the prior three years, which will provide more variety in events they are sponsoring and/or art installations.

Ms. Torrano suggested that they allow some flexibility by permitting an increase of that \$2,000 by special vote of the Commission in the event of an exceptional investment opportunity. Mr. Sheehan said they can certainly put in language that the Commission has the flexibility to increase the award, but he would point out that they really only have a budget amount of \$7,535, which is basically three and a half events if you kept it at \$2,000. Chairman Serrano said, to clarify, it is giving the flexibility up to what the budget is in that line item.

Ms. Torrano asked how do they measure sustainable impact. Mr. Sheehan said sustainable is basically saying that the project has a lasting impact and some permanency to it. It shouldn't be something that is gone in a couple of days.

Ms. Torrano said as to the requirement that you can't come back to the Agency if you received money in the past three years, if they are looking at something that is sustainable and it is a new event, it is possible that they might need to come back for additional support in the early years and it would be nice to have the ability to be able to do that built into the guidelines, because the idea is to help initiate. Mr. Sheehan asked if they would rather that it said you were limited to three applications and once you had your third round, you can't come back at all. Ms. Torrano said or even two, but she just thinks that in the first years of the event you are going to need more help and support, and so this money ought to be reserved for newer initiatives that need more support going forward to get off the ground. It is giving them the flexibility that in a special situation you could go beyond the two years.

Chairman Serrano said so we are putting discretionary flexibility into the \$2,000 budget, and the rest stays as it is right now. If they see something that is not working and needs improvement, they can certainly come back and seek the Commission's consideration of modifications.

**** MS. TORRANO MOVED TO (1) APPROVE THE COMMUNITY ARTS & CULTURAL SPONSORSHIP GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES AS REVISED DATED APRIL 2018; (2) APPROVE THE COMMUNITY ARTS & CULTURAL SPONSORSHIP GRANT PROGRAM APPLICATION REVISIONS DATED APRIL 2018; AND (3) APPROVE THE COMMUNITY ARTS & CULTURAL SPONSORSHIP GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING SOURCES 2018- 2020.**

**** MS. COOPER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

III-B - SPONSORSHIP FOR NORWALK NOW

Dick Brescia, Chairman of the Parking Authority, said he is there with Linda Kavanagh of MaxEx to give the Commissioners an understanding of what Norwalk Now is and how it was developed. The process started about four years ago when the Parking Authority determined that one of the best ways it could assist the businesses in both SoNo and Wall Street and strengthen the urban area was to sponsor a professional marketing and communications strategy with the goal of energizing more visitors and patrons to experience Norwalk's urban vitality. They interviewed three companies and selected Ms. Kavanagh and her company, MaxEx, which means Maximum Exposure, because of the sustainability of it. They wanted someone who in addition to having marketing expertise and getting the word out, could also manage it so that the proprietors of the businesses in both Wall Street and SoNo didn't have to worry about the management aspect of it. When they started to get this off the ground, Ms. Kavanagh said they needed at least 15 participants, so they invited 15 to 20 members of the business community to a meeting and explained the program. Most were enthusiastic and were giving them suggestions on how to reach out to other members of their business community. They are up to 25 participants now and they should be at 30 by the summer.

Linda Kavanagh said this year is her 20th anniversary doing PR and marketing primarily for the hospitality, lifestyle, and travel and tourism industries. Norwalk Now is collaborative marketing in its purest form. It is businesses coming together to promote their city, their business and each other, so there is a joint effort and energy and sustainability behind it. This is not going to work for a doctor's office, but it is meant for things that are more consumer and enjoyment driven.

The businesses are what drive people into Norwalk, so by promoting the individual businesses they are bringing people into the city, but there has to be a buy-in or an investment from the businesses to commit.

They just came off of a very successful event called Norwalk City Limits, which was five days and nights of live music. The participants loved it. Their next event is the City Hunt, which is a citywide scavenger hunt and the stops along the way are the participating businesses. They are doing an Instagram takeover with a couple of hundred instagrammers invited for a five day event where they just swarm Norwalk and compete to do as many posts as they can. Norwalk wins because the social media is just going to blow up. And they have some other trivia things and citywide things planned. All of their events are geared to bring people into the individual businesses. They are going to be working with the Seaport Association, and they are doing Happy Hour on the Harbor, and actually collaborating outside of Norwalk to get a boat company in Stamford to bring people into Norwalk for a dinner package. The businesses are their best ambassadors. They are the ones that are going out there and promoting the program.

Chairman Serrano said he has seen the videos and it is really a great endeavor, but he has some concerns because they are using public funds to invest in the local businesses. Mr. Brescia said they have reached out to several developers and are reaching out to the Agency to join the Parking Authority in funding this effort, and they will continue to support this as long as they can. Their hope is that once this is established, it will run itself, because it will get continuing support from the Parking Authority and hopefully from this Agency and from some of the developers and other people that will profit by a business community that is working. The more support they can get, the less they need to ask of the participants. The participants currently have a \$200 a month contribution that they make and they would like to get that down to \$50. The Parking Authority is covering 60% of the costs right now, and is budgeting \$100,000 a year for five years on this project. Their long range plan is to have a minimum of 50 people in the downtown area be participants.

Mr. Brescia said the Parking Authority likes to get innovative in dealing with parking issues when they can and so they are sponsoring a circulator for City Hunt which will take participants and customers to any restaurant from Wall Street down into the SoNo area. There will be two buses circulating all day long. He and Ms. Hebert will give Mr. Sheehan a specific recommendation for the Commission's consideration for next month and explain where they are and what they think they will need.

IV PROJECTS – SOUTH NORWALK FARMERS' MARKET PROPOSAL

Mr. Sheehan said this idea actually came out of a discussion that was brought up at the last Parking Authority meeting and MPT Associates' name was advanced in that discussion, and he has absolutely no problem with going out and getting requests for qualifications, but first he would like to find out from the Commissioners if there is support for having a farmers' market in the area so that as we are going out for the request for qualifications we can indicate to the people that are responding that this is an idea that the Commission supports and is willing to advance funding for.

Chairman Serrano said from his perspective he thinks there is clear support for the farmers' market. Mr. Sheehan said the Agency will issue an RFQ and then bring back a recommendation.

Ms. Torrano said she particularly liked what Ms. DeTroy was saying about the Food Access Coalition, and thinks that would be a great component to work in there somehow, and she likes

the fact that they are looking at Sundays from 12:00 to 3:00 as it gets people downtown on a Sunday when not much is happening. She asked how they came up with the \$6,000 budget. Mr. Sheehan said we looked at costs in terms of the organizational costs and the operating costs. Somebody has to manage this and make sure that the farmers are there, and somebody needs to make sure the electrical is there, and things like that, and just trouble shoot on a weekly basis. When we go out for the request for qualifications we will get an understanding as to whether it is enough. Chairman Serrano said we can come back with that since we've got to do the authorization of the contract another date. We are just voting on the budget proposal.

**** MS. TORRANO MOVED TO APPROVE THE \$6,000 2018 ANNUAL
OPERATING BUDGET FOR THE SOUTH NORWALK FARMERS' MARKET.
** MS. COOPER 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. Cooper and second of Ms. Torrano, the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency meeting was adjourned at 6:47 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Pacchiana