

**CITY OF NORWALK
REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 8, 2011**

ATTENDANCE: Emil Albanese, Chairman; Commissioners Felix Serrano,
Randy Napoletano, Lori Torrano and Lisa Cooper

AGENCY COUNSEL: Marc Grenier, Esq.

STAFF: Timothy T. Sheehan, Executive Director; Michael Moore,
Senior Project Manager for Development; John Slovak, NRA
Comptroller; and Tad Diesel, Director of Marketing and
Business Development

CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting was called to order at 5:58 P.M by Chairman Albanese.

ROLL CALL

Chairman Albanese called the roll. A quorum was present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public were present.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
January 11, 2011 Regular Meeting

**** MS. COOPER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE
JANUARY 11, 2011 REGULAR REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
MEETING.**

**** MR. NAPOLETANO SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. FINANCIALS
Agency P & L Statement for 12/31/10
NRA All Funds Comparative Balance Sheets at 12/31/10
NRA Combined Balance Sheets at 12/31/10
NEDC P & L Balance Sheet at 12/31/10
North Walke Combined Balance Sheets at 12/31/10
North Walke all funds Comparative P & L Balance Sheets at
12/31/10

Mr. Slovak reported on the financial statements as follows:

Total revenues for fiscal year-to-date ending December 31, 2010 are \$812,505. Year-to-date budget is \$818,034, year-to-date unfavorable variance of \$5,528, compared to the prior

year actual of \$915,644 in revenue. The annual approved budget is \$1,636,047. The annual budget remaining for revenues for the fiscal year ending 6/30/11 is \$818,013.

Total personnel expenditures were \$669,014 against a budget of \$695,994. There is a \$26,980 favorable personnel variance. Prior year-to-date actual was \$798,567, annual budget was \$1,392,047, total annual personnel budget remaining for this fiscal year is \$696,053.

Total expenditures were \$781,833 against \$814,638 year-to-date six month budget. There is a favorable expenditure variance for the first six months of \$32,805. Prior year-to-date actual is \$4,915,941. Four million of that is the grant that was made to NEDC by the NRA. The annual budget for this fiscal year is \$1,629,326, annual budget remaining for expenditures is \$814,688.

The bottom line, net operating surplus is \$30,674 against a budgeted net operating bottom line of \$3,396, a favorable net operating surplus of \$27,278 and last year, which was essentially break even with the grant taken out, an annual bottom line budget of \$6,721, \$3,325 bottom line budget remaining for operating Fund 100.

Going to the Norwalk Economic Development Corporation, the NEDC has incurred legal and marketing expenses year-to-date in the amount of \$31,236. The NEDC has \$12,973 cash on hand at December 31, 2010.

Mr. Sheehan said he withdrew the request to put a recapitalization back into the NEDC because he wanted to make sure the Commissioners were comfortable with that before it came up on the agenda. The proposal is to bring the balance back up to what the approved balance was at the start. The majority of the expenses associated with the NEDC have been the filing for the tax exempt status and preparation of the tax return.

Mr. Slovak noted that also in the packages for the Commissioners' information are the comparative balance sheets for the year, prior year P & L and balance sheets for all five funds for NRA and the three different combined balance sheets and P & Ls for the North Walke Housing Corporation for the first six months, July to December of 2010.

**** MR. NAPOLETANO MOVED TO ACCEPT THE FINANCIAL REPORT AS PRESENTED.**

**** MS. TORRANO SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. BUSINESS

- A. Agency Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Applications
 - 1. CDBG Administration
 - 2. Transit Oriented Development
 - 3. Fair Housing

Mr. Moore said the Redevelopment Agency has initiated the annual allocation process associated with the Community Development Block Grant program for the upcoming fiscal year, Program Year 37, which begins on July 1. The Agency has begun formulating its applications for three proposals and seeks the Commissioners' authorization for staff and the Executive Director to submit the applications. The applications are (1) to implement the recommendations of the City's Transit Oriented Development Master Plan in and around

the South Norwalk Train Station, (2) to reduce the barriers to fair housing in Norwalk as identified in the City's recently approved Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, and (3) to access 20% of the City's annual CDBG allocation for administration and implementation of the program.

Mr. Moore went through a slide presentation and explained that the Agency is working with a variety of elected officials, community stakeholders and social service providers to develop a Transit Oriented Development Master Plan that seeks to leverage the land resources within a quarter mile radius of the South Norwalk Train Station to revitalize that neighborhood. Among the strategies recommended to implement the policy objectives in the Master Plan are:

- Development of city owned and under utilized properties.
- Preservation and reinforcement of existing housing options.
- Investment in existing businesses while encouraging new enterprises.
- Public improvements to facilitate pedestrian connections to the train station and the utilization of public open spaces.
- Enhanced public safety and enforcement.

The geography of the TOD Master Plan encompasses the highest low to moderate income census tracts in the City of Norwalk, and has the highest concentration of the City's affordable housing stock. CDBG dollars would be used to invest resources in the preservation and physical rehabilitation of those units. South Norwalk is the location of 77% of the family occupied public housing units in Norwalk. It is a heavy concentration, and increasing safety throughout the neighborhood is a priority.

Mr. Sheehan noted that the community policing component is critical. Developers are currently advancing a project on Chestnut Street. They are in the preliminary stages of the Planning & Zoning process, but are being faced with questions of how can they lease out units when they are dealing with shootings across the street. The proposal is for almost 200 units of housing in close proximity to the train station, and will be a good thing in terms of putting feet on the street, but until the area is safe and secure, they are not going to get the private sector investment to come forward.

Mr. Moore explained that there is not an easy pedestrian connection going from the train station to the Washington Street Historic District, the Webster block or North Main Street. The Master Plan emphasizes a need to address such obstacles. CDBG dollars can be used to improve the walking environment, improve the sidewalks, put in lighting, curb cuts, signage and other amenities that will help encourage pedestrian access to and from the train station. They can also use CDBG funds to serve as a source of technical assistance and financial assistance to businesses within that corridor.

Mr. Sheehan said they have had some significant successes with the small business lending program. For example, the Agency just closed on a loan with SoNo Bakery, which was for an expansion and equipment purposes. This is the type of small business activity we want to continue to foster and invest in so those businesses remain in South Norwalk and expand. A condition of the loan is that the business has to meet HUD requirements for job creation retention, and that job has to be at that location for the term of the debt. At this point just about everybody in the Washington Street, North Main Street and South Main Street

corridor knows that the Agency operates this program. A lot of this information has been spread by word of mouth.

In response to a question by Commissioner Torrano regarding community policing, Mr. Sheehan said typically there were extra police put on Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 7:00 PM to midnight over the summer, so that there were four to five police officers in and around Washington Street. Agency staff has been out in the neighborhood for the Transit Oriented Development Master Plan and has been getting feedback on both the retail study and the incubator study. The feedback is that there is a deep seated perception of a lack of public safety in the area adjacent to the train station and that carries over, unfortunately, right onto Washington Street. The geographic area they would have the patrols servicing is the TOD Master Plan area, not simply on Washington Street, where last year policing was strictly focused in and around Washington Street.

Mr. Moore said another application the Agency is contemplating is for an allocation of funds to help implement actions that are identified within the City's recently approved Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, which is a document created by CDBG entitlement communities like Norwalk to identify sources of potential or known acts of discrimination in housing choice and to identify actions to address that. The first impediment that was identified within the AI is housing discrimination. The highest indices of discrimination are race/color, disability, and lawful source of income. In other words, people being denied access to a rental property because of the use of Section 8, which is illegal. The Agency would use CDBG funds to create an outreach program to educate renters, landlords, realtors and stakeholders within South Norwalk about sources of discrimination and ways to combat them. There are proposals for the creation of an educational webinar, and the implementation of formal presentations to realtors and social service organizations like NEON and the Housing Authority in South Norwalk.

Mr. Sheehan said the Agency is in an odd position with regard to the preparation and submittal of the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing. The City does have a Fair Housing Officer and a Fair Housing Advisory Commission, but the Agency is the administrator of the Community Development Block Grant program, so the responsibility of creating the AI has fallen to the Redevelopment Agency. HUD requires evidence that the City is implementing steps to combat discriminatory issues regarding housing within the community, and getting information out with regard to the laws regarding discrimination as it relates to housing is clear evidence to them that such requirements are being met.

A lack of clarity exists on the part of the Redevelopment Agency regarding the roles and responsibilities of the Fair Housing Officer, the Fair Housing Advisory Commission, the Human Relations and the Fair Rent Commissions and related staff as directed by the City regarding such impediments. In conversations with the Planning Committee the goal was to bring all three of these entities together to work towards addressing the impediments as the Council has identified them, and provide quarterly reports as to what activities the City is taking to solve the problems so that there is ongoing interaction between the Planning Committee, the Council and the entities that are actually trying to come up with the resolutions. That concept seems to be causing some conflict with the Fair Housing Advisory Commission and the Fair Rent and Human Relations Commission.

Mr. Moore said the last application is the Redevelopment Agency as the administrator of the CDBG funds can access up to 20% of the resources to actually put on the day-to-day administration of the program, oversee the creation of the Annual Action Plan, oversee the allocation process and monitor the sub-recipients. The Agency is obligated to apply for those funds and proceed through the application process.

**** MR. NAPOLETANO MOVED THAT THE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY AUTHORIZE THE SUBMISSION OF THE THREE APPLICATIONS AS OUTLINED ABOVE AND AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE ANY RELATED GRANT IMPLEMENTATION DOCUMENTS.**

**** MR. SERRANO SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

B. Updates

1. Agency Capital Budget Requests
2. The SoNo Retail Study

Mr. Sheehan said the Capital Budget Requests have been submitted and have cleared the Finance Director and Public Hearings have been held with the Planning Commission. At this point the Finance Director has suggested the approval of \$300,000 of capital budget funding for the Transit Oriented Development initiative and \$250,000 has been recommended for the affordable housing initiatives.

Mr. Sheehan announced that on Thursday, February 17th, at 6:00 PM there will be a Special Agency Meeting to review both the retail analysis for South Norwalk and work plan that was done by MJB Consulting of New York City. The report will be forwarded to the Commissioners in advance so they can review it. The report comes up with a host of good recommendations and talks about the reality of the marketplace as it relates to retail in South Norwalk.

Chuck Stein will also be present to talk about the feasibility of a business incubator in South Norwalk. The meeting will be held at the Maritime Aquarium. The Agency is sending invitations to approximately 150 people, and is hoping it will be very similar to what it did last year with the office study. It is anticipated that an updated market analysis on both the existing office market, retail and multi-family housing will be available in March.

4. NEW BUSINESS
None.

5. OLD BUSINESS
None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further Old or New Business, the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency meeting was adjourned at 6:44 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Pacchiana