

**NORTH WALKE HOUSING
CORPORATION
SPECIAL MEETING
JANUARY 16, 2018**

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

AGENCY COUNSEL: Joseph DaSilva, Esq.

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Serrano called the Special Meeting to order at 7:01 PM

ROLL CALL

Chairman Serrano noted that a quorum was present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No one from the public came forward to speak.

BUSINESS

A. 24 HAVILAND STREET

1. Approve authorizing the Executive Director to contract with Chris O. Buswell, DBG Options Real Estate marketing homes as DoAWalkThru.com to provide real estate brokerage services for 24 Haviland Street for a period of six months.
2. Authorize reducing the list price for 24 Haviland Street to \$378,515 from its current list price of \$400,000.

Ms. Strauss said they have not yet sold 24 Haviland Street despite their best efforts, so they have requested real estate services from four firms and have received four quotes and are recommending that they go with Chris O. Buswell who is doing business as DoAWalkThru.com. They are a local real estate brokerage service located on Haviland Street, and have proposed a creative marketing plan that included numerous referrals. At the Agency's request, they activated a comp analysis and are suggesting reducing the asking price to \$378,515 from the original list price of \$400,000, as they think at that price they will be able to sell the house in 45 days.

Ms. Torrano asked if they thought it should be discounted even more, because other comps in the area don't require you to go across the street to park, although the house does show well because everything is brand new. Ms. Strauss said they are not suggesting that

\$378,515 is going to be the sale price, but they think that is the one that is going to spur offers.

Ms. Langley said she has had conversations with three young women from her church that were interested in this program and have applied, and the feedback she has gotten is that the process is too cumbersome and confusing, and all three have moved to Bridgeport and now have kids going to school in the Bridgeport system.

Ms. Strauss said HDF, the Housing Development Fund, has an online process where you fill out an application and upload your tax returns and pay stubs. You have to pay \$20 for a credit check to see if you are income eligible for the program, and once they go through assessing your documents, they bring you in for a one-on-one counseling appointment and give you a plan and a price of what you can afford based on your income and your debt, and then leave it up to you to find a house. There is no charge except for the \$20 credit check fee.

Mr. Sheehan said maybe it is a matter of having them deal with somebody internally at the Agency at the outset. Ms. Strauss said that's what HDF does. When people come to the office and say they are interested in buying a house, they give them HDF's information.

Ms. Langley said she specifically reached out to these young people because she knew they were looking for housing and asked if they had looked for a house on Haviland, and she was just wondering if there was a way to help support some of these people. She doesn't think people have enough information, so it is knowing where the resources are.

Ms. Strauss said HDF has helped over 2,000 households buy houses, so the process works. The agent where they are going to list the property needs to showcase that there is help available to buy this house, which will enhance the process. About 15 households have gone to HDF for this house and it's fallen through for one reason or another.

Chairman Serrano said would it be helpful if people, instead of going directly to HDF, called her so she could track them.

Ms. Langley asked if they could ask the realtor to have a workshop, or work with HDF to have a workshop.

Ms. Strauss said she will talk to him. Maybe they can tack it onto the listing. And she is also going to contact HDF to see if anybody new has contacted them.

**** MR. DEVINE MOVED TO APPROVE AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO CONTRACT WITH CHRIS O. BUSWELL, DBG OPTIONS REAL ESTATE MARKETING HOMES AS DOAWALKTHRU.COM TO PROVIDE REAL ESTATE BROKERAGE SERVICES FOR 24 HAVILAND STREET FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS; AND TO AUTHORIZE REDUCING THE PRICE FOR 24 HAVILAND STREET TO \$378,515 FROM ITS CURRENT LIST PRICE OF \$400,000.**

**** MS. TORRANO SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

I. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. Approve Minutes of November 28, 2017 Special Meeting

**** MR. DEVINE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 28, 2017 SPECIAL MEETING OF THE NORTH WALLE HOUSING CORPORATION SPECIAL MEETING.**

**** MS. TORARNO SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IV. **NEW BUSINESS**

None.

V. **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further Old or New Business, upon motion of Mr. Devine, the North Walke Housing Corporation meeting was adjourned at 7:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Carrie Provenzale

**CITY OF NORWALK
REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
SPECIAL MEETING
JANUARY 16, 2018**

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

AGENCY COUNSEL: Joseph DaSilva, Esq.

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Serrano called the Special Meeting to order at 5:41 PM

ROLL CALL

Chairman Serrano noted that a quorum was present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No one from the public came forward to speak.

I. A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve Minutes of November 28, 2017 Special Meeting

**** MS. TORRANO MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 28, 2017 SPECIAL MEETING OF THE NORWALK REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY.**

**** MR. DEVINE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

I. B. FINANCE

1. Approve the NRA Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for October 31, 2017.

Mr. Slovak reported on the NRA Explanation Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for October 31, 2017 as follows:

- Operating Fund 100 had revenues of \$573,541 versus budgeted revenues of \$585,298 with a difference of \$11,758.
- Actual operating expenditures are \$480,890 versus a budget of \$577,866 resulting in a \$96,976 favorable variance due to lower expenditures.
- There is an actual operating surplus of \$92,651 versus a budgeted operating deficit of \$7,433 resulting in a \$85,218 favorable net operating variance.

2. Approve the NRA Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for November 30, 2017.

Mr. Slovak reported on the NRA Explanation Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for November 30, 2017 as follows

- Operating Fund 100 had revenues of \$712,973 versus budgeted revenues of \$731,623 with a difference of \$18,650.
- Actual operating expenditures are \$624,097 versus a budget of \$739,067 resulting in a \$114,970 favorable variance due to lower expenditures.
- There is an actual operating surplus of \$88,876 versus a budgeted operating deficit of \$7,444 resulting in a \$96,320 favorable net operating variance.

**** MS. TORRANO MOVED TO APPROVE THE FINANCE REPORTS FOR OCTOBER 31, 2017 AND NOVEMBER 30, 2017 AS PRESENTED.**

**** MR. DEVINE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

III. DESIGN REVIEW

A. Approve 121-123 Water Street Design Review by ADA Architects

Present were Bill Andriopoulos and Maria Genovese from Andriopoulos Design Associates, Colin Grotheer from Beinfield Architecture, Attorney Liz Suchy from Carmody Torrance, and Eric Rains, landscape architect.

Mr. Andriopoulos explained that the development is located in the South Norwalk TOD Redevelopment Plan area, which encourages a pedestrian oriented mixed use. The developer proposes to construct a new six-story mixed use multi-family residential building with associated site improvements on the property. The new building will contain approximately 2,690 SF and a first floor retail with lobby and amenities facing grade level. Floors two through five will contain 80 new residential units which will have twelve studio units, 43 one-bedroom units and 25 two-bedroom units ranging in size from 420 SF to 1,090 SF. There will be eight workforce housing units dispersed throughout the building, and a total 126 parking spaces will be located to the rear of the building in an on grade surface parking lot. 12,000 SF of recreation spaces are proposed as required for the development, including an outdoor deck with swimming pool on the fifth floor, unit balconies, interior recreational spaces in the lobby and on the other floors, and an open air dog run at grade level with fences, screens and landscaping. The property will be improved with landscaping including multiple trees, shrubs, and other ground cover. Ingress and egress to the development will be from a two-way 24' wide driveway from Hanford Place.

Mr. Andriopoulos went through the TOD Site Improvement Guidelines Section 5.4.2 (Site Improvement Guidelines) and 5.4.3 (Architectural Guidelines) and discussed how the plan meets those guidelines. The developer has decided upon and incorporated three different uses for the development site that encourage both private and public activity, mixing in publicly visible landscape, park installations, bike racks and park benches.

Chairman Serrano asked about the landscaping on the Water Street side where there was a focus to try to soften the elevation. Mr. Rains said the intention along the frontage of North Water Street, because of the grade change from the sidewalk elevation up to the first finished floor of the building, was to not have that be flat, so they are taking advantage of the grade of the area behind the sidewalk up to the base of the building and sloping it so that as you get closer to the building, it is a higher elevation, and the intent is to make the transition appear much less. It also varies in width. The building is not parallel to the street, so they are taking advantage of the

varying dimensions of width from the back of the sidewalk to the building to help attenuate that grade change. The sidewalk along Water Street is 9' wide.

They are using Corten walls in two locations, which wraps the circular area in two layers where it connects to the building at the high end and then slopes as it curves around, so it is a cylinder that has a curve as it falls around the circle, and that creates zones between the Corten members for planting as well. The goal was to have that element be visible, but then have it further softened by plant material. The terrace is 6 ½' to 7' in height. Along Water Street the grade changes marginally, so the relationship of sidewalk to first floor is pretty consistent. The second place that the Corten occurs is in the mid portion of the site and it's used in a different configuration as it comes away from the building in a curve and then returns toward the building much like a checkmark does, which allows them to get very higher sooner and then hold it higher as it gets closer to the building, and at the same time giving a progression of the element along the street that increases in height as you move towards Hanford.

Mr. Andriopoulos said the architect is of two distinct residential elements atop a transparent ground floor level which appears to be floating as it connects to the street via the featured stairway and landings at the ground floor level. The connection provides purpose and identity to a central entrance of the main eastern façade facing Water Street and is open to the air. A covered entry plaza extends through to the western façade providing for access points to the residential components and commercial components at grade. Open outdoor terrace and recreation spaces provide activity and scale at the street level. Wide window openings with deep well window surrounds and a detail of Juliet balconies and accessible balconies provide rhythm to the façade. The graduated step backs of the main building footprint and the variations in wall massing assist to reduce the scale of the large building masses.

The corner of Raymond Street and Water Street has been recognized as a prominent corner to this neighborhood, and as such the development provides curb linear detailing of the first floor outdoor terrace and the corresponding feature landscape art forms which graduate up from the sidewalk provide pedestrian friendly visual anchors to the corner. The smaller simplified structure is the office component on the southern property line behind the building. It is basically a two-story structure with parking on the first level and office space on the second floor level, and is connected to the main building via an enclosed walkway at grade. The building has open parking of six spaces, and at grade level horizontal windows on the north and south side.

Mr. Sheehan said just so the Commissioners understand why that's there, it is a zoning issue in terms of parking which isn't allowed as a frontal usage on an arterial, so that is what the developer has proposed to deal with the zoning requirement.

Mr. Andriopoulos said the roof structure is a simple sloping roof designed to accommodate a collection of solar panels facing due south. From the Water Street view, the elevated first floor level and vertical columns and transparent glass curtain wall atop a foundation of linear concrete provide the base upon which the upper stories of the structure appear to float.

The building roof is topped off with a perimeter middle guard railing, and a step back roof of the amenity space enclosure with a wave like roof form provides emphasis and scale to the southern most portion of the eastern elevation. The elevation provides for future signage in two locations, which more than likely will be address or wayfinding type signs. There is another one at the public access stairwell on the west.

There are some utility enclosures located at the north side of the property that provide for utilities and an emergency power generator. These utility services are required to be elevated above the base flood elevation in this zone. It has a different roof structure on it. The architect has integrated the rooftop solar panels into that roof design and the connection of that building to the main building is like a walkway. It is going to be finished in a natural finish and it provides this linear screening for not only the walkway connection from the main building to the office building, but there is an open garage on the back that acts as a retaining wall, which will have some landscaping, but the garage is open so the air can ventilate through there, and they provided wood slat screening in that portion of the building to provide some continuity and some texture on the Raymond Street side.

The immediate surrounding area to the building development is mostly industrial zoned property. The architecture is a variety of mostly commercial industrial buildings with flat roof structures, and the architect has chosen the flat and varied roof forms which are authentic to this type of architecture in the South Norwalk area. Roof top utilities have been adequately screened from view.

There are images that show the lighting for the entry features and the secondary stairwell, and there is lighting provided for illuminated handrails. There will also be some step lighting and a linear LED overhead lighting. The lighting proposed is sufficient and designed to focus on key components of the building, and meets all codes.

The developer and the development signage manufacturer are to submit under separate copy signage details in accordance with the TOD section 5.4.4. The commercial tenants that go into the commercial space will be required to provide their own signage, but their signage will be relegated to inside their window space outward, and that signage plan has not been submitted.

Mr. Sheehan said they will have to come back with signage. He said there has been a lot of back and forth between staff and the design team on this, and one of the most important things from the staff's perspective was the pedestrian interaction between the project and the street experience, and he thinks they have made a good effort in terms of dealing with the predominance of the corner on Raymond Street and making that a unique design feature. Because it is in a flood plain, the building has to come up so high, and that was the challenge throughout, and he thinks the team has been very responsive to the concerns of both the Redevelopment Agency as well as the P&Z staff.

**** MS. TORRANO MOVED TO APPROVE THE FINAL PROJECT SITE DESIGN FOR 121-123 WATER STREET AS RECOMMENDED BY THE THIRD PARTY DESIGN REVIEWER, ADA ARCHITECTS, IN THEIR REPORT DATED JANUARY 3, 2018 AS PRESENTED ON JANUARY 16, 2018.**

**** MS. LANGLEY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IV. LOANS & GRANTS

1. Approve application for historic façade funding for Canaan Baptist Church.

Ms. Sweitzer said Canaan Institutional Baptist Church submitted for a grant facade under the design grant program guidelines that were approved at an earlier meeting, including grant funding as a matching fund for two grants that they have received already from the State Historic Preservation Office of \$50,000, and a Connecticut Trust grant of \$14,000. The church is located

at the corner of Concord and South Main, and has three substantial stained glass windows which are highly prevalent on their building façade. The church has been very diligent in trying to maintain the historic integrity of their building. The church will provide around \$25,000 to make up the difference for the total project cost, which is about \$128,000. The state grants, both the SHPO grant and the Connecticut Trust grant, require a match funding, and the language included was a not to exceed number because if their costs come in under the total estimated project cost, the Agency's share would be reduced accordingly. The only outstanding portion of the funding source is the church's, and the Reverend committed that that was not a problem for them, but they can't go to contract on the project until all their funding sources are in place.

The next phase of this would be putting together a finalization of their scope of work and bid documents. Depending on the bids returned back, the pieces of this would be adjusted, and there is the possibility of reducing the project scope. If in fact they cannot do all the windows, the most prominent window that you see on the street would be the first priority, and the side windows would be their second priority.

**** MS. TORRANO MOVED TO APPROVE THE NORWALK REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT APPLICATION SUBMITTED BY THE CANAAN INSTITUTIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH FOR AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$38,400 IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROGRAM GUIDELINES DATED NOVEMBER 2017. GRANT FUNDING IS AVAILABLE IN ACCOUNT 09170910 5777 C0591**

**** MR. DEVINE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

II. WALL STREET-WEST AVENUE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN PRESENTATION BY RPA

Ms. Strauss said the Commission is not being asked to approve the plan, but to approve for the plan to go out to the public approval process and to schedule a public hearing for the March 13th meeting of the Redevelopment Agency. She went through a Power Point of the draft documents and the vision for the area and the draft recommendations.

The plan area, which combines the previous West Avenue Redevelopment Plan area and the Wall Street Redevelopment plan area, extends a little bit west to include the hospital and comes down to include the Toys R Us site. This site has been identified as a potential soft site. The purpose of the plan is to come up with a vision for the future based on the community character, economic development, mobility and connectivity, and a road map for achieving that vision through zoning amendments and design guidelines, capital investment and identifying the opportunity sites in the area. They hope to have this plan adopted by April of this year.

They have been working on this for about nine months and have had several outreach meetings and seven working group meetings. Two zoning commissioners are on the working group as well as the Director of P&Z. They talked to residents, government agencies, retail and commercial businesses, property owners and waterfront businesses, institutions and social service organizations, and banks and the development community. The vision for the Wall Street-West Avenue Redevelopment Area is one that is innovative, authentic, lively, affordable, and accessible. They want to attract new types of businesses, jobs and entrepreneurs, and capitalize on the physical, economic and network opportunity. They want the vision for the neighborhood to remain authentic, but preserving the historic character, recognizing that there are growing arts

organizations, local businesses and restaurants, and preserve and use connections to the waterfront and preserve the industrial uses.

The plan recommendation has zoning regulations and zoning changes and recommends tax incentives and capital improvements, and collaborative planning and investment. There are so many assets in this neighborhood already, but it requires fostering that collaboration and bringing those organizations together. The plan capitalizes on neighborhood assets such as the library, the Wall Street Theater, Garden Cinema, Lockwood Matthews, Stepping Stones, the hospital and open spaces such as Freese Park, Union Park, Matthews Park, the Harbor Loop Trail, the River Valley Trail, the waterfront and the Plaza at Waypointe.

One of the recommended zoning changes is to combine the Central Business District A and B, as they are very similar except for the amount of reactivated ground floor space, so they are going to make a recommendation that it doesn't necessarily need to be retail, it needs to be activated. Steve Kleppin and the zoning staff has reviewed the plan preliminarily and they think it is a good idea, so they are hoping the Zoning Commissioners will buy in on it.

Mr. Sheehan said there is no point in doing redevelopment plans that don't have the requisite zoning to support them, and that has been an issue. One thing that they did right at Waypointe was make an application for the text change and he thinks they should do that in this district. The activated ground floor use needs to apply throughout the entire district and not just on the main arterials, which is an important lesson they learned on the previous Wall Street zoning. When you can't populate your main arterials with retail, it's hard to imagine that you're going to have quality retail on non arterial streets.

Ms. Strauss said they are going to recommend a Waterfront Design District Overlay Zone that would protect and grandfather the uses that are there, but any new development would have standards for waterfront access, a public art requirement, a buffer between new residential and existing industrial, and allow for breweries and maker spaces and different uses while protecting the uses that are there. The plan is going to recommend corridor design guidelines on West Avenue, Wall Street, Maple Street, Commerce Street, Harbor Avenue, Main Street, Knight Street and High Street for sidewalks, bike lanes, street furniture, lighting, signage, public spaces and gateway treatment.

They have identified a few opportunity sites in the redevelopment plan area, the first one being the former YMCA that's owned by Norwalk Hospital. Norwalk Hospital has ideas and they have met with the hospital to talk to them about it and they are open to hearing what our ideas are, and a representative from the hospital has been part of their working group.

They are going to recommend reimagining the Pulse Point transit hub and perhaps moving it to the South Norwalk Train Station and creating a more modern transportation hub. Also reimagining the Yankee Doodle Garage block and redevelop and make recommendations for the largely vacant office building at the corner of Burnell and Belden.

The library block is another opportunity site, and with the library going through a capital plan and with the courthouse possibly closing, there is the opportunity for doing a mixed use development on that site.

The Agency and the City can play a leadership role in developing collaborative partnerships with the neighborhood institutions and bringing them together to leverage their shared values and what

they want to see happen in the neighborhood, and that those be identified to the major institutions; the hospital, Stepping Stones, the city, the library, the local industry, King Industry and Devine. One of the collaborations should be centered on health and wellness because they have such rich resources in that area. And obviously with the Wall Street Theater opening, Norwalk, 2.0, Stepping Stones and the Lockwood Matthews Mansion, there is real opportunity to grow an arts and culture magnet in this area.

Chairman Serrano said one of the things they mentioned earlier was the title or what they are going to be calling the plan, because people get concerned when they see it referred to as a redevelopment plan.

Ms. Strauss said by statute it needs to be called a redevelopment plan and meet the requirements that the state has for a redevelopment plan, but it's going to be called the Wall Street-West Avenue Neighborhood Plan. A big part of this plan is preservation and preserving what is already there, and that doesn't come through when you call something a redevelopment plan.

Chairman Serrano said what the Commissioners are being asked to do now is open up a public comment period and then have a public hearing at their March 13th meeting, so he wants to make sure that, to the extent everyone knows their calendar, that the 13th works for the Commissioners. (Commissioners confirmed their availability.)

**** MS. TORRANO MOVED TO APPROVE ADVANCING THE DRAFT WALL STREET-WEST AVENUE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN TO PUBLIC COMMENT FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 22, 2018 TO MARCH 13, 2018 AND APPROVE A PUBLIC HEARING TO BE HELD AT THE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY MEETING ON MARCH 13, 2018.**

**** MS. LANGLEY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IV. NEW BUSINESS

None.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further New or Old Business, upon motion of Ms. Torrano and second of Ms. Langley, the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency meeting was adjourned at 7:01 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Carrie Provenzale