

Sono Task Force Meeting Notes

Meeting Date: Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2015

Meeting Location: Sono Library, Community Room

Attendees: Bill Collins, Stephanie Pelletier, Bruce Beinfield, Tim Sheehan, Chris Loynd, Tilly Hatcher, Susan Sweitzer, Bill Finger

Unable to Attend: Rod Johnson, Travis Simms, Eric Rains, Bob Burgess, Tom Rich

Guests: Bruce Chimento, Dick Brescia

- 1) Bill C. opened meeting welcoming attendees and public attendees. Bill thanked the Library for hosting the meeting.
- 2) Bill C. introduced Dick B. for a parking update as follows:
 - a. The NPA has been conducting a listening tour with the community; the NPA is anxious to talk about issues and listen to complaints. A rate analysis is underway to determine impacts. Desmond has been hired as parking consultant.
 - b. NPA is expecting to report back later this Fall with a blueprint on how best to proceed with parking resources from Wall Street to Sono.
 - c. Bill C. inquired about the parking hours along Washington Street and N/S Main Streets. Discussion was held about the small public/free parking resources such as at Mathews Park and at Oyster Shell park. Dick said that Desmond will be reviewing all parking resources in the area.
- 3) Bill asked Susan Sweitzer for a Wayfinding update as follows:
 - a. Marje Consulting has been hired to as the wayfinding consultant.
 - b. A public presentation is slated for Oct. 14; place and time TBD.
 - c. The wayfinding scope is limited to the Urban Core. Some of the learnings may be applicable to other parts of the city.
 - d. Once the design and plan have been approved, then the project can be put out to bid. The consultant is designing a system. The Bike/loop trail are part of review.

- 4) Branding for Norwalk
 - a. The Zunda Group has been hired to re-brand the City of Norwalk. The new brand will be conveyed on the City website and in print materials.
- 5) Bruce Chimento reported on Trash and Garbage:
 - a. Bruce reviewed a map of the Webster lot.
 - b. The compactor behind the N. Main St. stores is to be replaced. 50 Washington Street owner to handle.
 - c. The dumpster in the NW corner of the lot needs to have its owner identified.
 - d. Bruce will discuss Haviland and Washington Street with City Carting.
- 6) Street Lighting update:
 - a. Note: Steve Semaya is no longer on the Sono Task Force. Tim Sheehan provided the following update:
 - b. It is cost prohibitive to change to LED lighting.
 - c. There is an application to the DOT for additional lighting for Washington Street from N/S Main Streets to MLK. These would be the historic lights.
 - d. Tilly Hatcher inquired about how the light wells can be located to prevent pedestrian 'pinch points'. Tim commented that to remedy that situation, this project will need funding and that the request for funding be put in place prior to the Capital budget process which starts Jan. 1, 2106.
 - e. Bruce C. commented that anyone can contact the DPW at 203-854-3200 to submit a work order: i.e. for lights to be turned on. Also, go onto the DPW website at the city website to file a work order.
- 7) DSSD for Sono
 - a. There was general discussion about the status of the DSSD in Sono. GGP has indicated that they would potentially contribute to a DSSD in some way. Stephanie explained what had been done over the past few years, leading up to a presentation to the Ordinance Committee in March 2014. Draft maps, budgets and property owner lists had been compiled.
 - b. Bill C. asked the group if the DSSD should be a Task Force agenda item.
- 8) Mall Update provided by Tim Sheehan
 - a. On Sept. 15 there is a joint meeting to discuss the business terms of the LDA and the CMSP.
 - b. The Urban Renewal Plan will have a separate public hearing on Oct. 5.
 - c. Tilly asked if an environmental impact statement had been issued.

- d. Bruce B. commented that the mall will potentially bring a lot of people to the neighborhood. This increase in visitation will impact Sono, so how can Sono use the mall to our advantage in terms of maximizing the visitor experience. Since the mall is so close to the river and the Aquarium, the goal should be to get visitors out of their cars and walking around Sono.
- e. Bill F. asked if there would be Sono wayfinding at the mall.
- f. Susan S. suggested that connections would be created via the use of new apps for mobile devices.
- g. Tilly mentioned that the Norwalk Bike/Walk task force has provided inputs to GGP.

9) The Pearl

- a. Bruce C. said that the project has been delayed, so the planned Washington Street paving will most likely happen in Oct. If the paving doesn't happen in October, it will have to be delayed.
- b. For the proposed FD Rich hotel, the design review hasn't been completed and the applicant has not responded.

10) Aquarium update provided by Chris Loynd

- a. Chris spoke about tourism marketing and provided stats and information about visitation at the Aquarium.
- b. Chris suggested that Norwalk is not a tourism destination, but a sum of its assets which need to be branded and marketed. Efforts need to be made to help tourists get value out of their visit to Norwalk. Building up awareness and PR are critical to keep Norwalk top of mind when visitors are making tourism decisions.
- c. Stephanie suggested that maybe the Task Force set up a marketing sub-committee.

11) Misc.

- a. Stephanie suggested that the Task Force needs new appointees to replace members who can no longer participate.

SoNo Comeback Task Force

September 15, 2015

Creating SoNo as a Tourism Destination.

The Maritime Center, now The Maritime Aquarium, is the successful result of a \$35 million investment by the City of Norwalk in 1986 and the Aquarium opened in 1988. The latest economic impact study (2003) shows the Aquarium's impact to Norwalk exceeds \$20 million per year. Attendance averages around 500,000 per year, 36% from out of state. How can the City capitalize on its investment?

Excerpts: *Norms and Space. Understanding Public Space Regulation in the Tourist City.*
Lucas Konzen, Lund University, Milan 2013 Doctoral Dissertation

Chapter 1.3 "The Rise of the Tourism City"

"In our globalized world, every major urban center is struggling with peer cities for a privileged position in the international division of labor and consumption. The role of local governments has fundamentally changed due to this inter-urban competition and the interior space of cities has been redeveloped to meet the demand for urban attractiveness. Cities are now assuming entrepreneurial practices in order to defeat their adversaries and encourage economic growth, new business opportunities, and employment generation. City governments are developing aggressive strategies aimed to attract direct private investment, bring money through tourism, and benefit from the financial resources distributed by public administration agencies at higher levels of government."

"Urban tourism almost always appears as a possible segment for innovation. Among the various strategies of space production, the conversion of cities into tourist destinations is perhaps one of the most contradictory. Indeed, to a certain extent all major cities now market themselves as tourist cities."

"The idea that the creation of tourist attractions, if necessary through massive public investment, will generate socioeconomic development is one of the biggest accepted truths of our time in terms of the politics of space."

Chapter 5: Making a Living from an Image: Public Space Regulation in Acapulco, Mexico

"Nobody knows the State of Guerrero abroad, but surely has heard the word Acapulco, said a government official, while looking out over the Bay of Santa Lucia." A few sentences on a tourist brochure, illustrated with a photo of La Quebrada cliff divers, give plenty of reasons to believe he is right."

"Tourist promotion has been essential. Tourist promotion means marketing an image of the city. This is because there is a need to produce anticipation of the experience among potential visitors. Once tourists arrive, there is the desire to for confirmation of the expectations towards the promised experience."