ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
AD HOC AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
THURSDAY, AUGUST 1, 2024

ATTENDANCE: Joshua Goldstein; Chair (ECDC), Jalin Sead: Chair (AHAHC), Heather Dunn, James Frayer, Lisa Shanahan, Nicole Edy, Barbara Smyth, Nora Niedzielski-Eichner, Nicol Ayers, Darlene Young, Greg Burnett

STAFF: Sabrina Godeski, Michelle Andrzejewski

OTHER: Stevin Kleppin; Director of Planning and Zoning, Ashley Ley; Consultant, AFK

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Goldstein called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Roll was called as reflected above.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Diane Lauricella
21 Little Fox Lane

Ms. Lauricella had questions as to whether the plans being discussed had anything to do with similar plans being discussed by other committees. She stated she felt the survey conducted by P&Z was biased in favor of large five to six-story buildings. She also expressed her opinion about ADU dwellings and various programs that could help seniors.

NEW BUSINESS

A. DISCUSSION

1. **Review and update on the Affordable Housing Plan**

Mr. Sead indicated he was excited about the much-needed new study and his hopes to bring it before the public and use it to work with allies in Hartford and D.C. He also expressed his excitement for the opportunity to continue to hear the presentation and get input from fellow council members.

Mr. Kleppin described the nature of the study stating it would be data-driven. He stated the goal was to achieve very specific, very actionable recommendations. He indicated Ms. Andrzejewski had been overseeing the study.

Ms. Andrzejewski introduced Ms. Ley from the consulting team at AFK. Ms. Ley was brought on to prepare the housing needs assessment and affordable housing action plan. She pointed out that the plans were prepared in conjunction with Kevin Dwarka and the Pace Land Use Law Center.

Ms. Ley presented a series of slides describing what will eventually become the city's affordable housing action plan.

Her discussion covered the following:
The housing needs assessment overview and the eight key findings.

1. The city's critical need to provide affordable housing, social services, and economic pathways for very low-income households.
2. The financial burden suffered by renters and homeowners at all income levels.
3. The city of Norwalk needs to significantly expand the supply of affordable rental housing to households earning less than $75,000.
4. The city of Norwalk needs more options for affordable home ownership.
5. Norwalk needs more housing for retail workers, public safety personnel, teachers, and hospital workers.
6. Noting the benefits of local housing It was also noted the lack of size-appropriate housing.
7. The need for two-bedroom and family-size rental apartments
8. Linking housing to transit, walkable neighborhoods, and economic development strategies.

Ms. Ley stated that the above assessment led to the Community Values Statement of making housing accessible to all. She further stated a place where residents can live and work because of the affordable, diverse housing stock that accommodates the diversity of its population.

Ms. Ley presented a slide describing the potential policy response to housing needs. She provided a brief explanation of each element in the policy. They are as follows:

- Local zoning and regulatory changes
- Public/private partnerships.

- Tax and financing innovations.
- Administration and implementation.
- Federal and state advocacy.

Ms. Ley then discussed the steps in the process for creating a guidebook to an affordable housing plan in Norwalk.

Mr. Sead had questions about the workforce options and people moving from the city since COVID resulting in people from Norwalk getting priced out of the market. Ms. Ley addressed the pressure from people moving out of the city. She indicated that micro-grants may be a solution.

Mr. Frayer was curious about the funding of affordable housing and the pressures from people coming from out of town. He wanted to know about the possibility of the hospital and other local businesses to build employee housing. Ms. Ley said that was something that could be included under the umbrella of public/private partnerships. Ms. Ley then described the various ways that could be used to achieve that.

Ms. Young wanted to know how much land the city had to dedicate to development. Ms. Ley indicated they were analyzing under-used properties both city-owned and institutional. for this purpose.

Mr. Kleppin stated there was a workforce housing program already in place but that it only targeted one segment of that population. He also pointed out that the issues can't be resolved by Planning and Zoning alone and that the Housing Authority was working on other aspects. He discussed various zoning changes designed to increase the number of two-family dwellings in certain areas.

Mr. Kleppin also discussed various economic ramifications and how to optimize current programs.

Ms. Smyth wanted to know the plan for staying on top of all the regulations. She also wanted to know how to change the narrative that tax abatements are bad. Ms. Ley discussed various options. Mr. Sead pointed out that the issue affected everyday people who despite their making the median income were still spending up to 40% on housing. Mr. Kleppin noted the issue of the lack of available land.

Ms. Smyth had a question about the impact of the AirBnB market in the area. Mr. Kleppin stated that there were some complaints in communities, but the problem wasn't prolific.

Mr. Burnett had a question directed to Ms. Ley and Mr. Kleppin as to whether any data research collected was specific to Norwalk. Ms. Ley stated the trends seen in Norwalk were comparable with the sister cities in the region. Mr. Kleppin stated he had notes on the subject and would email them to Mr. Burnett.

Ms. Dunn questioned what family size entailed and wanted to know whether there had been a deep dive into what types of housing were needed. Ms. Ley responded there was not enough two-plus bedroom housing available which led to crowding. She also noted outreach to senior groups to get recommendations from that demographic. Ms. Dunn asked about five-bedroom units. Ms. Ley stated there weren't many available. She noted that in their community outreach events, there is a desire and need for larger units to prevent overcrowding situations. Ms. Ley pointed out there were guidelines from HUD on what constituted overcrowding. Ms. Dunn wanted to know about the average number of adults versus underaged people in the household. Ms. Ley indicated that data was available. Ms. Dunn commented that they needed to know the specific needs in terms of their population.

Ms. Edy had questions about whether there was a cap on workforce housing. She also had questions about increasing the income limit for workforce housing. Ms. Edy also asked if they were monitoring the workforce list to prevent people who don't live or work in Norwalk from getting on the list. Ms. Ley proceeded to answer the first two questions and deferred the third to city staff.

Ms. Young had questions about rent stabilization and the large rent increases being imposed by landlords. Ms. Ley addressed the questions. Ms. Kleppin confirmed Ms. Ley's response. Ms. Young had income eligibility questions. Mr. Kleppin stated they were looking into creating a multitiered program to address that issue.

Mr. Frayer stated that this was an area that required more detail and a more specific look at the issues that may arise. He stated developers were not going to create affordable housing if they weren't going to get their money out of it.

Mr. Goldstein discussed the importance of workforce housing. He asked if the median was calculated on a regional or city basis. Mr. Kleppin responded that it was the state median. Mr. Goldstein was concerned about the fact that 75% who work in the Norwalk public sector don't live in the city. He recommended finding some way to suggest to the state to calculate workforce income qualifications on a more regional basis. Mr. Goldstein also discussed ADUs and whether or not their construction has become stagnant over the last 30 years. Mr. Kleppin spoke about the regulation changes. He indicated he hadn't seen any current data on whether those changes have had an impact. Mr. Goldstein complimented Ms. Ley on the work she had done on the draft.

Ms. Dunn was concerned about the effects of a life change such as a raise causing you to have to uproot your life and find new housing. Mr. Kleppin explained the rules regarding workforce housing. He stated they would be running afoul of the statute by ignoring the income rules. He further went on to say there were things they could do to address concerns while remaining compliant with the statute.

Ms. Andrzejewski mentioned an old policy and then posited recommendations for finding some wiggle room for income changes. Ms. Young shared her concerns about people in workforce housing who were later hit with fees for various services tacked on to their rent. She also

expressed concerns that people could lose their housing based on a simple increase in income. Mr. Goldstein agreed something did have to be done to protect those in workforce housing. Ms. Young pointed out issues with deeds in perpetuity and issues with equity.

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner requested a list of city properties without restrictions that would prohibit construction. Ms. Ley indicated they were analyzing underutilized land in the city. She stated there would be a list and a map in the final report. She also stated there would be a screening process and where available deed restrictions would be noted.

Mr. Sead thanked everybody for participating.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to discuss.

ADJOURNMENT

** **MR. GOLDSTEIN MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**
** **MR. SEAD SECONDED THE MOTION.**
** **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting ended at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
Telesco Secretarial Services
China Mayhew

CITY OF NORWALK
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
AUGUST 1, 2024

ATTENDANCE:	Joshua Goldstein; Chair, Heather Dunn, Jim Frayer, Barbara Smyth, Lisa Shanahan, Jalin Sead, Darlene Young
STAFF:	Sabrina Godeski
OTHER:	Todd Kallanbach; DKA, Brian Kaspr; Chair, Arts and Culture Committee

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Goldstein called the meeting to order at 8:23 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Roll call was listed as stated above.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Diane Lauricella
21 Little Fox Lane

Ms. Lauricella requested the commission return to the drawing board and not approve the West Street mural project replacing the vines. She listed her reasons for wanting the project to return to the drawing board. She cited the expense of bringing in and housing the two artists and their assistants. She was displeased by the fact the artists chosen were neither local nor regional. She felt it mirrored the same problem they had with the yellow ribbon (the Vines). She was also curious to know the cost of removing the sculpture and site clean-up.

I. ADMINISTRATION

A. Approval of the Minutes of June 6, 2024 regular meeting.

** **MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Mr. Goldstein stated in New Business, that the third paragraph to clarify Mr. Goldstein said it should read the council. On page two Himes should be changed to Heims. He also noted that AARP should be changed to ARPA.

** **THE MINUTES PASSED UNANIMOUSLY AS AMENDED.**

II. NEW BUSINESS

A. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

1. **Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to execute all documents to renew the contract for Marketing Services between the City of Norwalk and Dorenburg Kallenbach Advertising, LLC for one hundred and fifty thousand dollars ($150,000) for one year. –**
   Sabrina Godeski & Tod Kallenbach
   ACCT: 01-37-80-5258

** **MS. SMITH MOVED THE ITEM FORWARD FOR APPROVAL.**

Ms Godeski described the services and role played by DKA for the city of Norwalk. For the sake of time, the PowerPoint presentation was eliminated.

Ms. Dunn was told that DKA is located in Bloomfield, CT.

** **THE MOTION PASSED WITH SIX IN FAVOR AND ONE ABSTENTION (HEATHER DUNN).**

Items two and three were read into the record and moved together.

` **MS. SMYTH MOVED THE ITEMS FORWARD.

Ms. Godeski explained this was an Arts and Cultural Committee item that had to go to the council. She explained the process leading up to the current point including financing, budget, artist selection, design, and public opinion.

Mr. Kaspr discussed the artist selection process which involved an open call. The call yielded one hundred artists which were narrowed down by a subcommittee to five and from there to three. Of those three one was chosen.

Ms. Godeski stated pending approval the Vines would be coming down next week at a cost of $14,000. She noted the pieces were being put into storage until they could be placed in alternate locations. Ms. Godeski then explained that pending approval the artists would begin work on Labor Day Weekend.

Mr. Kaspr explained the initial pricing and various elements used to trim the price. He indicated the cost for the 20,000 sq. ft. project was half the going rate.

Ms. Godeski answered Ms. Smyth stating that the money was approved in the Capital Budget last year. Mr. Kasper answered Ms. Smyth's question about local artists. He pointed out there were not many local artists who answered the open call. He also stated selections were made based on the artwork alone, not on who the artist was or where they were from. Ms. Godeski did note they were doing other projects using hyper-local artists.

Ms. Young wanted to know how the mural would connect South Norwalk to Wall Street. Mr. Kaspr explained unlike the Vines the mural could potentially create an environment where people had a better opportunity to interact with the art. Ms. Young wanted to know if the artists were asked to present work with a suggested theme. Mr. Kaspr said there was a suggestion made. Ms. Godeski clarified the process for Ms. Young. Ms. Young went on to say that local artists should be provided with more high-end opportunities.

Mr. Sead wanted to know what steps were being taken to build relationships with local artists.
Ms. Godeski explained the various approaches they use when looking for artists.

Ms. Smyth was concerned about the artist's safety while working. Mr. Kaspr stated the artists were renting what they needed to complete the job.

Mr. Goldstein had questions about how the colors would finally render and asked about their effect on people who are colorblind. Ms. Godeski indicated there were options they could look into.

Mr. Goldstein had questions about another large project. Ms. Godeski and Mr. Kaspr clarified that it was the Fence project which was being done by a local artist.

Ms. Dunn wanted to know what makes the mural intrinsically Norwalk. She thought it was an awful large amount of money to spend without a more direct link to Norwalk. Mr. Kaspr said her concerns could be made for any design that doesn't speak to the contemporary history of Norwalk. Ms. Dunn spoke of several themes that would be more Norwalk-centric. Ms. Smyth said humpback whale aside the mural depicted the natural habitat of Norwalk. Mr. Kaspr noted that for a project of this scale, nature is hard to be upset about. He also pointed out that the image in the packet was far from what the actual mural would look like. He then went on to describe the work of both artists. Mr. Kaspr stated it would be a massive piece of art made by two nationally recognized artists and that is a huge point of pride.

2. Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to execute a contract with Sonny Behan to install the West Avenue Underpass Mural in an amount not to exceed ninety-one thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars ($91,750). – Sabrina Godeski & Brian Kaspr
ACCT: 0923-3760-5777
0924-3760-5777

** **MR. FRAYER MOVED TO APPROVE THE ABOVE MOTION.**
** **THE MOTION PASSED WITH FOUR IN FAVOR, TWO OPPOSED (MS. DUNN, MR. SEAD), AND ONE ABSTENTION (MS. YOUNG).**

3. **Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to execute a contract with Maranje, LLC to install the West Avenue Underpass Mural in an amount not to exceed ninety-one thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars ($91,750) – Sabrina Godeski & Brian Kaspr**
   ACCT: 0923-3760-5777
   0924-3760-5777

** **MR. FRAYER MOVED TO APPROVE THE ABOVE MOTION.**
** **THE MOTION PASSED WITH FOUR IN FAVOR, TWO OPPOSED (MS. DUNN, MR. SEAD), AND ONE ABSTENTION (MS. YOUNG).**

III. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to discuss.

ADJOURNMENT

** **MR. FRAYER MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN.**
** **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting ended at 9:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
China Mayhew
Telesco Secretarial Services