

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 5, 2017**

ATTENDANCE: John Kydes, Chairman; Thomas Livingston,
Shannon O'Toole-Giandurco, Douglas Hempstead,
Faye Bowman (6:36 p.m.), John Igneri (6:54 p.m.)

ABSENT: Travis Simms

STAFF: Timothy Sheehan, Redevelopment Agency Director;
Tami Strauss, Community Development Planning Director;
Elizabeth Stocker, Economic Development Director; Timothy
Carney, Housing Development Project Manager

CALL TO ORDER.

Mr. Kydes called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Kydes called the roll. A quorum was present.

Ms. Bowman joined the meeting at 6:36 p.m.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

Mr. Kydes asked if there was anyone present who wished to address the Committee on any topic not related to the CDBG funding presentations. No one came forward.

BUSINESS.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) PROGRAM.

1. Presentation of CDBG Applications for Program Year 43.

#16 - Carver Center – Facilities Project – HVAC Replacement, Phase 3.

Ms. Novelette Peterkin came forward and thanked the Committee for their previous support. She reported that they have now completed the first two phases of a four phase HVAC Replacement project. She reminded everyone that the building was only intended to last 20 years, but they were now in their 40th year. There have been several challenges, such as an air vent that was blocked when the original construction was done.

This will require the wall to be demolished to move forward. Also the renovations require the facility to be brought up to the current code requirements. The current plan is to replace two units near the gym and relocate them. Two storage areas will be converted to a Teen Center.

Mr. Kydes asked if they had looked into efficiency rebates for updating the HVAC. He was told that the heating and cooling systems were separate systems and that while there are rebates available for lighting, there are none for HVAC.

Mr. Hempstead asked about the study that was done for the upgrading projects and if it was still being utilized. The representative said that the original upgrading project was the one that they were following for the project.

#10 Person-to-Person - Emergency Assistance Program.

Ms. Ceci Maher, the Executive Director, came forward and thanked the Committee for their financial assistance in the past. Person to Person has been around for 48 years helping people keep utilities on and families warm. Ms. Maher gave an overview of the process for a client and how they work with outside agencies to provide services. Over 600 families received utility assistance.

Ms. Mayer said that the organization also provides food and they have served over 5,000 hot meals this year. The recovery from the recession has not lifted all boats.

#22 Rowayton Senior Housing Corporation – Improve Heating Efficiency

Mr. Bob Eydt, the president of the Hilltop Homes, came forward to speak to the Committee about a project for a heat pump to replace the current electric heating. The residents in the building all receive Section 8 assistance. The group is trying to reduce their operating costs so they won't have to raise the rents for these individuals. They are also hoping to make some changes to the bathrooms by replacing bath tubs with more accessible units.

Mr. Hempstead asked what the anticipated energy savings would be. Mr. Eydt said they expected the savings to be between 10-15%. That money would be used on renovating bathrooms. The building hasn't been worked on in 30 years and needs updating.

#11 Saturday Academy- Cryptography

Ms. Cynthia Barnett came forward and spoke about a program for women in cryptography, which is the study of encrypted data. With all the concerns about cyber security, this will prepare these students for the 21st century. It will also strengthen their math and technology skills. These types of jobs are not offered in schools and gives the students a chance to learn about other career opportunities.

Mr. Livingston asked if it was just for girls. The representative said that it was because the girls were not going into the math, technology and science areas.

Ms. Bowman asked a program that had been held a few years ago. The representative said that the class was about coding and that the results were excellent.

Mr. Kydes asked how long the classes lasted. The representative said that it was once a week for a year.

Mr. Igneri joined the meeting at 6:54 p.m.

#21 Open Door Shelter – Family Housing Renovations

Ms. Jeannette Archer-Simons, the Open Door Shelter Executive Director, came forward and spoke about the construction that the Shelter is currently undergoing. There are about 80 families that are homeless on any given night in Fairfield County. In order to house these families, the group purchased a house that will provide units for 4 families. The request is for funding for the renovations for the building for the families. It is estimated that it will be \$175,000 to renovate a unit. The current Building has four apartments but they need to have multiple bedrooms. Discussion followed about the details of the rentals and potential rents.

#20 – Norwalk Senior Center – Accessible and Safe Parking.

Ms. Beatrix Winter came forward to speak about the Norwalk Senior Center. She thanked the Committee for their previous support. Right now there is work underway to update the bathrooms.

Since the pre-school program moved into the building, the available parking has vanished. Many of the seniors cannot walk very far and others are parking across the street, which is a very busy street. By paving part of an unused tennis court, they could have over 20 more parking spaces.

Ms. O'Toole-Giandurco asked about the amount of parking. Ms. Winter said that originally there was supposed to be valet parking, but now they are having parents park for meetings and the Senior Center now only has a third of the parking left. By using the tennis court, the teachers would have parking and the seniors could park closer to the building.

Mr. Livingston asked several questions about where the various people were parking and the amount of the contingency allocation. He also wished to know if this had been discussed with any other City officials. Ms. Winter said that she had been discussing this

with Alan Lo. Mr. Kydes asked if there had been a dialogue between the Senior Center and the BOE. Ms. Winter said that Mr. Lo had spoken with them.

Mr. Hempstead said that since it was a City owned property, he felt that using CDBG funding for this was not right. He said that it would be better to do this as a Capital Project. Ms. O'Toole-Giandurco said that she had been through that area every morning and that the parking was tight. Mr. Hempstead said that the long term solution would help out. If the current parking area was restriped correctly, it could add between 8-10 more spaces.

#11 – Family and Children's Agency – Project REWARD

Ms. Elizabeth Murdoch, the Director of Behavioral House at the Family and Children's Agency came forward to speak about Project REWARD, which is focused on women with behavioral and drug issues. She said that the gender specific aspect of the project was extremely important. It is geared towards women and there are two levels of care: out-patient and therapy. The group provides both transportation and childcare to the clients. The previous funding source has cut a portion of the funding, which caused a shortfall. The referrals come from a multitude of sources.

Mr. Hempstead commented that he was hearing from other agencies that provide mental health services that the pressure is shifting back onto the local community.

#8 – Hair Tech Beauty and Barber Academy – Barber Academy Life Skills.

Ms. Darlene Young came forward with Mr. Victor Grant, the owner of the Hair Tech Barber Academy, to speak about the training of young people as barbers. The licensing costs can range from \$10,000 to \$20,000 and this program will allow the low income students to learn to be barbers. The student would have to purchase their own kits and the program would run about 10 months. At least two or three positions will be allocated for students from the shelter and the remaining students would be from the community.

Mr. Grant said that there were a number of people that just needed skills and a job so they can support their families. He has the State certification for the school, but would like to see more people to be successful. One student completed the program and is now working in Stamford. Ms. Young said that they require the students to have some ownership, which is why they are required to pay for their own kits.

#24 – STAR – Lighting the Way

Mr. Peter Saverine, the STAR Director of Philanthropy, came forward and thanked the Committee for their past support. He said that he would applaud the committee for helping groups with projects that would never get off the ground otherwise.

This request is for converting a storage area into two unisex handicapped bathroom stalls for those who are in wheelchairs, and will also have adult changing tables. STAR will be assuming responsibility for between 8 and 10 more clients who are wheel chair bound.

#3 -- ChoZen Few - LIFT (Learning Is Fun Too).

Ms. Mellodye "Sweets" Ragin of SoNo Entertainment and Recording Studio came forward to thank the Committee for their past support. The last program was on bullying and this new program will focus on cyber bullying. She described the video that the students had produced and how the students in another LIFT program sponsored by a church wanted to do even more. Some of those who had seen the video realized that they had not only been bullied, but that they had acted as bullies also.

#18 – North Guilford Studios -- Norwalk Businesses on Google Maps

Mr. Nicholas Berkun came forward and spoke about how his program works with the Street view Google maps. The street view photos can be linked together for a virtual tour. North Guilford will be working to handle private organizations like the Lockwood Mansion or the Gallaher Mansion and have a virtual tour built. It is important to update the maps.

Ms. O'Toole-Giandurco said that she understood that this was for Norwalk venues, but the organization is listed in Wallingford. Mr. Berkun said that they had been working on the local area and Ms. Strauss stated that it was eligible.

Mr. Kydes asked how the locations were chosen. Mr. Berkun said that there were two ways to do it, to have it publicly available to anyone or to have it restricted to those who visit a certain website. Discussion about the details followed.

Mr. Hempstead said that he was having difficulty connecting the idea of the street view to how it would help the people in the area. Mr. Berkun said that they would pay the volunteers who provide the mapping photos.

Mr. Livingston asked if there were studies that showed how effective it would be to have the photographs available.

Ms. Strauss said that this application was in the lower half of the chart for Public Facilities, so there is no public service component.

#17 – Homefront – Home Renovations

Mr. Sean O'Brien, the Executive Director, came forward and thanked everyone for their support. He said that the group was pleased to resume a relationship with the City. This program is a means of mobilizing volunteers to help repair over 600 homes. He spoke

about how an elderly Norwalk couple in their 80's were assisted and how it changed their quality of life by installing a ramp to one of their doors.

Last year's funding will be finished in May and the average repairs cost about \$7,500. The group is able to deliver about \$30,000 worth of repairs to various home owners.

#4 - Community Health Center – Dental Care for Seniors.

Ms. Spring Raymond came forward to speak about oral health for seniors. The demand for funding outstrips the available funding. As of September 30th, they helped over 300 Norwalk residents. The seniors that have such low income receive the dental treatment, but don't have any funding for lab fees for dentures. Ms. Raymond said that she was hoping to cover 40 patients. She said that she was very impressed with how much the Community Health Center does for the Norwalk residents.

Mr. Hempstead asked what the funding sources were. The representative said that the insurance payments were the things that were put back into the program.

#12 - Senior Services Coordinating Council – Senior Safety Net Part II

Ms. Laura Epstein came forward and spoke about the various services that were available to the seniors. There have been numerous scams and frauds that seniors have been subjected to. The program is the Senior Safety Net for physical and financial safety. The program teaches seniors to avoid scams and fraud issues. The group also works with the seniors in terms of safety around stairs and other means of access.

Mr. Livingston asked how the seniors were being informed about the program. The representative said that they serve about 2000 seniors that came through outreach and those who are disabled or come to their offices.

#19 - Norwalk Housing Authority – Irving Freese ADA Improvements.

Mr. Marcus Bordiere, the Norwalk Housing Authority Construction Project Manager thanked the Committee for their past support. This request is for automatic door openers for the Irving Freese Apartments. There are three handicapped units in the building and the other units are basically ADA compliant. While the units are accessible, the problem is gaining entrance to the buildings. This would involve a total of 5 doors. There is a security fob system at the doors and the automatic door closers are problematic because they close too quickly.

Mr. Kydes said that the request was less than total cost of the project. Mr. Bordiere said that he would be donating his time.

Mr. Hempstead asked if these apartments were on the ADA list that the council approves. Mr. Sheehan said that he would check with Adam Bovilsky about that.

#16 – Higher Education Literacy Professionals -- College Edge program –

Mr. Tristan Fields came forward and read portions from various essays written by the students about the College Edge program. About half of the current students have submitted their college applications to local schools. Most of the new students only know about the larger colleges that are not in Connecticut, but this re-directs their attention to more local colleges. Mr. Fields said that the program provides a bridge between where the students are and where they want to go.

Ms. Bowman said that she wanted to congratulate Mr. Fields on the effort that they made to reach out to the youth at various locations. Mr. Fields said that he was always surprised about the number of students who were not sure if they would go to college but had high GPAs.

Mr. Livingston asked how they reached out to the students. Mr. Fields said that there was a BOE email blast and the Norwalk Housing Authority had also advertised the program. He gave details of how they provide opportunities.

#5 – Domestic Violence Crisis Center (DVCC) - SustainAbilityCT (iACT)

Ms. Rachelle Coutramere came forward to speak about the various situations of financial abuse that people are subjected to. There are a variety of platforms and the legal department works to help the victim overcome their financial challenges, such as fraud and identity theft. Leaving a relationship may be a challenge because of the housing issues. The clients can engage in individual sessions or have group lessons on financial management.

Ms. Bowman asked how many individuals were served last year. Ms. Coutramere said that it was just over 400 people. The referrals come from a variety of sources.

#2 – Child Guidance Center of Mid-Fairfield County – Dialectical Behavioral Therapy

Ms. Marissa Mangone and Ms. Delphine Naidie came forward and thanked the Committee for their help in the past. This program is a safety net for families and serves adolescents who have behavioral issues, suicidal attempts, suicidal ideation and other issues. The program is two hours a week for 16 weeks. The clients are committed to treatment and are actively engaged in the program.

Mr. Hempstead asked if the organization was also facing funding cuts. He was told that they were and there was no other organization in Norwalk providing these types of services.

Ms. Bowman asked where they get referrals. The representative said that they get referrals from teachers, hospitals, private physicians, and many other sources.

#13. – Serving All Vessels Equally (S.A.V. E.) - Check and Connect

Ms. Debbie Rath said that she was happy to hear that the College Edge program was available because the need is great. They are keeping students in the school by connecting the students with mentors that help the students succeed. The parents' surveys have indicated that this program is a success because it is helping the students. The NHS administrators have also praised Check and Connect, and said that it leads to a decrease in truancy. The students who have been struggling have been encouraged and it has resulted in students having positive attitudes.

Mr. Livingston asked if they had considered BMHS. The representative said that they were trying to build a level of mentors to develop a culture at the school. McMahon has other similar types of programs there.

#14 -- Triangle Community Center - Case Management and Navigation Program

Mr. Anthony Crisci said the Triangle Community Center received its first ever public grant from CDBG last year. While the LGBT community is a relatively small percentage of the community, there are issues such as young adult homelessness, and 33% of the LGBT population is homeless. He went on to speak about the improvements in the intake process and having a director. Because of the 2016 funding, Norwalk received 216 National accolades for that on the Municipal Quality Index.

#7 – Food Access Coalition – SONO Common Ground Farmer's Market

There was no one from this group present.

#23 – South Norwalk Community Group – SoNoCC Renaissance Project

There was no one from this group present.

Ms. Strauss said that she had received a few questions emailed to her from the public about some of the applications that were presented. She said that she would like to have the answers as part of the record.

There was a question about the Hair Tech Beauty Academy proposal. The Agency does have a copy of the business license and their teaching license for the business. Since they

are a first time applicant for the CDBG funding, they have not received CDBG funding before.

There was a question regarding the North Guilford group. Ms. Strauss said that Mr. Berkun was a City of Norwalk employee in the Department of Public Works. She explained that there was a question regarding a potential conflict of interest in the group receiving CDBG funds. Ms. Strauss said that HUD would not have a conflict as it relates to the organization receiving CDBG funds. The Agency has also checked with Corporation Counsel regarding a possible conflict and has not yet received an answer.

Ms. Strauss said the last question was in regards to the Agency's City Neighborhood application and the information will be included in her presentation to the Committee.

Ms. Strauss said that the Redevelopment Agency was requesting funds for the City Neighborhood programs that includes housing rehabilitation, technical assistance with businesses, brownfields, parks and recreation and public facilities. There was a question regarding how many businesses the funding would cover and the Agency estimates that it will be between 10 and 15 businesses, but they don't know exactly how many that will be until the businesses apply for assistance for relocation or other issues.

Mr. Hempstead asked about the six acres of brownfields. Ms. Strauss said that they were anticipating 6 acres, and Ryan Park was 2 acres of the six. Discussion followed about the details and the various phases of the plan and the remediation plan to clean up the park.

Ms. Diane Cece said that she was the person who asked the three questions. She said that regarding the North Guilford organization, the other principal appeared to be a Norwalk City employee. The addresses for the two principals were City municipal addresses.

Ms. Cece said that she had asked about how they determine the amount of money for the brownfields. She said that she later realized that they had a formula for the amount.

Ms. Cece said that having municipal employees working with the program could be problematic.

Mr. Kimmel joined the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

December 1, 2016 Regular Meeting.

**** MR. KYDES MOVED THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 1, 2016.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 1, 2016 AS SUBMITTED PASSED WITH FIVE IN FAVOR (KYDES, BOWMAN, IGNERI,**

**LIVINGSTON, AND O'TOOLE-GIANDURCO) AND ONE ABSTENTION
(HEMPSTEAD)**

RECESS

Mr. Kydes declared a recess at 8:42 p.m. He called the meeting back to order at 8:50 p.m.

WALL STREET THEATER.

1. Approve advancing to the Common Council the third-party underwriting of the Section 108 loan for the Wall Street Theater Company.

Ms. Strauss said that the resolution approved by the Council in May with the final underwriting is in the package. The Agency undertook the underwriting and this is the final form.

Mr. Hempstead asked if the Redevelopment Agency could still proceed if the other items were not done. Ms. Strauss said that they had received a business plan and would email it to Mr. Hempstead tomorrow. Mr. Hempstead said that there were requests for plans and other information owed the Committee since 2012 and pointed out that the marketing plan included some unanswered questions. Ms. Strauss said that the marketing study was done and it recommended that a feasibility study be done. The feasibility study has been completed. Mr. Hempstead said that he was nervous about the Council committing to this with so many unanswered questions for Tuesday's meeting. Mr. Sheehan suggested that this item be put back to the second January meeting in order to give the Committee members more time to digest the information in the two studies. Ms. Strauss said that they would send out the full underwriting plan, the full marketing plan and the full feasibility study to the Committee promptly. Mr. Hempstead pointed out that this project has survived five different councils and two different mayors, which is what concerns him.

Ms. Bowman asked for a short update. Mr. Sheehan said that the project has a temporary Certificate of Occupancy.

Mr. Hempstead said that once the funding is committed, the City is ahead of the bank on this. He said that the City did not need to inherit a building that was not self-sustainable.

**** MR. KYDES MOVED TO TABLE THIS ITEM TO A SPECIAL MEETING
THAT WILL BE SCHEDULED AT THE END OF THE MONTH.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

NORWALK ENTERPRISE ZONE

1. Discuss Enterprise Zone and other state development programs.

Mr. Kydes asked Ms. Stocker to update the Committee on the options for the enterprise zone. She came forward and said that there were sections of the State statute that would provide guidelines. It would come before the City's legislative body for approval and did not give any certainty to tax abatements for the City staff and the developers.

The next area of incentives was tax increments for financing. The group focused on the 2015 law, which allows the community to make the decisions rather than the State.

The Tax Incremental Financial section focuses on the kind of financial growth that may occur in that district. She said it was similar to a sewer tax where all the entities were taxed and the funds reserved to have improvements in the future. Mr. Barron and Mr. Tom Hamilton were very cautious about that for several reasons.

The third incentive was the enterprise zone and there is more certainty because the terms are set out in black and white.

Mr. Hempstead asked if the City could be very specific in terms of what it would like to be built in the enterprise zone. Ms. Stocker said that they could not do that in an enterprise zone. Mr. Hempstead said that there were a variety of options associated with these projects. Discussion followed about how to provide housing and job opportunities.

Mr. Kydes said that what the Committee needed was to know what the tax assessment would be on the projects that were underway. Ms. Stocker said that she would email the information to Mr. Kydes.

Mr. Kimmel said that his understanding regarding using an incentive program was to attract the items that the Council wanted to see in a given area. Mr. Sheehan said that the plans were defined down to the individual parcels. He said that there was no rush on this and the Committee could review the previous plan to see what they have accomplished. Mr. Kimmel said that a number of projects have retail components but they are within each walking distance of a mall. He said that in order to adopt an incentive plan, he would like to have a clear goal in mind. Mr. Sheehan said that there were detailed plans for the corridors and the Committee had spent years reviewing the plans.

Mr. Kydes said that the goal was to have the options presented and to understand what kind of tax revenue the City would lose if an incentive plan was approved. Discussion followed.

Mr. Sheehan said that it was his understanding that the Council felt that there was a limited choice of the enterprise zone or nothing. Mr. Hempstead said that there had been a study done before the 2008 recession that had projections on the future needs such as the increase in students and the number of fire and police in terms of public safety. He said that he would like to know how accurate the projections were.

Mr. Kimmel said that when he was new to the committee, Mr. Sheehan had presented the various approved plans that the Agency had. He said that he would like to clarify what the 2017 targets should be. Mr. Sheehan said that the urban core could not survive successfully just on housing and retail.

Mr. Hempstead said that they had mentioned the qualification levels for the CDBG incomes for renewal and wished to know if the area did qualify. Ms. Strauss said that they did as of the last figures they had.

Mr. Kydes said that this issue would have to be revisited in the future.

WEBSTER STREET BLOCK

1. Discuss setting a Special Meeting date.

Mr. Kydes said that there would have to be a special meeting later this month on this issue. Mr. Sheehan said that the staff needs some direction on this issue.

The Committee agreed to schedule a Special Meeting on January 30th at 6:30 and there will be a meeting on February 2nd for the Capital Budget.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services.

PY43 Presentations to the Planning Committee

January 5, 2017

Tab # (office only)	Organization	Speaker's Name (please print)
16	Carver foundation	Novellette Peterkin
10	Person-to-Person	ORA MATHER
22	Rowayton Sr Housing	BOSS SYDT
11	by Saturday Academy	Cynthia Barnett
21	Open Door Shelter	Janneth Arthurson
20	Norwalk Senior Center	Beatrice Winter
6	Family+Children's Agency	Elizabeth Murdoch
8	Hair Tech Academy	Vincent Grant/Darlene Young
24	STAR, Inc.	Peter Savarino
18	North Guilford Studios INC	Nicholas Berkun
3	Chazen Fox Entertainment	JOSEPH MEMOYE RABIN
17	HomeFront, Inc.	SEAN O'BRIEN
4	Community Health Center	Spring Raymond
12	Senior Services Council	LAURA EPSTEIN
19	MAB FOR NORWALK HOUSING	MARCUS BORDIERE
9	HELP, INC	Tristan Fields
5	HomeFront Drcc	Meaghan Dwyer
2	Child Guidance Center	Marissa Mangone / Delphine Naudin
13	SAVE (Check & Connect)	Debbie Rath
14	Triangle Community Center	Anthony Crisci
25	Norwalk Redevelopment Agency (City Neighborhoods)	Tami Strauss
27	Norwalk Redevelopment Agency (CDBG Administration)	Tami Strauss