CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEARING &
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 7, 2016

ATTENDANCE:	John Kydes, Chair; Faye Bowman; Doug Hempstead; John Igneri; Tom Livingston; Shannon O'Toole Giandurco; Travis Simms
STAFF:	Timothy Sheehan, Redevelopment Director; Donna King, City Clerk
OTHER:	Mayor Harry Rilling; Donna King, City Clerk; Bruce Kimmel, Council Member; Dave Davidson; Diane Lauricella; Thomas E. Kulhawik, Chief of Police; Bruce Chimento, Director of Public Works; Michael Lyons, Chairman of the Board of Education; Steven Cecil, AIA ASLA , Principal, The Cecil Group; Paul Madden, Design Manager; Martin Vatra, Co-Developer; Mike Mushak; Tony Mobilia; Emily Innis; Former Mayor William Collins

CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM. A quorum was present.

FY2016-2017 CAPITAL BUDGET- CONSIDER ALLOCATIONS AND APPROVE ADVANCEMENT TO THE COMMON COUNCIL

Dave Davidson
Mr. Davidson came forward to speak on the item and stated that he lives in East Norwalk. He stated that his opinions and personal views in no way reflect any committee or board, and that he believes in investing in Norwalk's building infrastructure.

Mr. Davidson stated that while the Board of Education filed a capital budget submission request of $5 million, Mr. Tom Hamilton, Director of Finance for the Board of Education, indicated that they did not yet have definitive plans as they had only recently received the final results from their consultant's study. He stated that the Finance Director recommended $1.6 million and that there are three key factors to consider- the complexity of the issues to be addressed, the Planning

Committee's recommendation to submit a special appropriation once planning is done and efforts to allow room for the Board of Education's discretion. Mr. Davidson urged the committee to not designate any funding to their project until such time as specific support and preparation has taken place.

Diane Lauricella
Ms. Lauricella came forward to speak on the item and stated that there is a common thread running through the Capital budget.

In regards to the Public Works Fleet Replacement, she encouraged the committee to ensure that the basic standards of fleet maintenance be as green as possible, which will also render them less expensive. She stated that she has been on record for the past several years encouraging this development, and stated that perhaps a renewed interest in electric is responsible for the bump up. She stated that she will continue to do research and implored the committee members to ensure that there is a standard for minimum miles per gallon in fleet vehicles.

Ms. Lauricella requested that drainage mapping be added, stating that it is important to plan this variety of mapping for holistic change and management, as well as a modern, climate change sensitive department.

In regards to item H5 under Energy Conservation (Public Works), Ms. Lauricella asked if the $25,000 amount was a placeholder or if it is intended for a specific purpose. She stated that she isn't certain this is enough for this item, and that she would like to work with the Chair and others to find a way to increase the amount of energy saved. She then asked if there is a short and long range plan for each building, stating that having these in place would help in determining a feasible number.

In regards to item H-11 AKA Alternate Energy (Public Works), Ms. Lauricella urged the committee and Department heads to look at renewable energy sources for short and long term savings to taxpayer dollars, and further suggested they implement geothermal or solar energy in some of the City's buildings.

In regards to Water Pollution Control Authority and the Solids Handling facility, Ms. Lauricella commended the committee for looking at the building and noted the economic benefits of eliminating the smell issues associated with the building. She stated that the implication that the smell was related to low tides, as asserted by DPW's predecessor, was insulting to the citizens and inconsiderate of the impact this had on East Norwalk's development and quality of life. She urged the committee to consider new engineering solutions for odor control, and stated that there are new methods being employed abroad that they may wish to consider.

In regards to the Board of Education, Ms. Lauricella stated that she feels the facilities item must be funded, and that she respects the opinion of Mr. Davidson.

In regards to Parks and Recreation vehicles, Ms. Lauricella requested they consider a minimum vehicle miles per gallon.

Ms. Lauricella asked the committee to consider adding an item that would reserve funds for the updating of the Master Plan for Parks and Recreation, as it is roughly a decade old. She stated if this could be folded into POCD then that would be preferable, but that it needs to be updated in orderly to properly budget.

In regard to Information Technology (#1), Ms. Lauricella stated that Norwalk must invest in IT and that they need to develop and short and long-term plan for updating the City website. She stated that the long range goal is to make the City website more user friendly, and at present it definitely is not.

Ms. Lauricella asked that the committee withhold money for upgrades until they receive a full plan.

Chair- Committee to ask department heads any questions?

Mr. Hempstead
Mr. Hempstead asked Mr. Chimento why the amount requested for traffic updates is so negligible, and Mr. Chimento stated that they believe they have adequate funds in their accounts to fund planned upgrades. Mr. Hempstead asked about improvements along Seaview Avenue, and Mr. Chimento stated that they are looking towards improving the safety of the turn at the intersection of Seaview and First by adding traffic calming measures.

Mr. Hempstead asked Mr. Chimento if all of the funds for sidewalks (318) had been expended from last year, and Mr. Chimento answered in the affirmative. Mr. Hempstead asked if the footpath has been extended, and Mr. Chimento answered in the affirmative, stating that that it is presently under contract.

Mr. Hempstead asked why no money has been allotted for the watercourse main. Mr. Chimento stated that there were discussions held regarding taking funds from the Daphne-Honeysuckle Road designation to Watercourse maintenance.

Mr. Hempstead asked if they are currently waiting to hear back from the State regarding East Avenue Streetscape improvements, and Mr. Chimento answered in the affirmative.

Mr. Hempstead inquired about the Board of Education allotting no money for district paving this year. Mr. Chimento stated that he had no idea why this was, and that they typically provide them with the projects, as the City's contract can afford them lower costs, as they place the areas under larger blanket paving projects.

Mr. Hempstead expressed his concern that the driveways at the school are not in great shape, and have no money allocated to fix them. Mr. Rudl stated that the District did request funding, but that they don't believe it has been recommended at this point in the process. Mr. Rudl stated that money has been appropriated the past few years by the Council, and that Public Works stepped up and assisted in getting those projects done. Mr. Rudl stated that they will be spending the current year's capital budget money on some paving work at the school, but that their highest priority is the facilities study implementation.

In regards to the facilities study implementation, Mr. Rudl stated that the district has engaged outside architects, engineers, and consultants to prepare the facilities master plan. Mr. Rudl noted the following:

1. Following an enrollment and utilization study that covered enrollment projections for the next 3 years, the results indicated a seat deficit of about 610, and that the City's schools are currently at more than 100% capacity, where the average in the state is 74%. There are multiple portables across the City, and they confirmed that the seat deficit will grow over the next decade to about 900 seats.
2. Evaluation of all school buildings to come up with a prioritized list of projects, which was completed, presented and reviewed. They recommended a substantial amount of work be done, in excess of $100 million, with 3 major renovation projects being spotlighted- West Rocks, Jefferson and Columbus. It is further recommended that various improvements be done to bring buildings up to standard; among those improvements is the restoration or replacement of the original Marvin windows.
3. A number of alternatives were recommended in terms of how to address a seat deficit, and a complex area of planning requires a great deal of discussion. Among these solutions are the construction of a new school at Nathan Hale, an addition to Naramake Elementary, allowing it to become a K-8 school, alternative construction at St. Phillip's and renovation at Tracy.

Mr. Rudl stated that the Board of Education is still evaluating those recommendations.

The Chair asked how the specific number requested for facilities redevelopment was determined.

Mr. Rudl stated that the original request was filed prior to the numbers, and that it was just an understanding that the consultants would recommend a substantial capital program, which was pegged at about $100 million. He stated that they were advised to expect the architectural and associated engineering fees would run about 6% of the overall project cost. He stated that the proposed cost split is over 2 years, and that this was where the figure of $3 million came from. Mr. Rudl stated that it will now depend on what they request to bring forward to the City, and in the meantime, they are made aware that there is a substantial need to invest in current school facilities. He stated that the City schools represent the City's capital investment collectively, and that the number they requested is based on a 6% figure, which just so happens to fall in line with the $100 million over a five year period, with a recommended amount of $335 million gross investment over 10 years, with netting roughly $2 million in local money, with the rest being a reimbursement from the State. Mr. Rudl stated that this is an important line item, as they cannot take steps to begin without a funding source to do so. He stated that he cannot say that the Board is necessarily committed to any one project at present, but that they do know there are significant projects they need to bring forward. He stated that this is also important in ensuring they don't lose a full year of planning and design.

Mr. Kimmel stated that the term special appropriation has been used liberally and that his understanding of the term is in Mr. Rudl's capacity as Financial Director for the Board of Education, is that they cannot supplant planning. He stated that if there are too many special appropriation items, the ratings agencies will begin to ask questions about the City's planning and budgeting process. He questioned whether it would be a more sound practice to wait and make a special appropriation rather than fund the requested amount right now. Mr. Kimmel asked for clarification on the thinking of the Board, and noted that there would be an impact on debt service irrespective of the decision. Mr. Rudl stated that there is some language in the charter regarding special capital appropriations, and that in this case, due to the impending need for more seats and improvements, it technically qualifies as an emergency. Mr. Rudl stated that he knows the district needs to advance the issue and that it will cost money to do so. Mr. Rudl stated that they haven't requested the entire appropriation necessary to do the construction itself, and thus they feel it is okay to allot the amount for the project until such time as they decide which project to proceed with, and vet it through the appropriate bureaucratic channels.

Mr. Hempstead expressed similar concerns addressed by the Chair, and stated that it seems premature to commit the amount of funding requested when the Board hasn't picked their priorities at this stage in the process. Mr. Rudl stated that hopefully in the next 12 months (more likely 3 to 4 months), the Board will come to an agreement regarding top priorities for construction. Mr. Rudl stated as an example, if construction on Nathan Hale were to go forward, the project would be roughly in the $25 million range. Mr. Rudl stated that, with an estimated budget of $250 per square foot, the amount needed to design and advance any one project would fall roughly in the $3 million range. Mr. Hempstead stated that the $3 million seemed to be something of a guess, given they do not know the project they will choose. Mr. Hempstead stated that it would be foolish on the City's part to commit $3 million, taking the amount from someone else with a cohesive plan. Mr. Hempstead stated that he certainly is in favor of committing to the renovations, but has no desire to commit an amount as large as $3 million this early in the process, as it seems to be premature. Mr. Hempstead suggested that some funds should be allocated in that account for preliminary studies, but allotting money for half of the design fees is excessive. Mr. Rudl stated that $3 million is roughly a quarter of the amount required to design all the projects recommended. Mr. Rudl stated that the consultants have presented a cohesive, concrete plan regarding which projects will go first, and that it is currently a matter of the Board of Education debating a bit more on the plan, and deciding if they want to modify or move forward with the plan. Mr. Rudl stated that it makes sense to allocate $3 million and proceed with enough money to get into actual project design, assuming the Board of Education will be coming forward with a concrete plan within the next several months.

Ms. Bowman stated that she did not feel the execution of the plans were as imminent as Mr. Lyons was indicating. She stated that Nathan Hale is nowhere near finished, and that a public hearing has not yet been held. She further expressed concern that the district tech budget is flat, and asked how this would tie into the facilities plan. Mr. Chimento stated that, as they moved forward and decide to renovate, that the technical aspects will be incorporated in the building budget. Ms. Bowman stated that she did not believe they should move forward on anything without the input of constituents. Ms. Bowman stated that she would like 2 or 3 public hearings and more outreach conducted. Mr. Lyons stated, as part of the review process, the Board will reach out to the public, and that there will be a series of ongoing meetings to discuss their strategic operating plan, which will involve more than just facilities. Mr. Lyons stated that there was a meeting held at Norwalk High with several other members of the management team. Ms. Bowman stated that those meetings were held in a closed room, and were only just entering a social rather than private phase. Mr. Lyons stated that he believes the need is urgent, due to the growing enrollment, which presents a problem that needs to be resolved. Ms. Bowman stated that she thought Jefferson would be a good place to start, and Mr. Lyons stated that the site does in fact need a great deal of work. Ms. Bowman stated that the conversation is highly preliminary.

Mr. Livingston asked what the gameplan is, as he understands the need indicated, but isn't comfortable blindly committing $3 million to the plan. Mr. Lyons stated that they need money to advance the plan itself, and when a concrete proposal from the Board of Education is decided upon, they will need to come back to the City process for appropriations for the entirety of the project, and will then move forward from then. Mr. Rudl stated that they hope to move relatively quickly on this item, and that discussions are currently ongoing. Mr. Livingston asked for clarification that the $3 million is not for the beginning project costs per se, and Mr. Lyons answered in the affirmative. Mr. Kimmel asked if this then served as an argument against funding the full $3 million, and Mr. Lyons stated that this depends on how quickly they can move. Mr. Lyons further stated that, for what has been recommended, this would require the full $3 million.

The Chair stated that the amount was a commitment of good faith, and while the Board may not need the full amount over the next year, they eventually will.

Mr. Hempstead stated that he has not seen projects in the past that have frontloaded architectural costs, thus he is perplexed regarding the $3 million amount, which seems, in part, to be planned as architectural fees. Mr. Lyons stated that he recommends one of the first things they put in place be a project manager, and that the last school renovation project that took place was before his tenure in 2001 or 2002. Mr. Lyons stated that providing professional project management and oversight services are necessary in projects of this magnitude, and that it then becomes an issue of agreement between the Board of Education and the City as to which projects go forward. Mr. Lyons stated that they would then begin design work, and that he agrees with the idea that once a commitment is made by the City and the Board of Education, then they will put together an appropriation to cover all the costs, either in one sum or over a period of time, rolling the architectural fees in the project cost. Mr. Lyons stated that it is important to keep the ball rolling and allow them to move forward, despite all of the details not being concrete at this time.

Mr. Hempstead asked that Mr. Sheehan elaborate on the facade improvement program. Mr. Sheehan stated that it involves a number of historic structures in need of improvement to the exterior facades, and that they have identified locations to benefit from this. Mr. Hempstead asked if this program involved low interest loans, and Mr. Sheehan stated that the program is more flexible in structure, and that the determination is based on the applicant's needs associated with the request. Mr. Hempstead asked if the Old Norwalk Theatre is one of those locations, and Mr. Sheehan answered in the negative. Mr. Hempstead asked if funding could involve an outright grant, and Mr. Sheehan answered in the affirmative, stating that they are cautious to do a 100% grant as they want to make the maximum impact. Mr. Sheehan stated if there is a possibility to structure the funding as a loan, they will then have some portion of it provided to offset the costs.

Mr. Kimmel stated that when the Council receives the capital budget, they also receive the financial director's recommendation, and they have historically been well within maximum thresholds, which helps maintain their AAA rating. He stated that this time around, the Board of

Estimate Taxation has increased the capital cap by roughly $2 million. Mr. Kimmel stated, in the letter received from Greg Burnett, Norwalk Board of Estimate and Taxation Chairman, Mr. Burnett states that he believes the impact on the City's overall debt profile will be within the acceptable limits. Mr. Kimmel stated that belief is extremely different from the exact tables they have come to expect, and while he does trust those staff who put together the budget and reports, he feels more precision needs to be employed going forward. Ms. King stated that they will provide Mr. Kimmel with the updated tables requested.

Mr. Kimmel stated that this is the second year where the Police Department has received more than asked for, this year in the areas of Tactical Ballistic Help and Vehicles, and asked why this might be. Chief Kulhawik stated that they may have rounded up. Mr. Kimmel stated that he was simply perplexed, as he was under the impression that an increase from a lower requested funding amount wasn't possible, and that he had no objections to this.

Mr. Kimmel asked where the funding for bike line work (A5) would come from. Mr. Chimento stated that a line item was requested for bike line work, but that it was removed, and that they have the line striping budget. Mr. Kimmel asked if the amounts would come out of the regular line striping budget and Mr. Chimento answered in the affirmative. Mr. Kimmel asked if the amounts are designated and Mr. Chimento answered in the negative, stating that each project is calculated individually on a case by case basis.

Mr. Kimmel asked for elaboration regarding the Norwalk River Valley Trail (E3) amount of $300,000. Mr. Chimento stated that there is a joint venture between Wilton and Norwalk to extend the trail, and that there are about 3 easements in order to connect the trail so that it runs from the Harbor Loop in SoNo into Wilton. Mr. Igneri asked if the costs for the trail are reimbursed from the state, and Mr. Chimento stated that part of the amount is reimbursed by the state. Mr. Hempstead stated that last year $600,000 was requested for this item and half was put in, making the amount this year the remaining balance.

Mr. Kimmel asked for some elaboration regarding the Honeysuckle Daphne Diversion. Mr. Chimento stated that a great deal of work has been done internally with that project, and that things are improving. Mr. Chimento stated that they have identified four areas for the 4 phases; Phase 1 and 2 are dedicated to Riverwood Crest watercourse maintenance. Mr. Chimento stated that they are planning to do work on the roads with catch basins and new manholes, and in Phase 2 dig the new diversion for $600,000 rather than $1.1 million. Mr. Kimmel commended their efforts and success in handling this complicated and costly problem.

Mr. Livingston noted a redevelopment request for biking that wasn't funded, and asked if it is similar to the other bike adjacent items. Mr. Sheehan stated that there is an urban bikeway planned, and that one request was for further implementation. Mr. Sheehan stated that Mr. Chimento is dealing with the construction specific to the various trails and bike paths that are being contemplated. Mr. Chimento stated that there were meetings earlier in the day regarding the Calf Pasture Beach road to implement bike lanes from Gregory Boulevard to the beach itself. Mr. Livingston asked if there is money to do so, and Mr. Chimento answered in the affirmative.

Ms. Bowman asked if Reed Street made it through to the final budget and Mr. Chimento answered in the affirmative, stating that it is part of the state grant.

In regards to the item of asbestos abatement (Board of Education #10), Mr. Kimmel voiced his concern that no money is being allotted when there was a request for $500,000. Mr. Kimmel asked if they are conforming to the state requirements. Mr. Lyons stated that this item was a new request, not a previously funded program, and that he feels it should be funded. Mr. Lyons stated that state requirements don't mandate that they remove asbestos, but instead require a proper management plan be in place. Mr. Lyons stated that they wanted to start an abatement program, and that as they are potentially doing as-new renovation of schools, then this would be the most logical time to start said program. Mr. Lyons stated that they are also looking into lead, and that he received an email recently from the superintendent discussing money to do lead testing, though at present they aren't aware of any issues involving lead.

Mr. Kimmel noted that the Council approved $3 million for infrastructure, and asked if they foresee reaching a point where there is no more infrastructure work to be done or if the work goes on irrespective of the court case? Mr. Sheehan stated that some of the funds will go to Day and Raymond Street, and that issue is that the street needs to be elevated out of the floodplain to be eligible for other public funding coming into the redevelopment project. Mr. Sheehan stated that the total cost was estimated at a little over $7 million, and that the City's piece is relatively small in comparison, with the state taking on the role of major investor. Mr. Kimmel asked if there has been any news on the court case status. Mr. Sheehan stated that there was a hearing, the judge heard arguments, and that it will be roughly 4-6 weeks until the judge returns a ruling. Mr. Sheehan stated that they cannot go to draw public funds with outstanding litigation, but that this does not prevent them from trying to get the other $7 million for other projects.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chair closed the public hearing at 7:43 PM.

CITY OF NORWALK
PUBLIC HEARING
7:00 PM
TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT REDEVELOPMENT PLAN
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 7, 2016

ATTENDANCE:	John Kydes, Chair; Faye Bowman; Doug Hempstead; John Igneri; Tom Livingston; Shannon O'Toole Giandurco; Travis Simms
STAFF:	Timothy Sheehan, Redevelopment Director; Donna King, City Clerk
OTHER:	Mayor Harry Rilling; Bruce Kimmel, Council Member; Dave Davidson; Diane Lauricella; Thomas E. Kulhawik, Chief of Police; Bruce Chimento, Director of Public Works; Michael Lyons, Chairman of the Board of Education; Steven Cecil, AIA ASLA Principal, The Cecil Group; Paul Madden, Design Manager; Martin Vatra, Co-Developer; Mike Mushak; Tony Mobilia; Emily Innis

CALL TO ORDER

The Chair opened the public hearing at 7:44 PM.

PUBLIC INPUT

Diane Lauricella
Ms. Lauricella stated that there will be another public hearing on Tuesday night regarding this substantial document.

In regards to stormwater and flood management (page 26), Ms. Lauricella implored the committee members to consider alternate sites for the Washington Village project buildings in order to avoid the floodplain altogether, saving millions of dollars in construction costs. She stated that if there weren't as many people in the floodplain, they would not need a dry egress.

She stated that she is saddened that the new administration seems unwilling to consider reasonable alternatives in this plan, and that discussing the matter could reduce taxpayer costs and positively impact the ongoing lawsuit.

In regards to the consistency with POCD, Ms. Lauricella stated that she was distressed that some individuals seated seem to treat this aspect as a wishlist, when real consultants were brought in to conduct them.

In regards to the design guidelines, Ms. Lauricella stated that she wholeheartedly approves of them, and believes that Planning & Zoning should do the same.

In regards to the sustainability guidelines, Ms. Lauricella stated that they were satisfactory, and that she believes they should be adopted across the board to curtail operating expenses.

In regards to green infrastructure (page 40), Ms. Lauricella stated that this is often cheaper, with data from the State, UCONN and University of New Hampshire supporting this. She stated that they should start asking for this kind of infrastructure in all applications.

In regards to building orientation (page 46), Ms. Lauricella stated that she would like language requiring solar energy to be added into the document. She stated that they should consider adding solar energy elements, which adds an attraction to developers and increases development appeal.

Mayor Henry Rilling
Mayor Rilling stated that he was impressed with the amount of effort that went into coordinating existing zoning and design developments for a much broader area. He stated, in his estimation, that there is one serious flaw in the plan, which has to do with housing. He stated that Norwalk remains in a low or moderate income housing crisis situation, and he asked what plans there are to address this. Mayor Rilling stated that projects already underway exemplify this, particularly one on the corner of Putnam and Monroe with several buildings involved. He stated that several families there are not paying rent values up to the workforce housing levels, and that one of the complexes in the overall plan calls for 17 units, which does not quite reach the threshold of 20 as required by zoning regulations.

Mayor Rilling stated that there are a number of pipelines leading people out of Norwalk due to the inaccessibility of housing, some of which are Bridgeport or the southern states, such as Virginia or the Carolinas. He stated that one of the things the plan does is lower the threshold or units from 20 to 16, which likely should have been done long ago.

Mr. Sheehan stated that the plan calls for 12, but clarified that the City's affordable and workforce housing regulation is run off of the income compliance regulations under the state statute, which is 80% of the state median income. However, the calculation is significantly less than $70,000. He stated that the accessibility of housing was discussed within the committee, and that the housing bracket Mayor Rilling is addressing is not their economic target for this particular development. Mr. Sheehan stated that they try to be sensitive to economic issues in the area.

Mayor Rilling stated that another technique that exists within their zoning regulations allows the City to let developers offer a payment in lieu of building specified units. He stated that the way the formula is constructed is too high, and is almost never taken up. He stated that this payment in lieu of units provides an opportunity to get to smaller developments between 4 and 12 families. Mayor Rilling stated that it would be wise to examine the formula and figure out an improved formula, and it could be handled by redevelopment or another agency.

Mr. Sheehan stated that the plan suggests payment in lieu of taxes or housing be broadened and expanded.

Mayor Rilling stated that they somehow have to get this down onto an actionable piece of paper, but that overall the plan looks good. He stated that they have been wrestling with zoning and development in this part of town for years, and that this plan looks like a way to make sense of it.

Mike Mushak

Mr. Mushak came forward and stated that he lives in SoNo and has chosen to do so because of its economic and ethnic diversity. He stated that this diversity is the strength of SoNo, and that he supports the TOD plan because it maintains the diversity while investing in the area, something that has been sorely lacking in the past few years. He stated that the HUD development works to break the cycle of disinvestment and racially concentrated areas of poverty. He stated that someone recently expressed concerns about gentrification, and with all due respect, SoNo is never going to lack for diversity. He stated that a number of strong community organizations that exist will address these issues and act as advocates for the integrity of the neighborhood. Mr. Mushak stated that the neighborhood is vibrant and that they want to bring development in, but control it, and that this plan is the way to do so. He stated that it creates housing choice and that the goals outlined in the Chapter 4 of the presentation documents closely align with the neighborhood's values.

Tony Mobilia, Norwalk Harbor Management Commission

Mr. Mobilia stated that he reviewed the plan at the last meeting, and that he made some comments and recommendations. He stated that he is interested in properties adjacent to the harbors, and wants to ensure that those areas are kept as water dependent uses to advance water dependent business. He further stated that he would like to submit a formal recommendation.

Emily Innis
Ms. Innis stated that she appreciates the comments made by Mayor Rilling, and that she will take the comments made during the public hearing back to address the concerns and have a new draft ready for review and vote by the appropriate bodies. She stated that they have created bonus structure for additional housing, and that they are continuing to review and make sure what they have is appropriately maintaining the diversity of housing choices.

Mr. Hempstead asked if they plan to respond to the Harbor Commission in the next couple of weeks. Mr. Sheehan stated that the area east of Water Street is out of the TOD plan, and that they will have to examine the issue.

Mr. Kimmel asked what a realistic range of income would be for a typical family that could afford this housing. Mr. Sheehan stated that the range goes all the way down to public housing, effectively 30% of the median income. Mr. Kimmel stated that he did not know if the regulations had changed, but for many years affordable housing was a bit of a misnomer in the state of Connecticut. Mr. Sheehan stated that it is a complex issue that goes beyond calculating a formula, and agreed with Mr. Mushak's assessment of SoNo's unique appeal, thus creating the urban corridor attraction to the area.

Mr. Collins asked if the agency or an outside contractor does auditing of the incomes of people who move into the workforce units. Mr. Sheehan answered in the affirmative, stating that incomes are tracked, as required by regulations, to ensure low income standing.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chair closed the public hearing at 8:17 PM.

CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
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CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 8:27 PM. A quorum was present.

ROLL CALL

Roll was called. The following members were present:

Mr. Kydes (Chair)
Ms. O'Toole Giandurco
Mr. Igneri
Ms. Bowman
Mr. Simms
Mr. Hempstead
Mr. Livingston

As a point of personal privilege, the committee members wished Mr. Sheehan a happy birthday.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 3, 2016 Regular Meeting

** **MS. O'TOOLE GIANDURCO MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 3, 2016 REGULAR MEETING WITH THE FOLLOWING AMENDMENTS:**

1. **THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE REGARDING MS. O'TOOLE GIANDURCO'S RECUSAL IS TOO VAGUE AND SHOULD REFLECT THE FOLLOWING: MS. O'TOOLE GIANDURCO RECUSED HERSELF DUE TO A CONFLICT OF INTEREST DUE TO THE FACT THAT HER HUSBAND IS EMPLOYED BY THE CARVER CENTER OF NORWALK, WHO IS AN APPLICANT TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK (CDBG) GRANTS.**

** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

REED PUTNAM URBAN RENEWAL PLAN AREA

Mr. Sheehan stated, as part of a conditional approval, an architectural firm was hired to review the final plan GGP submitted for the underpass plan. This firm then made adjustments, and if the firm ultimately recommends approval, the Common Council and Redevelopment Agency would not withhold the redevelopment plan and memo.

Mr. Cecil came forward to present the memorandum on the Reed Putnam Urban Renewal Plan Area.

Mr. Livingston asked if the height is 8 ¼ feet. Mr. Cecil directed him to the back page of the memorandum, stating that what they've done is create a setback so the parking structures have a setback of about 18 feet. As a result, there is a slight net increase on the West Avenue side about the width of a parking spot, which is, on the whole, a good tradeoff.

Mr. Hempstead asked what material they are trying to mask, and Mr. Cecil stated that there are a number of materials involved, but that decisions regarding materials ultimately will not be decided until final design review. Mr. Sheehan stated that there are a few different layers, and that in terms of materials, the final decision will be made in the final plan. Mr. Sheehan stated, at present, that the review at hand is associated with the underpass, public realm and overall design review. Mr. Hempstead stated that he is disappointed, as he thought the underpass would be a great opportunity with modern technology and lighting to make the ceiling of the underpass resemble space, where what he sees on the new plan is a white ceiling. Mr. Sheehan stated that the white is part of the lighting plan.

Mr. Cecil stated that the ceiling design is very complex and intended to create a lot of interest, which he feels is a dramatic improvement.

Mr. Sheehan clarified that the design plan is complete. Mr. Cecil stated that they have been exchanging documents, design ideas, etc. with GGP's team to find a way for this particular part of the project to advance.

Mr. Cecil noted the following changes to the previous design plan:

1. On the south side of N Water Street, the walk bridge was given open railings and the edge was animated to create a continuous, straight connection on both sides of the street.
2. Complex architectural screening and graphic public art have been placed along the length of the facades of the parking decks.
3. The firm committed to the idea of combatting smell and noise pollution by allowing for more open walls and ventilated decks.
4. Bridging will be featured between both sides for visual impact, with the structure being comprised of a thinner steel to distinguish it from the other parking decks.
5. The ceiling is comprised of a proposed series of plains with cove lighting and an inlaid series of light bands. The accent lights shine on the columns as well and create a ceiling with visual interest and enough illumination to satisfy safety concerns.

Mr. Livingston asked if the height is significantly lower from the model plans, and Mr. Cecil stated that the height has gone from 46.2 to 41.6.

Mr. Hempstead asked if the ceiling is still under discussion. Mr. Cecil stated that this plan is their final input, and that this is the design they expect to have as it moves through construction drawings.

Mr. Cecil stated that the ceiling is intended to be white, layered with different lights. Some of the features of the ceiling may involve recess surfaces, slight color changes, or a series of horizontal bands with accent lights within them. Mr. Cecil stated that it will not be plain looking.

Mr. Livingston asked if they planned to avoid exhaust panel issues in the tunnels to prevent discoloration, and Mr. Cecil answered in the affirmative. Mr. Cecil stated that air handling is an important consideration.

Mr. Sheehan stated that the main entrance to the mall is in the underpass area, and asked Mr. Cecil to touch on the importance of the visual aspect. Mr. Cecil stated that when people enter, a significant amount will arrive by car, and that there will be a significant glass lobby. Mr. Cecil stated that the lit underpass allows for well-lit, easy navigation to the larger structure that is consistent with the rest of the development.

The Chair asked what benefits or improvements the notch would provide regarding the issue of access to the rear of the building on the East Side. Mr. Cecil stated that by moving the North Street portion back, this opens the area up to the sun. Mr. Cecil stated that a common architectural feature is to recess the doorways, and that this makes the entrances more inviting. Mr. Cecil stated that they pulled back as much as they could without disrupting vehicle circulation, and that, from a distance, it helps with directionality.

Mr. Hempstead asked for clarification regarding which portions of the sidewalk the City owns. Mr. Cecil stated that the sidewalks need to make that transition. Mr. Hempstead stated that this is a great improvement.

Mr. Sheehan stated that working with the design team has been a pleasure. The Chair commended Mr. Sheehan for looking out for the City's best interests throughout the design process.

** **MR. SIMMS MOVED TO APPROVE THE REED PUTNAM URBAN RENEWAL PLAN AREA.**

** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

Mr. Cecil stated that it is a LDA requirement to provide a public realm plan. In the case of a circumstance like this, where the property was disposed of and is in the process of having agreements made, public realm can be extended for civic uses. Mr. Cecil stated that he intends to show that the design will provide access for citizens as well as a welcoming, open space.

Mr. Sheehan stated that Mr. Hempstead and Mr. Simms are well aware of the long conversations regarding the definition of public realm. He stated that the objective of the committee's job is to determine that what GGP presents meets the objectives of the designation of public realm.

Mr. Chimento stated that this is an exciting new use for Norwalk, and that Mr. Cecil has been helpful for the design and formatting aspects. He stated that Martin Vatra, the co-developer and Paul Madden, the design manager are also present.

Mr. Cecil stated that there is a 5% requirement of public realm space for the development, which amounts to roughly 53,000 square feet. When the final plan was created, they ended up with over 80,000 square feet of public realm space. He stated that the buildings are open and more available to the public than a traditional office or residential building, and that it helps to create a variety of buffer options and space.

Mr. Madden came forward to present the highlights of the development in lieu of Robert Barry (architect), who could not be present. They were as follows:

A. Street Level Plan: Part of the initial idea is to line West Avenue with retail and activate the area. The area will be comprised of restaurants, mixed retail and health and wellness stores. The idea is to address the corners at the Church and the North End entrance to I-95 N.
B. Level 1: SW Plaza
    a. Serves as the main pedestrian gateway to SoNo.
    b. Uses include civic space, flexible space, an interactive fountain, signage, plantings, benches and use zones for the tenants.
    c. Streets will be tree lined.
    d. The main plaza area will be offset from the curb, with added curved elements, signage, benches and plantings, as well as a sculptural identifying gateways.
C. Level 1: Central Plaza
    a. Situated on the north side of the N Water Street intersection.
    b. This section is anchored by retail and pulls the building away from the curbline to create a public environment.
    c. Features include a sculptural green wall, site furnishings and plantings. Stairs will be accentuated as they lead up to the concourse.
D. Level 1: NW Plaza
    a. Developed similarly to Chamford Corner, this space contains more of a linear element and is close to exiting. The architects created a wall and space that could be activated by tenants in public and programming.
    b. Features a series of terraces and a planting bed, with pavement that highlights connection points to the building.
    c. Tremendous visibility for potential retail presence.

   d. The West Avenue curb features a wide sidewalk and a planting bed up to the patio.

E. Level 2: SW Court Interior
   a. Features 3 activation areas in the mall that have a common large, oval atrium element. The firm carved out these areas in front of Bloomingdale's, the Center Court and NE Court, and that range in size from 2500 to 4700 square feet.
   b. The shape is an attempt to create a buffer zone away from the planned elements.
   c. Added kiosks will serve as additional activating spaces.

F. Level 3: Sculpture Garden
   a. The space was squared off and reoriented northwest. This place off the mall concourse is a flexible space that accommodates multiple uses and takes inspiration from the MOMA Sky Garden.
   b. The interior/exterior defining glass wall will be buffered by an exterior planting and feature plantings, fountains and sculptural elements.
   c. As part of the calculation, the space pulled back the public realm from the terrace areas to allow tenants opportunities to interact in the space.

G. Level 4: SoNo Garden
   a. The space faces East over the river and features an additional entrance element.
   b. The space features tenant interaction areas, an interactive fountain element, a kiosk space, and is buffered by plantings.
   c. The orientation of the building is set to facilitate the best views of the river.

Mr. Hempstead inquired about the condition of the northwest corner. Mr. Sheehan stated that previous programming considered an activating plaza with potential for concerts, but the location's proximity to I-95 put a damper on those plans. Furthermore, the City didn't think this adequately fit the definition of public realm space.

Mr. Hempstead asked how the listed commitments are embedded into the official documents and Mr. Sheehan stated that this ultimately falls back on a public realm plan being filed, and if changes occur, they will need to come back before the Redevelopment Agency and Common Council.

Mr. Hempstead asked for specifics regarding areas periodically subject to seasonal activities or advance. Mr. Madden stated that these spaces would be used for displays for things like Christmas or Easter, as well as events, which comes back to the idea of creating more space than required and seeing critical activation activities take place throughout the year.

Mr. Hempstead asked for further elaboration regarding the activated spaces' appropriate uses. Mr. Sheehan clarified that public realm areas, like parks, are available for public use but have restricted uses, such as protests.

Mr. Hempstead asked if the SoNo Garden area is intended to be used for all 4 seasons like Bryant Park. Mr. Madden stated that this is their hope.

Mr. Hempstead asked if the public realm calculations take into account what would normally be sidewalks and a certain amount of feet. Mr. Sheehan and Mr. Madden answered in the affirmative.

Mr. Sheehan stated that this development requires a higher level of sidewalk than usually required, and that the quality and aesthetics of the sidewalk are different from what may be required. Mr. Sheehan stated that the cross box is basically a cost coming off of the City.

The Chair commended GGP for putting in the rooftop garden without being asked.

Review and advance the SoNo Collection underpass plan and the Cecil Group's memo to the Common Council for approval & Review and advance the SoNo Collection Public Realm Plan to the Common Council for approval

** **THE CHAIR MOVED TO REVIEW AND ADVANCE THE SONO COLLECTION UNDERPASS PLAN AND THE CECIL GROUP'S MEMO TO THE COMMON COUNCIL FOR APPROVAL & REVIEW AND ADVANCE THE SONO COLLECTION PUBLIC REALM PLAN TO THE COMMON COUNCIL FOR APPROVAL.**

** **MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MR. HEMPSTEAD).**

Ms. O'Toole Giandurco exited the meeting at 9:40 PM.

Mr. Sheehan stated that there will be a joint meeting of Planning and Zoning scheduled sometime in May for a presentation with the Cecil Group. He stated that they would then review this in June, with action being taken sometime in June or early July.

Mr. Hempstead asked to be kept apprised of these meeting dates.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSISTANCE ACT TAX CREDIT PROGRAM FOR 2016

Review Project Status
Ms. Arton requested a public hearing be held on the item.

** **MR. LIVINGSTON ORDERED A PUBLIC HEARING RELATIVE TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSISTANCE ACT TAX CREDIT PROGRAM FOR 2016.**
** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

** **MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO APPROVE PY42 CDBG FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS & ADVANCE THE DRAFT PY42 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN (AAP) TO THE COMMON COUNCIL FOR APPROVAL & AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PY42 AAP.**
** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

FY2016-2017 CAPITAL BUDGET

The Chair stated that he would like to amend the line item designated as Honeysuckle Daphne (G3) by moving the allotted $617,000 to Watercourse Maintenance (G2). He stated that he would like to move the remaining $20,000 to Alternative Energy Insulation (H11). He stated that this would likely cover the RFP for solar at City Hall, including incidental fees for design and permits.

Mr. Hempstead asked if Honeysuckle Daphne would then be ignored a part of the watercourse, and further asked if there was some wording that should be included in order to ensure that watercourse garners some attention. Mr. Igneri stated that the individuals responsible identified items to fix, and by placing the funding in Watercourse Maintenance instead of Daphne specifically, it allows them flexibility should there be any leftover funding. Mr. Hempstead asked that a list of projects intended for those funds be provided, including Honeysuckle Daphne.

Ms. Bowman asked for a review of the Chair's amendment request. The Chair stated that $617,000 shall be taken from G3 and moved to G2. The remaining $20,000 in G3 shall be moved to H11.

** **THE CHAIR MOVED TO AMEND THE FY2016-2017 CAPITAL BUDGET BY MOVING $617,000 FROM G3 TO G2 & MOVING AN ADDITIONAL $20,000 FROM G3 TO H11.**

** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

** **MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO AMEND THE FY2016-2017 CAPITAL BUDGET BY MOVING $200,000 FROM BOARD OF EDUCATION FACILITIES STUDY IMPLEMENTATION TO BOARD OF EDUCATION DISTRICT PAVING AND SITEWORK.**

The Chair noted that last year, the committee found that the Board of Education didn't piggyback on the City's contract, which would have saved them 40% of the usual paving cost, and thus, they never used their allotted paving amount from last year. He stated that he has been flowing up with Bill O'Dale, and that he believes they may still have the funds from last year.

Mr. Igneri asked if it was wise to spend $200,000 on a driveway if the school may be completely renovated in the near future. Mr. Hempstead stated that, regardless, there are sidewalk issues.

Mr. Kimmel asked, assuming the Chair is correct, and the amendment is approved, if he believes they could spend the amount they would then have specifically for paving. The Chair answered in the affirmative, as many schools are in need of repair in that regard. Mr. Igneri seconded the Chair's opinion.

Mr. Hempstead stated that he would be amenable to adding language that requires the Board of Education to use the City's paving contract. The Chair stated that their schedule may be booked for the year, and they may have missed the window. Mr. Igneri invited them to move the item to the floor at the appropriate time and making it contingent on having their questions answered.

Mr. Sheehan asked Mr. Hempstead if he wanted the language amended to reflect the contract, and Mr. Hempstead answered in the affirmative. The new motion read as follows:

MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO AMEND THE FY2016-2017 CAPITAL BUDGET BY MOVING $200,000 FROM BOARD OF EDUCATION FACILITIES STUDY IMPLEMENTATION TO BOARD OF EDUCATION DISTRICT PAVING AND SITEWORK WITH THE FOLLOWING CONDITION:

1. **THE BOARD OF EDUCATION MUST UTILIZE THE CITY'S PAVING CONTRACT.**

In regards to the abatement item, Ms. Bowman asked if the other committee members wanted to inquire further to see if they need the funds for a specific project. Mr. Livingston stated that he spoke to Mr. Alan Lowe, and he indicated that there is an asbestos issue with the gym roof. Mr. Kimmel stated that, having worked for a school with an asbestos problem, the asbestos needs to be isolated and investigated, and the school can be shut down for months at a time. Mr. Kimmel stated that Item 10 seems more specific to remediation, and that this is the type of issue where there can't be a mistake. The Chair stated that he would like to speak with Mr. Bill Odell to have further questions answered.

Mr. Kimmel asked where Ms. Bowman would like to take the funds from, and Ms. Bowman stated that they could take it from the facilities line. Mr. Hempstead stated that, as hotspots have been identified, the reallocation is necessary.

** **MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MR. SIMMS).**

** **MS. BOWMAN MOVED TO AMEND THE FY2016-2017 CAPITAL BUDGET BY MOVING $300,000 FROM ITEM F1 TO ITEM F10.**
** **MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MR. SIMMS).**

** **THE CHAIR MOVED TO APPROVE AND ADVANCE THE FY2016-2017 CAPITAL BUDGET AS AMENDED TO THE COMMON COUNCIL.**
** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

OLD BUSINESS

No old business was discussed.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business was discussed.

ADJOURNMENT

** **MR. IGNERI MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
** **MR. SIMMS SECONDED THE MOTION.**
** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 10:02 PM.
Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Ramos
Telesco Secretarial Services