

# President's Report

Laurel Lindstrom

Date: 6/8/05

## Past Meetings/Workshops:

- Mayor held a reception for Citywide Cleanup volunteers 5/13 at 5:30 PM.
- Loitering Ordinance went to public hearing on 5/17. Laurel, representing the ENNA, spoke in support of the nighttime loitering ordinance for posted public property such as parks and school grounds.
- Meeting with DiScala at Mill Hill on 5/19 at 8:30 AM with ENNA and NHS members present to discuss Wall Street Parcel 3 plan (see report attached).
- ENNA Programs and Projects (P&P) Committee meeting on 5/19 (see report attached)
- Opening ceremony for new Police station on 5/21
- Opening ceremony for new East Norwalk Train Station 5/24
- Tree Advisory Committee (TAC) met on 5/24. Laurel attended as a member.
- On 5/27 Mayor selected members for Westport Ave./Main Street Corridor Study Advisory Committee. Laurel selected as member representing the ENNA
- MNPC meeting cancelled on 6/1
- Lamar Advertising reps met with TTD Commission rep (Paul Coggin), ENIA rep (Karen Page) and ENNA rep (Laurel) re removal of 2 billboards at the Metro North railroad tracks at East Avenue (6/1)
- Planning Committee of Common Council public hearing on Mid-Harbor Plan on 6/2. Laurel spoke representing the ENNA and provided the committee with the document the ENNA presented to the Planning Commission at its public hearing on 3/30/05.
- No CNNA meeting since last ENNA meeting

## Future Meetings/Workshops:

- Workshop – Website, Technology and Fundraising Issues for Nonprofits sponsored by ProBono Partnership and The Greater Bridgeport Area Foundation on 6/9 9 AM to 12 Noon – Laurel plans to attend.
- Zoning Commission Public Hearing on Pepperidge Farm property proposed development scheduled for June 15
- Tree Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting on 6/28 at 6 PM
- 'Programs & Projects' meeting of the ENNA Board – date to be determined
- MNPC meeting on 7/6 at 10 AM
- Next regular ENNA meeting is 7/13 at 7:30 PM in Room 101 – EN parks on agenda (Fred Bondi and Mike Mocciae to attend)
- CNNA meeting on 6/13 & 7/11 at 7:30 PM
- P&Z meetings (see calendars and agendas available on City website)

#### Communications of Note:

- Email to membership on 6/6 (see email bulletin page on ENNA website)
- Article in the Advocate and in the Hour on 6/2 on the Planning Committee Public Hearing for the Mid-Harbor Plan quoting the ENNA (see Media page on ENNA website).
- Community Briefs in local papers published meeting notices for the ENNA 6/8 meeting.
- Laurel received several emails and phone calls from members and others regarding ENNA issues (email correspondence, and reports of phone conversations, have been forwarded to Board members as FYIs)

#### Programs & Projects Meeting Report:

Date of P&P meeting: 5/19

Present: Laurel Lindstrom; Marija Bryant; Gordon Tully; Erik Nees; Wendye Pardue

Items discussed:

- 1) Adopt-a-Spot at Strawberry Hill and Tierney can be planted once Don Nelson receives a sketch of our planting plans for the site and we sign the City's liability waiver. Laurel took measurements of site. Gordon will produce a computer-generated copy on which we can sketch landscaping plans.
- 2) River Ranger program for spot along the east bank of the river at Constitution Park. Laurel circulated printed packet from Diane Lauricella of the NRWA regarding program. No decision made.
- 3) Post Citywide Cleanup correspondence to be sent at Laurel's discretion.
- 4) Mid-Harbor Plan is posted on city website with most recent revisions by Planning Commission. Laurel has briefly reviewed it and noted that at least one of the changes that the ENNA requested was made. Some others were not. Board to review further before the Planning Committee of the Common Council holds a public hearing in the first week of June (tentatively).
- 5) Smith Street parcel of DiScala's Wall Street Plan was discussed this morning at meeting with DiScala. ENNA and NHS represented. Gordon and Maribeth present. Gordon stated that the ENNA reinforced our position that the condo development on upper Smith Street needs to be decreased in height, and that Maribeth will write-up a report on the meeting.
- 6) Merritt Interchange project – there will be a lawsuit by the Merritt Parkway Conservancy. Discussion on appropriateness of ENNA involvement. It was agreed that it would be outside the scope of the ENNA, but we could support the MPC through the CNNA if the member organizations took a vote on the issue.

- 7) Tax Exempt status – Laurel email Jessica who indicated that she has not heard anything from the IRS, but will call the contact person.
- 8) Billboards to be removed at EN train station – Laurel is in contact with TTD Commissioners David Brown and Paul Coggin, and with a representative of Lamar advertising to finalize the removal.
- 9) Landscaping for property on entrance to EN train station – Through negotiation with Don Nelson and David Brown, Laurel arranged for the TTD to oversee this property with input from the EN community including the ENNA. Laurel has been in contact with David Brown and Paul Coggin recently to work out the details. Laurel hopes to get Nick Overall, our south-of-the-Interstate Tree Liaison involved.
- 10) Sidewalk improvements in EN village center starting with the area near the EN Cemetery. The TTD approved \$50,000 in this year's budget based on the recommendations made in the ENNA Ludlow Square revitalization plan. Money is needed from other sources such as grants and City of Norwalk. Laurel was recently in contact with David Brown who is against spending any more TTD funds, and with Paul Coggin who says he has met with Hal Alvord. Hal Alvord is requesting a site plan showing improvements proposed so that a cost estimate can be done. Gordon suggested that the ENNA work on this, indicating that he could create a draft.
- 11) East Norwalk Cemetery historic designation – application has been on hold since last fall. Laurel voiced concerns about the need for some clarification on organizations that claim responsibility for the cemetery. The TTD owns the property. An East Norwalk Cemetery Association has recently been resurrected. Its legal standing is unknown as yet by the TTD Commission.
- 12) Fundraising and Promo ideas – discussion, but no decisions made as yet.
- 13) ENNA City Department Liaisons – volunteers to be in contact at least monthly with staff and/or Board or Committee chair for the City Departments/Taxing Districts to provide and receive information specific to the ENNA area. Erik volunteered to be in contact with Frank Mauro in DPW. Gordon volunteered to be in contact with the P&Z and Redevelopment staff and commissions. Marija is in contact with the Historical staff and commission. Wendye will contact Ken Slapin of the First Taxing District. Laurel is in contact regularly with TTD commissioners, Hal Alvord of the DPW and others through the Mayor's Neighborhood Preservation Committee. Discussed inviting Kevin Poruban, Fred Bondi and Mike Mocciaie (Recreation and Parks) to upcoming ENNA meetings.

Date of next P&P meeting: to be decided

Coalition of Norwalk Neighborhood Associations Report:

Date of last CNNA meeting(s): None since last regular ENNA meeting

Date of next CNNA meeting(s): 6/13

Mayor's Neighborhood Preservation Committee Report:

Date of last MNPC meeting: None since last regular ENNA meeting

Date of next MNPC meeting(s): 7/6 at 10 AM

Respectfully submitted by Laurel Lindstrom

## Tree Liaison's Report

Maribeth Becker (north of the I-95) and Nick Overall (south of the I-95) are the ENNA Tree Liaisons.

### Activity Summary

Nick Overall:

- I have requested a tree for my private property but have not heard anything from DPW.
- I have met with reps of Marvin Senior Center and will be sending in a request for 3 trees for their property via fax on June 3rd, with the assumption that DPW will potentially award 3 trees because they have a special arrangement with the city.
- Laurel Lindstrom has referred me to the site improvement work that will be funded by TTD at East Norwalk Train station. I plan to provide landscape architectural guidance and a plan drawing for submittal to appropriate agencies.

## Meeting with DiScala on Wall Street Parcel 3 Report

Maribeth Becker

Meeting Thursday May 19th - 8:30 AM

Mill Hill

Attendees: Mike DiScala, Steve Cecil, Alan Webber, Gail Wall, Ralph Bloom, Bill Krummel, Tod Bryant, Gordon Tully, Maribeth Becker

Mike and Steve have an upcoming meeting with Redevelopment and DPW to discuss public places and streets. This led to a lengthy discussion of various issues regarding traffic, parking, etc.

How should parking be incorporated? Shared? One of the benefits of a true mixed-use development within a district is that the various uses share the parking at different times of the day (spots used by employees during the day are then used by residents in the evening). A few of the current spots on the street are going to be removed. There are worries about residents utilizing short term store front parking. There is also a need for merchants to have a loading area on Wall Street - currently it is very difficult and dangerous with trucks double-parked in the traffic lane.

A concern was the Smith Street section along the river (140 spots for 80 proposed units). Since the current plan calls for Smith Street to be closed at Wall Street due to proposed pedestrian gateway, Hubbels Lane will be the only access road for people going to these condos. When a vehicle is exiting Hubbels Lane (approximately half of the cycles), the cycle time goes to 3 minutes. Could there be a 'members only' gate with some sort of cardreader at the entrance to Smith Street for those people who live in the condos to relieve some of the traffic on Hubbels Lane at the large intersection? (But what about guests?)

Gordon then described many of the benefits of roundabouts and said that the intersection at the green would be a great place for Norwalk's first roundabout (Ralph pointed out that it used to be Washington Circle a while back). A roundabout would slow traffic as it comes in and out of the feature. Traffic needs to be slowed down in the area if pedestrians are to feel safe walking around "St John's Place" (and Mill Hill - people speed down the hill). They are planning some change in the road surface to indicate that this is a pedestrian area so that cars know that they are entering a pedestrian area and that they should 'share the road' and not race through it. They are also planning to reverse the directions of Knight and High Street so that people don't make that illegal U-turn into oncoming traffic.

We talked about ways to better incorporate the Mill Hill complex into the plan so that it is potentially linked into the development (terracing in both directions of the hill) and not something that looks out of place with the new massive development. We talked about the possibility of various walking paths through the area that could better highlight historic elements and create alternate scenic routes to enter the Wall Street area.

We discussed the possibility of a destination (restaurant, park, ice cream shop, boat rental, water taxi, etc) at the end of the condos so that you would actually be walking to something as you walked along the river. Most of the

restaurants/public space would be up near the Fat Cat area, but they said that they would consider something.

We then talked about the '800 pound gorilla in the room'. The size of the proposed condos on Smith Street.

Before we got into everything too deeply, Gordon stated that everything comes down to the developer's bottom line and the 'tradeoffs' that are necessary for him to achieve a profit. Gordon challenged us all to think about what we really want out of the project. If people want more public amenities (riverwalk, street and sidewalk improvements, Freese Park enhancements, affordable housing, etc), then these need to be funded with money that is generated from the sale of prime real estate - hence more units are needed along the river. If people don't want as much, then DiScala doesn't need to build as much to finance it.

We then discussed the feasibility of alternate design plans - once again each with tradeoffs. What are we willing to give up and still have the developer make a profit?

- Steve said that he could bring some computer models next time so that we could get a better idea of the scale from different angles.

- DiScala envisioned potentially making the buildings look like 3 or 4 structures that had been built separately over time. He said that it is hard to achieve that look when you build it all at once, but to him it's more appealing than something that looked like a big wall of identical condos all created at the same time. (He talked about not wanting to build something that looked like the recent 'house of a thousand gables' on East Ave)

- He talked about building some sections of the structure higher (called it a 'tower') while keeping the sections near Wall Street/Mill Hill a bit lower so that the condos do not dwarf the scale of Mill Hill and dominate the view.

- We talked about the possibility of putting the buildings into the side of the hill on city property. Mike said that when he originally mentioned this, it did not go over too well, so he dropped it. He and Steve were willing to revisit it.

- The buildings cannot be broken up in the multiple buildings to reduce their appearance or give walkways - space is really tight there. And even if they could break them up, you'd need to be at the perfect angle to see through the space.

- The historic center will be like the trolley barn.

- Massing and scaling - Mike wants to make sure that the complex doesn't look 'fake or odd'. It must blend in and be the 'least intrusive'.

- Even low buildings will not give you the sight of the river.

- We revisited the idea of putting the buildings into the side of the hill on city property. Maybe create a 'C-shaped' building? Doing some of these alternatives could get the overall height down while still keeping the number of units where DiScala needs them to be.

Mike and Steve said that they appreciated the thought and ideas that everyone was coming up with. They said that it takes time to get this right and they want to make sure that the various parties are happy with the end result. Other people's eyes see things differently than they do, so this feedback is important to them.

A third party has verified the financial numbers, and DiScala is currently at the lowest profit level. Because he is doing a great deal of historic renovation, that is costing a lot of money. He can't just fix the fronts of the buildings - he also needs to do the side and back as you walk down to the river.

Gordon suggested that we put the pressure where we want it and back off on other points. We need to think about what we will give up. We also need to think what is most important to us. Is it reducing the overall height of the buildings? (Gordon forcibly stated that this is the ENNA's position). Is it reducing the mass of the buildings? Each party needs to come up with their priorities.

Bill stated that he wanted a lasting building that had a sense of personal beauty. Something that tied to the history of the area. He praised the districtwide approach to this process.

We then moved to the back of the building to wrap up our meeting because Mill Hill was then overtaken by a group of schoolchildren on a fieldtrip. I don't have any written notes on this part of the meeting. We continued to talk about alternate designs and Steve and Mike said that they would work of them and get back together with us. Mike also mentioned TIF (Tax Incremental Financing - new net incremental real estate tax profits) again and said that if the city had TIF (which Alex is against) then some of the new tax money from this project could go toward some of the public improvement projects.

We asked how we could become better involved in this process, we were told "you're doing it - you're involved. Let's meet again to see some of the alternatives that were discussed".

We'll need to schedule a new date to look at some alternatives and continue to provide feedback into this project. In the meantime, each of the various entities (ENNA, NHS, NPT, etc) needs to determine their priorities and what they are willing to 'trade off'.