

**EASTERN NORWALK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

August 8, 2007

Minutes

Board Member Attendees: Laurel Lindstrom (president), Maribeth Becker, Erik Nees, Sarah Hunter, Gordon Tully

Board Members Absent: Diane Cece

Advisory Board Member Absent: Nick Overall, Marija Bryant

Others: Arthur Santella, Allan Sbandos, David Park, Cece Lampitelli-Giordano, John Pishcand

1. Meeting called to order at 7:40 PM
2. Public Participation – none at this time. Laurel explains how our meetings work to non-board attendees.
3. Minutes
 - a. Approval of May minutes. June minutes tabled until next meeting.
4. President's Report – Laurel Lindstrom
 - a. I have nothing in notes
5. Treasurer's report – not available at this meeting.
6. Regular Business:
 - a. Watch List Properties
 - i. **93 East Avenue:** Art Santella asked if ENNA has taken a position. Laurel replied yes, we are in favor of efforts to save the property. Grumman St. John House mentioned for also being near "the green". All decisions are on hold in court.
 - ii. **124 East Avenue:** A neighbor asked about this, why it went down without fair warning. See 6.e below.
 - iii. **Veterans Park:** Columbian Festival had out of control noise. The Haitian festival was ok for noise, and the Kayak for a Cause event was so-so with the 1st half of the event being ok, and the second half too loud. Maribeth said that the police said they were poorly equipped for the size of the Columbian festival and the noise control. Art Santella discussed closing Seaview Avenue for the Oyster Festival. Laurel, says when it's just one festival per year, people seem to tolerate the noise. The City says they are working on the noise problem. Art has suggested to Mike Mocciaie that the music and speakers be pointed out towards the sound. David Park indicated that Jaffin Holden Accoustics has done free consulting work for City Hall in particular assessing Oyster Shell Park amphitheatre plans. Laurel indicates that Mike Mocciaie said the music would be facing the other way at the Columbian Festival, but it did not, and this is the second time he's said a festival would have music point the other way, and it then did not – not sure what the issue is. Art Santella said that the buses were parked on East side of Vets Park, when the other side was unused, and that there were 24 motorcoaches running most of the time. He complained to customer service.
 - iv. **1 Gregory Blvd:** This is up for demolition. The current plan is to put in 5 unit condo. They can do this, but it is before Zoning Commission right now. Allan asked if this is going to involve the stream that starts at Olmstead. His concern is flooding. Allan says the city admits the drain is all silted up. He says work should start up at Mill Pond, and feels that the Olmstead people are being passed over for help repeatedly. He mentioned there is an engineering study that will cost 100K.

- v. **198 and 200 East Avenue:** These could be up for demolition, not sure. Laurel explains that it isn't just importance of one property. It's that one after another demolition of these old homes deteriorates the neighborhood character of the street. Right now there are no plans on this property that have been filed.
 - vi. **Lower East Avenue:** For now there is no update.
 - vii. **73 Strawberry Hill (old Fitch school):** The Board will review feedback we've individually received from neighbors and create a position statement based upon it. Two years ago when this property first came to our attention as proposed new development, it was proposed for a 26-unit development. Since then more of the adjacent properties have been purchased by the developer, and now the proposal is for 29 units. Because the neighbors were alerted and voiced their complaints, the site plan is now in Zoning at City Hall for review again. Tomorrow, August 9th, there is a committee meeting of the Zoning Commission where the public can listen, but not speak. A new traffic study will be presented. On August 15th, there will be a presentation to the public, and a public hearing. Note that last year, Conservation approved the 29-unit proposal, but that was before the big floods. Currently drainage in the area is so horrible because there is too much pavement. Conservation has recommended more vegetation. As of right, they can currently put 18 single family homes. The developer is proposing building plans that make the drainage work better with the 29-units, but are not making the drainage improvements in a single family dwelling plan. Laurel explains the traffic study done at the nearby intersection at Beacon. She also explains that Zoning could raise the PRD, as this is a Zoning Regulation change. The developer is asking for 2 things: 1) raise the PRD limit, and 2) accept his 29-unit site plan. At the upcoming meeting and hearings, the developer will make the case for condos by comparing his 18 single family home plan to his 29-unit multifamily dwelling plan, by use of their traffic study, and their school impact study. Gordon points out that if the developer states they will use porous pavement for the condo complex, why not for the single-family development. Gordon asks, is it reasonable for the city to put conditions on what can be sold? Nick comments as well. Gordon notes the progress that citizen groups, and neighborhood associations have made on the conditions now stipulated for West Avenue.
 - viii. **Norden Place:** The latest plan is for an office building. Instead of residential. Maribeth asks if this is the same parcel as prior proposal. Laurel indicated it was not and that the property that had been proposed for residential was further to the east. Art Santella says the developer is likely gauging the residential market.
- b. Neighborhood Issues/Committees
 - i. **Zoning & Master Plan:** The Planning Commission finished their draft, and now it moves on to the Common Council. There will be a few more public hearings over time. The Implementation Plan is available in the Zoning office.
 - ii. **Speeding & Traffic:** No updates or news.
 - iii. **Neighborhood Flooding:** No updates or news.
 - c. Mayor's Neighborhood Preservation Committee Report – Laurel Lindstrom
 - i. There was not an August meeting to report on.
 - d. CNNA Report – Maribeth Becker
 - i. There has been no meeting since the last ENNA meeting to report on. August 13th will be the next CNNA meeting.
 - e. NPT Report – Marija Bryant
 - i. What happened with 124 East Avenue is that before the demolition sign went up, NPT contacted the owner with questions and information about this 1830's home, and the village district plan. The owner shared the plans with the NPT architect, and there was an agreement made not to invoke the 90 day demolition delay because only the back (newest) portion of the building was gong to be demolished. Everyone is currently trying to figure out why the entire building was demolished. P&Z and Zoning Commission and Building

Department are all wondering what happened. The Hour article said the owner stated that he had done what he was allowed to do. The understanding of all other parties was that he was at minimum going to save the façade. Mike Greene said that the owner has now lost his zoning and building permit for this action. Cece asked if he could rebuild, and there is some question as to whether Zoning can now approve plans to build. We discussed the need for stronger laws to go after someone who violates what has been approved. CT state laws are currently very weak, whereas MA has good laws for such things. We surmise the developers must have already assessed the loopholes.

- f. Trees, Landscape & Adopt-A-Spots – Nick Overall
Currently planning for fall planting and the Tree Advisory has a proposal to replace trees on Calf Pasture Beach Road. The plan is to replace sick trees. Hal Alvord thought this area in median might be a good opportunity for Adopt-A-Spots to be created. This would be from Ludlow Park to Marvin School. The asphalt could be removed and plantings put in place. It is approximately 4 feet wide. There was a meeting with the Charles Creek condo association, and they seem supportive. The trick is that the plantings have to be very durable due to traffic and use on that roadway.
- g. Other. Nothing at this time.

Board Only (some of information included above in item #6 may have been discussed during ‘board only’ part of meeting)

7. Other Business

- a. Watch List – Former Fitch School
 - i. Review of neighbor’s responses to the Fitch update generated by the 250 letters Laurel delivered door-to-door to neighbors in the vicinity of the site. Opposition is universal with a variety of reasons cited. These reasons include the aesthetics, open access by means of public rights, the problem with a separate community and neighborhood safety and sense of security. Many more concerns cited as well.
 - ii. Board unanimously approved the following position statement:

Based on the responses we’ve received from residents who live near the former Fitch School property located on Strawberry Hill Avenue, as well as our own deliberations, the Eastern Norwalk Neighborhood Association Board of Directors:

1. Opposes amending zoning regulations to raise the cap on the number of Planned Residential Development (PRD) units permitted in B Residence zones; and
2. Opposes approval by the Zoning Commission that would allow construction of the PRD that’s proposed for this site.

While the impact on traffic, drainage, schools and infrastructure of the 29-unit PRD may be similar to that resulting from the 18 detached houses on a cul-de-sac that could be built ‘as of right’, and while we applaud the inclusion of affordable housing in the PRD, the lack of connection to the larger neighborhood resulting from the proposed PRD is the deciding factor in the board’s decision.

The planned PRD is viewed by the neighbors and by the ENNA Board as incompatible with their neighborhood, which is comprised of single family homes fronting on public rights of way. Residents know their neighbors, are aware of their comings and goings and are able to quickly identify intruders or people who may be there for other than “neighborly” purposes. Such neighborhoods are safer to live in and foster a spirit of cooperation.

By contrast, the units in the proposed PRD front on private interior roadways that will be infrequently visited by neighbors. Its residents will be cut off from the rest of the neighborhood, creating a pocket of

unobserved activity that decreases safety and neighborliness for everyone in the vicinity, including the PRD residents.

Starting two years ago when the PRD was first proposed, the ENNA has taken a leadership role informing and educating residents to the process, and has presented the pros and cons of the PRD as compared with a cul-de-sac of private homes. These discussions resulted in the drafting of a petition opposed to raising the cap on PRD units which the ENNA circulated, obtaining more than 100 signatures. Although residents have heard the arguments for and against, those who continue to contact us remain strongly opposed to the PRD.

As a board representing the neighborhood, and based on the merits of the case, we support the residents in their opposition to the planned PRD.

8. Next regular board meeting (annual meeting): September 12, 2007
9. Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM

Submitted by Sarah Hunter