

March 30, 2004

**The Hour:
Wall Street development plan praised, questioned at hearing**

**Hour Staff Writer
Robert Koch**

Speakers praised the concept but questioned the details of the Wall Street Redevelopment Plan on Monday night.

"Do you have any plan for garbage?" asked Michael McGuire, who is renovating a building at 64 Wall At. "There's garbage blowing all over the place."

Nearly 20 people attended the third presentation and public hearing on the plan, held by the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency at City Hall. Presenting the plan were Munro Johnson and Michael Moore of the agency.

The plan calls for revitalizing Wall Street -- Norwalk's historic center before the 1955 flood -- with office, retail and residential uses. City officials hope to lure private developers to build around municipal parking lots.

The plan is based on the Norwalk Wall Street Area Planning Update, as prepared by the Cecil Group of Boston last year. Unlike the update, the plan would actually implement redevelopment and give the city statutory powers of eminent domain.

Based on comments heard, neither McGuire nor other speakers expect to lose their buildings to eminent domain. McGuire ultimately praised the redevelopment plan, which he hopes will add vigor to Wall Street, where he owns a business.

Timothy T. Sheehan, redevelopment agency executive director, suggested that the trash problem is surmountable. He said the redevelopment plan would create a special services district, holding landlords accountable. In addition, city officials plan to beef up an anti-letter ordinance, he said.

Laurel Lindstrom, president of the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association, praised the redevelopment plan but asked the agency not to overbuild the intersection of Main and Cross streets.

"Adding more lanes just adds more traffic," Lindstrom said.

Michael DiScala, owner of a real estate investment business at 10 Wall St., asked how the plan would led to actual development.

Agency officials hope the Common Council will approve the plan this summer. Requests for proposals would be sought from private developers afterward and priority would be given to the Isaacs Street parking lot and the areas along Main and Smith streets.

"I like the mixed-use plan. I like the historical preservation part," DiScala said. "It's not a scorched-earth plan."

March 15, 2004

MARCH 13, 2007

The Hour: Neighborhoods to create own master plans

The documents will help the Planning Commission create the city's Master Plan

**Hour Staff Writer
Robert Koch**

Cranbury neighborhood residents are concerned about over-development. Their neighbors in Silvermine are focused on power lines.

To the south, many Rowayton residents are smarting from their new property valuations. And in East Norwalk, it's all about zoning and traffic Congestion.

For these and other reasons, Norwalk's 19 or more neighborhood associations have good reason to mind Norwalk's unfolding Master Plan, which the Planning Commission is working on.

Paying close attention to the city's effort is the Coalition of Norwalk Neighborhood Associations. Next month, member association hope to have finished "mini" master plans for their neighborhoods. The information eventually will be passed to the commission.

"I think the planners will learn from us. We know things about the neighborhood that they would never learn ... because we live here," said Leigh Grant, coalition board member and president of the Norwalk Association of Silvermine Homeowners.

The coalition formed in January to provide a common voice on larger Norwalk issues, inform its members about important city issues, events and meetings, and to solicit fair and equal participation from each member association.

The East Norwalk Neighborhood Association is at least 20 pages into its mini master plan, Laurel Lindstrom, association president and coalition board member; said more input is needed from residents.

"It's very daunting task, but hopefully we'll have a draft in place in April," Lindstrom said.

Jerry Crowley, Harbor View Association president, said his neighborhood is concerned about the sewer treatment plant, shellfish beds, swimming and other water-related issues. As a member of the coalition, the Harbor View association will stay abreast of meetings and events related to the city's Master Plan, he said.

The finished Master Plan will be the city's first since 1990 and comes after many delays and much questioning of the process.

In December, newly elected Common Council member Richard A. McQuaid voted against a \$50,000 contract with Massachusetts consultant Chan Krieger & Associates to develop a Norwalk Mid-Harbor Master Plan.

McQuaid described the approach as pocket planning. He and other Republicans generally concur that dollars and energies should be put toward the Planning Commission and not outside consultants.

Walter Briggs, commission chairman, said the Master Plan will incorporate the Mid-Harbor Master Plan and urban renewal plans for Wall Street and the Webster Street Superblock. He hopes the commission will have the larger Master Plan finished by year's end.

Until then, Briggs is encouraging Norwalk's residents and neighborhood associations to engage themselves.

He and commission member Bill Kraus attended the coalition's organizational meeting in January.

"If the coalition wants to meet with us, it is not a problem. We want as much public input when we're done with the Master Plan as we can possibly get," Briggs said. "This is not a Master Plan for eight members of the Planning Commission. It's a Master Plan for the whole city."

February 29, 2004

Neighborhood leaders weigh in on budget

By Brian Fraga
Hour Staff Writer

With the Board of Estimate and Taxation poised to submit a tentative 2004-05 operating budget to the Common Council on Monday, several neighborhood group leaders are assessing their views of the budget-making process thus far this year.

Some voice concerns over the state-mandated property revaluation and what they said is the disproportionate amount that property taxes fund the city's operations, while other voiced their approval of the budget management the city has shown thus far.

Dennis Brookshire, president of the France Street Association, lauded Mayor Alex Knopp's administration for what he said has been its sensible manner of negotiation of the challenges of the budget season.

"Overall, I think this administration is headed in the right direction," Brookshire said, "It would have been great if this administration would have been here 15 years ago, because I think we would have had a lot less problems today."

Rowayton Civic Association President Mike Barbis, however, voiced his concern over the impact that revaluation will have on Rowayton's property taxes and said the city's budget season should be adjusted to factor in expected state revenues.

"How can you determine a budget when you don't know what your state funding is going to be?" Barbis said. "We cannot be so reliant on property taxes. This is destroying our neighborhoods."

"(City officials) need to adjust the timing of this budget," Barbis said. "I think they're between a rock and a hard place, but something's got to give. We can't continue on like this."

Based on proposed reductions by the Board of Estimate and Taxation, Norwalk's 2004-05 operating budget is hovering around \$223 million. That is down from an earlier proposed spending level of \$238 million, which was a 12.2 percent increase over current spending.

Jerry Crowley, president of the Harbor View Association, said he felt Knopp's administration was steering the budget in the right direction, commenting that the city was being run more like a business than in past years.

"They're trimming the fat as (Knop) likes to say," Crowley said. "Seriously, I think this mayor's policies are producing accountability on the part of department heads that are responsible for budgeting. Hopefully, we'll hold

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producing accountability on the part of department heads that are responsible for budgeting. Hopefully, we'll hold overall tax increases down."

Laurel Lindstrom, president of the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association, said she agreed with the Knopp administration tactic of using "placeholder caps" -- using last year's spending as a guide -- rather than using artificial hard caps to limit overall city spending.

Lindstrom said, however, that she believed the budget process could still be done more effectively by a cardrul review of each department's spending requests and a better estimate of state revenues in the operating budget.

"To understand where the money is going makes sense," Lindstrom said. "But it is too early, we still have public hearings coming up and nothing is final yet. I think at this point it's a matter of waiting to see how it all falls out."

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February 13, 2004

The Hour (letter to editor): **Working together can solve problems** by Gordon Tully, ENNA

[Click here](#)

January 5, 2004

The Hour: Big turnout urged for power line hearings by Jill Brodach

Article publicizes the January 5 public hearing before the Connecticut Siting Council on the Power Line proposal from Norwalk to Middletown profiling the ENNA and the Resolution passed by the Board of Directors stating that the board supports underground lines where power lines are deemed necessary. Article also covers the ENNA's recent involvement in the formation of a Coalition of Norwalk's Neighborhood Associations.

December 18, 2003

[ENNA Power Line Resolution](#) (presented to the CT Siting Council on January 5, 2004)

November 29, 2003

The Hour (letter to editor): **Tipping fee will lead to more illegal dumping** by Laurel Lindstrom & Gordon Tully, ENNA

At the last board meeting of the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association we discussed the imposition by Waste Management Incorporated of a \$76 minimum tipping fee at the Norwalk plant.

As the Norwalk transfer station does not accept construction waste many citizens doing odd jobs on their homes are faced with paying an exorbitant price for tipping a small amount of waste. One of our board members loaded his car to its weight-bearing capacity, and still could not bring enough material to justify the fee.

The results are already in evidence as citizens break up incidental construction waste, place it in black plastic bags where it cannot be identified, and take it to the transfer station or include it in their waste pickup. In addition, there will inevitably be an increase in construction trash dumped on roadsides, and there is some indication that this is happening already.

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We believe that WMI is instituting the fee precisely to keep residents other than contractors off their property. One solution would be to accept small amounts of construction waste at the transfer station; another would be to persuade WMI to lower the minimum fee to discourage small drop-offs, but not to severely penalize do-it-yourselfers from working on their homes. A minimum fee of \$25 is reasonable.

As it is, Norwalk will receive small amounts of construction waste, and illegal dumping will increase.

November 21, 2003

The Hour: Association protects East Norwalk's quality of life (Another view article) by Laurel Lindstrom

Violation of the zoning code in commercial properties mixed in with residences can destabilize and erode a neighborhood. The natural friction that exists between a business and adjacent home owners is made substantially worse by acts of the Zoning Board of Appeals that do not consider the need for preserving a neighborhood's residential character. Examples of erosive ZBA actions include automatically approving variances, allowing businesses to continue to operate in violation of 'cease and desist' orders, repeatedly postponing public hearings, and worst of all, denying the public the right to speak at hearings. Such actions by the ZBA do a serious disservice to the community which it is supposed to serve.

On Bouton Street in South Norwalk, contractors yards continued to operate in violation of 'cease and desist' orders issued by the city's zoning inspector. Repeated delays in proceedings were approved by the ZBA. The 'letter to the editor' of October 25 written by a Glasser Street resident expressed well the health and safety risks that exist for the neighbors due to excessive truck traffic, noise and dust. When one of the cases was finally heard the residents' statements held no significance for the ZBA as the decision was rendered.

In East Norwalk a landscaping business operating as a contractor's yard on Strawberry Hill Avenue was the focus of similar complaints by neighbors, beginning more than a year ago. Without allowing the public to speak at the two hearings that were held, the then chairwoman of the ZBA decided that the owners could operate without any restrictions on their property.

Despite this roadblock, the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association, of which I am the president, remained determined. We asked officials at City Hall to institute and enforce conditions of operation for this landscaping business. Negotiations between the zoning inspector and the owners of the landscaping business began and have been going on for the past couple of months. A written agreement has now been drafted that will regulate operation and contain expansion.

On behalf of the concerned residents and of the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association, I want to express sincere appreciation for the work of the zoning inspector in his recent negotiations, and also appreciation for the willingness of the owners of the landscaping business to modify operations to fit in with the residential setting within which their business is located. Peaceful coexistence is possible and desirable. We are very hopeful, but still waiting and watching for solid and enduring change.

The mission of the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association is to foster and preserve the residential character, natural and historic resources, and quality of life in the East Norwalk community. For purposes of the Association, "East Norwalk" is the area south of the Post Road to the Long Island Sound and east of the Norwalk River to the Westport Town Line. We encourage the residents of this area to actively participate in achieving the goals of the organization.

Laurel Lindstrom, president
East Norwalk Neighborhood Association

Printed in the Norwalk Citizen-News on November 14, 2003

November 13, 2003

The Norwalk Advocate: Neighbors, contractor near deal over yard activity by Lisa Chamoff
Article describing the ENNA's involvement in negotiations taking place to contain the expanded use.

October 29, 2003

Neighborhood news, and it's good news: email sent out to ENNA members from Laurel Lindstrom

Some excellent news! Actually two pieces of good news I want to share with you.

First

Tonight the Traffic Authority, chaired by Mayor Knopp, voted to approve speed bumps on sixteen streets, pending the 66% approval by the streets' property owners. Streets within our East Norwalk Neighborhood Association area are: First Street; Gregory Boulevard (Tonetta Circle to Dorlon Street); Melrose Avenue; Rome Street; and Sunlit Drive. Congratulations to those of you who live on these streets!

The Public Works Department will be sending out letters to the homeowners. The way it's worked in the past, a month or two has been allowed for the streets to get the letters back before the 'votes' are tallied to determine if streets return 66% in favor. An informational meeting is then held by Public Works for the residents of those streets.

Once winter begins the bumps can't be placed because the asphalt doesn't adhere well to the street in the cold weather. The plan, therefore, is to start placing the bumps in the spring. To review the steps of the speed bump process click ---> [Traffic Calming Guidelines](#)

Streets in the association area that are scheduled for traffic counts, which is the step before going to the Traffic Authority for approval of speed bumps are: Emerson Street; and Park Hill Avenue. Association streets that already have speed bumps are: Myrtle Street; Pine Hill Avenue; and Raymond Terrace.

Second

Another excellent news item that I want to share has to do with the landscaping business on Strawberry Hill Avenue, located just south of the I-95 next to Fitch Park. Working to contain this expanded contractor's yard has been at the center of the neighborhood association's efforts for the past 18 months. After not getting anywhere with the Zoning Board of Appeals we renewed our efforts with city officials and with the Zoning Department. Negotiations subsequently began between the Zoning Inspector (Jim Bradley) and the owners of the landscaping business, and have gone on for the past couple of months.

Last week I got a phone call from Jim Bradley that a verbal agreement on conditions and restrictions that the owners will abide by has been reached. The agreement will be in writing by middle to late November.

To be included in the agreement: no retail or wholesale operations; reduction of material stored at the rear of the property; limit on trailer truck delivery; recording and reporting to Zoning each shipment received; mafia blocks and storage containers to be moved five foot back from fence line; and screening with evergreen trees.

Successes are worth waiting for!

I'll get the written agreement out to everyone once it's available so that everyone knows what changes we can expect.

Other

The minutes of last Sunday's Neighborhood Issues meeting are posted on the website now, and the next Issues meeting is November 23. These monthly meetings are open to everyone. I'll send out a reminder in the week before the meeting.

Keep in touch.

Laurel

October 19, 2003

The Norwalk Advocate: Neighborhood group branches out to handle growing issues on East Ave. by Lisa Chamoff
Article describing the ENNA's progress.

October 14, 2003

The Hour: Letter to the Editor: E. Norwalk Neighborhood Association expanding

If you reside anywhere in Norwalk east of the Norwalk River to the Westport town line, or south of the Post Road to the Long Island Sound, you're living within the boundaries of the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association and automatically become a member.

Before incorporating in August for nonprofit status, forming a board of directors and adopting bylaws the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association was known as the East Avenue Neighborhood Association.

The change in name was made to more accurately define the expanded number of neighborhoods in which our active members reside, and the specific issues that residents identify and ask that we address. Our association works with elected officials and as a liaison between the residents and the city departments.

The East Norwalk Neighborhood Association is neighborhood-based, and our issues are the issues that arise in our monthly meetings with residents and in the communication we receive from them. Whether we are working to resolve a zoning or traffic issue, conducting a City Scan, writing and presenting a proposal to restore a wetland, advocating with other nonprofit organizations and individuals to save a historic house, speaking at a public hearing for the City's Plan of Development or maintaining an Adopt-A-Spot, we remain neighborhood-based.

The East Norwalk Neighborhood Association Home Page link can be found at <http://calmtraffic.org>. From the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association home page you can browse to several dozen pages that provide information about our committees, previous meetings and issues that are on the horizon. The latest 'Sea To The Green' newsletter for Fall 2003 introducing the new Board of Directors has just been posted. You may also phone 855-7668 for information on the upcoming monthly Neighborhood Issues Committee meeting and about how you can become an active member of the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association. It's an exciting time to get involved.

Laurel Lindstrom, President
East Norwalk Neighborhood Association

(The letter also was printed in the Norwalk Citizen-News)

September 17, 2003

The Hour: Parking, housing Wall St. concerns by Amrita Dhindsa

Article covers the public hearing before the Planning Commission for the Wall Street Master Plan and quotes ENNA president, Laurel Lindstrom, regarding our input into the plan

August 28, 2003

Dear Mayor Knopp:

I'm sorry you could not make the neighborhood meeting last Sunday afternoon. I know that you are interested in the concerns that the Olmstead Place residents have with the gridlock on East Avenue at Olmstead Place. You asked that we discuss the potential negative impact that fixing the problem with an enforced abrupt stop south of the intersection could have on further slowing the traffic that is backed up on St. John Street.

Prior to the meeting I placed a call to a resident of St. John St. He said he would need to think about it more before deciding if traffic conditions would worsen as a result of fixing the problem at Olmstead Place. He said he would talk to at least two other households on his street and get back to me if they saw it as a problem. Since I have not heard from any of them I imagine that they do not see any impact.

Also prior to the meeting I phoned an Olmstead Place resident. He believed there would be little or no impact on the traffic flow on St. John Street. His suggestions were: to alter the timing of the traffic lights to improve traffic flow; narrow the perceived entry width of Olmstead and move the stop line on the south side of the intersection further north so that the intersection is only two car lengths rather than four as it is now; have police regularly monitor the intersection initially to enforce the "don't block the box" rule right after the new signage and painted lines go in.

At the meeting there was robust discussion from those present. Changing the timing of the traffic lights to improve flow was at the top of the list. No one believed that enforcing a "don't block the box" at Olmstead Place would have any impact on the traffic flow on St. John Street. There was general agreement, however, that the amount of traffic on St. John Street is unmanageable and is destructive to a residential street. There was discussion about the proposed traffic light on East Avenue at Fort Point that would result in the traffic flowing to this commercial street rather than St. John Street. The consensus was that we strongly favor a traffic light at this location and hope the city can find a way to install the light that is not dependent on awaiting the State of CT plan to redo the railroad bridge at that intersection.

Very Best,
Laurel Lindstrom, president
East Norwalk Neighborhood Association

August 28, 2003

Dear Mayor Knopp:

You have shown real interest in Andrews Park, but I am contacting you, at this point, to ask that you provide a commitment.

Andrews Field is a valuable piece of city-owned land that could, if restored and enhanced, be more fully utilized by the residents of Norwalk. Other than the main field the property is no longer maintained by the city. The pond and its perimeter are overgrown with tall invasive weeds and vegetation. Even the maintained field is developing hazardous sinkholes

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At a recent neighborhood association meeting those present expressed several concerns that involve the health and safety of the residents, and liability for the city. A concern put forward was regarding the neighborhood children that play in Andrews that might reach the pond and be in need of emergency assistance. It is doubtful if the emergency response personnel could get through the overgrown paths in time to assist. Another concern is that a pond that has been left to stagnate with large amounts of sediment and algae is more likely to breed mosquitoes, and the potential for the West Nile Virus, then a pond that is receiving attention and restoration efforts.

For some time it's been clear that the proposal that our neighborhood association presented for Andrews Park can't proceed further without a commitment from the city.

We have found that because the property is city-owned any grants that might be available would require the city to be the fiduciary. Even before any grant applications are sent the city departments can start the process of site assessment. When we met with directors of city departments to present our proposal we were given verbal support and agreements regarding specific work that their departments could do. But, since then we have not been provided with anything further in writing.

When we met with Pam Stark last week, she asked that we meet with the department heads and get from them a basic line item budget that states what each city department will do, how many man-hours it will take and what it will cost. The plan would then be to provide you with this information so that you could make a decision regarding authorizing the work.

My concern is that I don't believe that we will be any more successful at getting a written budget from any of the departments with a second meeting then we were at getting it with our first meeting. Even putting this information together will require time and commitment that won't be forthcoming unless you ask your department directors to do so.

We will be happy to meet with any of the department staff to provide more information on the proposal to help them formulate a written plan once we know that they have received direction to do so from you.

Please let me know how ready you are to take steps toward an Andrews Park. If you are not prepared to move forward at this time please let me know.

Best Regards,
Laurel Lindstrom, president
East Norwalk Neighborhood Association
