

CITY OF NORWALK  
MAYOR'S NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION MEETING  
DECEMBER 6, 2006

ATTENDANCE: David Shockley, Chairman; Hal Alvord, Department of Public Works Director; Connie Blair, Customer Service; Fred Eshraghi, DPW Traffic Engineer; Glenn Iannaccone, Fire Department; Police Chief Harry Rilling; Christine Abraham, West Main Street Neighborhood Association; Maribeth Becker, CNNA; Helen Bryan, West Main Street Association, Jim Clark, Golden Hill Association; Tom Closter, Health Department; Leigh Grant, Neighborhood Association of Silvermine Homeowners (NASH); Katherine Griffing, Golden Hill Association; Moravia Langley, Meadow Street; Laurel Lindstrom, ENNA; Barbara Felter, Broad River Neighborhood Association; Don Nelson, Tree Alliance; Diane Paladino, Spring Hill/Hospital Neighborhood Association; Mark Pierce, Wilton Avenue Neighborhood Association; Al Raymond, Spring Hill/Hospital Neighborhood Association; Aline Rochford, Zoning Department; Dorothy Romanelli, Harbor Shores Neighborhood Association; John Romanelli, Harbor Shores Neighborhood Association; Donnie Sellers, Lexington Avenue Neighborhood Association; Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Santorelli, Spring Hill/Hospital Neighborhood Association; Marcy J. Whitman, West Main Street; Ernest de Flines, Rowayton Civic Association; Ben Buckner, Sr., Spring Hill/Hospital Neighborhood Association;

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Shockley called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m.

A. Welcoming Remarks and review of changes to meeting format and agenda.

Chairman Shockley explained that rather than going around the room and listening to the various difficulties, a new format was being tested. Connie Blair from Customer Service takes all the initial quality of life concerns and will be routing them to the appropriate parties. During the next few months, a number of informational speakers have been scheduled. Mr. Alvord will give a presentation about Public Works today. Mr. Maslin will speak next month about Zoning and Keep America Beautiful will also be presenting a program in the near future.

Chairman Shockley also announced that Mayor Moccia had to attend another meeting.

1. Review and approve November 1, 2006 meeting minutes

The following correction was noted:

Page 4, first two paragraphs; please change the following from:

"Mr. Pierce said that a new Yield sign had been installed in one of the crosswalks but that he noticed it was fairly small. He asked that a larger sign be installed.

Mr. Pierce expressed concerns about youth who are on the street at 11 p.m. Chairman Shockley will speak with Fred about what might be done. The problem, the Mayor pointed out, was that there are issues of civil rights involved and that unless the youths are breaking the law, they have the right to be there."

To:

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\*\* MRS ROMANELLI MOVED TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 1, 2006 AS AMENDED.

\*\* MR. SELLERS SECONDED.

\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

#### C. Review of Public Works Traffic Management and Traffic Request Process Presented by Hal Alvord, DPW Director, followed by a question and answer period.

Mr. Alvord explained that the Mayor was at a Emergency Communications Exercise that was being run by the Homeland Security Department and scheduled after this meeting was planned. If the Mayor did not attend, then the City could possibly lose the opportunity for Homeland Security Grants. Mr. Alvord stated that the Mayor takes these meetings very serious and would have attended if possible.

Mr. Alvord stated that one of the most asked about subjects in the City regards the traffic requests, what happens when a traffic request is filed and how DPW deals with the issue. Most importantly, people want to know why it takes so long to have work done. The number one complaint that Mr. Alvord hears has to do with the condition of the roads, number two concerns dead and dangerous trees and the third is traffic issues. He explained that DPW reformed the Traffic Management Section in the last year.

The most effective way to submit a request for traffic action is not to call the Mayor or Mr. Alvord, but to call the Customer Service Center at 854-3200. The Customer Service Center exists solely for the purpose of taking requests, questions and complaints. Ms. Blair will follow up on them; insure that they are delivered to the appropriate department, and that there is a response back to the resident who made the request. A record is created of every call. There is also a Customer Service Website.

Once a request for a stop sign is submitted via the Customer Service Center, Connie takes the information and then sends a traffic service request to Fred Eshraghi. A work order will then be generated for Fred's staff to put out a traffic counter at the site for 24 hours. The counter not only logs the number of cars, but the speed of the vehicles and the direction in which the traffic is traveling. This helps determining the volume of the traffic, and the average speed. There are many calls and complaints about speeding vehicles. Typically, the average speed from a counter tends to be slower than what people perceive it to be. The larger the vehicle, the faster it appears to be going. Following this, an analysis is done of the area and possible traffic solutions are considered. It is also important to look at the larger area in order to determine what traffic control devices should be put into place. Every traffic manager and engineer uses

a given set of criteria to determine whether the installation of a stop sign meets "warrants". The final determination may be that it does not make sense to install a traffic control device at that location. Fred will then contact the neighborhood group or make a report to the general meeting or contact Connie and have her send the report back to the person who made the request.

The reasons why it takes a lengthy period of time is because until October of last year, the City did not have a Traffic Management Section. This department, which withered away over the years due to attrition, has been re-established. Mr. Eshraghi is the Traffic Engineer and managing the day-to-day operations of the Traffic Management Section. Frank Mauro is the Traffic Analysis. If the request involves a traffic signal, Matt Oprica, who is the Traffic Signal Technician and Bob Antunes, who is the Traffic Signal Mechanic will meet with Fred and Frank to discuss the situation.

The signs are maintained by John Frederick. It is a two-man operation to install a street sign, which requires that on a daily basis, someone from the Highway Section of DPW is working with John to replace signs.

The City of Norwalk has 255 miles of city streets and roads. There are over 2,000 intersections. On average, six stop signs a week are knocked down by vehicles. This does not include the traffic cabinets, which are hit by drivers. There are 86 traffic signals. The system is old and running on DOS based software. The hardware is no longer manufactured. There are tens of thousands of signs, including street signs. These street signs are slowly being replaced with high reflectivity street signs, with larger letters and more reflective background to increase night visibility.

Fred and his department are also working on a Traffic Update project. The City was awarded a three and a half million-dollar grant through the EPA to replace the aging traffic signal system. This will be a state of the art digital system and will replace twenty-four signals in central Norwalk. There are also new funds available to do a Traffic Management Plan, which the Traffic Management Department will be responsible for preparing the proposal, selecting a consultant, and executing a contract. Two other programs that are being developed are Traffic Calming on Strawberry Hill and Safe Routes to School. The non-emergency work orders are then put in a list according to the date received.

Mr. Alvord stated that the City is not in favor of putting signs up all over the place. He pointed out that it detracts from the scene and that people frequently ignore them. As an example, Mr. Alvord commented that the Fire Lanes behind City Hall have been used as parking spaces for decades. After December 15th, tickets will be issued to violators. He also gave another illustration of a city street corner that was over-populated with signs. A driver will not have time to read the signs even if he is only going 10 miles per hour. There are legal reasons for some signs, but the City is trying to reduce sign pollution.

At this point, Mr. Alvord opened the floor for questions.

Mr. Sellers stated that he had almost gotten a ticket earlier for parking in the Fire Zone. Mr. Alvord stated that there was a parking enforcement officer that would be present at City Hall until December 15th. After that, violators will be ticketed.

Ms. Lindstrom asked about LAZ parking. Mr. Alvord explained that there are many misconceptions about what LAZ does. Many people believe that the City sold the parking lots to LAZ, which is not the case. LAZ is a contractor to the Parking Authority of

the City of Norwalk. They operate the system within the broad scope of the policies and procedures established by the Norwalk Parking Authority. The Parking Authority decides how to address issues in the parking facilities, LAZ implements those policies and procedures. He also reviewed other details of the contracts. Mr. Alvord stated that parking is still part of the DPW portfolio and that DPW administers the contract on behalf of the parking authority.

Ms. Grant recounted an incident last year where the parking by space machine was not working, which resulted in a number of customers receiving a large ticket for non-payment. Mr. Alvord stated that the machines are now wireless and when they break down, the office is known immediately. The biggest reason that the machines break down is because of customer's actions. Ms. Grant asked about the procedure for parking tickets. She added that it was an insult to have to pay for a parking space at the parking garage when she had to go there to pay for the parking ticket. Mr. Alvord said that the person who makes the determination on the parking ticket appeal is John Portata, a former Stamford police officer and currently the operations manager for LAZ. Appeals are also possible on-line. Mr. Alvord said that if you have to appeal a parking ticket, it is wise to take the ticket with you because the ticket has a date/time stamp on the ticket.

Mr. Pierce asked about the number of handicapped spaces at retail stores. Mr. Alvord stated that there are two reasons why City Hall had just restriped the parking area. One of the reasons was that the handicapped people did not have enough places to park. The second reason was that there were a number of mirror strikes on City Hall Drive with all the cars parked on the ball field side of the drive in the Fire Lane. Four more handicapped spaces will be added to the parking at City Hall.

However, there is a federal standard which requires a particular percentage of handicapped spaces for parking lots, based on the total number of spaces.

Ms. Griffing asked about what should be done when someone who is not handicapped parks in designated spaces. Chief Rilling stated that the Police Department can ticket on private property for the following reasons: reckless operation; operating a vehicles under the influence; parking in a fire lane and finally, parking in a handicapped space. However, Chief Rilling did say that often, by the time the officer arrives, the vehicle has been moved. He suggested that it would be good to write down the license plate number of the vehicle.

Ms. Abraham asked if it was possible to have a handicapped parking space created in front of an apartment building. Mr. Alvord said that this was not possible because there are specific criteria for doing this.

Another question from the group was how to find out when the last time a traffic counter was placed on Girard Street. Mr. Alvord stated that by calling Customer Service, the information could be researched and presented.

Ms. Paladino asked what the status of the petitions for speed bumps that had been submitted earlier. Mr. Alvord replied that the City did not have a well thought out plan for traffic calming. There are a number of measures that can be done to slow traffic down on streets, not just speed bumps. Speed bumps were thought to be a magic solution to speeding. This has turned out not to be true. In the past years, they were done on request with a two-thirds request from residents that wanted them, which was an arbitrary determination. In some cases, speed bumps may have value in calming

traffic. Unfortunately, they slow down ambulances, police cars and other emergency equipment. They are also a problem for snowplows. The prior requests are still on file. When the Traffic Management consultant arrives, then the requests will be evaluated. There are no ideal solutions.

Mr. Buckner asked if the residents of Girard Street would have to continue to live with the speeding vehicles for another six years until the planning is done. Mr. Alvord replied that the residents will have to live with the traffic. He also commented that although the request was submitted, it would still have to be evaluated and that speed bumps might not be the best alternative. Mr. Eshraghi said that they will do a traffic count on Girard Street. There are other alternatives, one being a decoy police car with a radar set up, and another is a radar trailer.

Ms. Whitmore commented when she was in Webster Street Lot recently, two of the vehicles had been parking in a manner that blocked others from parking in adjacent spaces. She also said that West Main Street was also an area where people would speed. A policeman would often be on site, but the following day, the traffic would resume its normal pattern.

Mr. Clark asked about liability and danger issues. Mr. Alvord said that if there was a liability issue, the request goes to the top of the list. He also stated that DPW have on call crews 24/7. This includes someone from the sign department and the signal maintenance. If a sign is damaged, calling combined dispatch at 854-3000. Mr. Alvord said that it was not good to call 911 about road kill, sign damage or signal problems. 911 is an emergency number.

Ms. Langley had some questions about a tractor trailer truck that was parked on Meadow Street near LaJoie's. Chief Rilling suggested that she contact Officer Reilly, Sgt. Bennett or Lt. Kahalway in the Community Policing about the issue. Mr. Alvord also suggested that Ms. Langley speak with the owner of LaJoie's about the issue. Ms. Langley also mentioned several other issues about LaJoie's. Mr. Alvord repeated that Mr. Murphy, who is the owner of LaJoie's, has been very cooperative. Chief Rilling also mentioned that there are people who come and just abandon vehicles near LaJoie's, but LaJoie's has to follow a set procedure to deal with these abandoned vehicles. He said that the officers from Community Policing would be able to work out a long term approach to the problem.

Mr. Alvord said that regarding Slow Down Days, and that many of the people who were speeding on the streets were residents of that street. When the neighbors get involved, there is an impact. The next Slow Down period will be in the springtime, but from Dec. 18 until the end of the year, there will be a state campaign called "Over the Limit - Under Arrest", which will be a DWI program.

This concluded Mr. Alvord presentation and he turned the floor over to Connie Blair.

#### Customer Service Center, Connie Blair.

Ms. Blair stated that most of the outstanding issues have been resolved. One of the outstanding issues is the missing door at Eclipse Avenue. The property owner has been contacted. All the other requests through Planning and Zoning and the Health Department have been resolved.

Due to the new format of the meetings, a newly created report sheet has been created. When someone calls the Customer Service Department, it is important to mention their neighborhood association. When the issue is resolved, then the Neighborhood Association will also be informed.

Ms. Romanelli asked about her request regarding the tennis courts and the crumbling seawall. Ms. Blair said that the seawall issue was still under review by the legal department. The issue regarding the tennis courts had been given to Recreation and Parks and there has not been a response as of yet.

Mr. Shockley said that Mr. Closter from the Health Department had an announcement to make and turned the floor over to him.

Mr. Closter from the Health Department informed people that he was a member of the Mayor's Water Quality Committee. The Committee met last week and there were concerns about water quality. Apparently some people are dropping their dog feces into storm drains. This actually impacts the shellfish beds. He encouraged everyone to call the Customer Service Center or the Health Department if they see people dropping feces into the storm drains.

Ms. Grant commented that there were Silvermine residents that were blowing their leaves into the streams and ponds. One of the people lives in Wilton and this practice is affecting people downstream. She asked if this was a water quality issue. Mr. Closter said that he could take a look at it. Ms. Blair also said that Conservation might also possibly get involved in the issue.

Mr. Alvord said that he had some comments on Mr. Closter's announcement. A recent incident was where there were three catch basins in a row that were packed with dog manure almost up to the steel grate. This actually raised the chloroform counts in the harbor and the Shellfish Commissioner had to shut down the oyster beds for a few weeks. There were some questions about positioning trash receptacles in various places. Mr. Alvord pointed out this would result in receptacles full of feces in the neighborhoods. The best solution seemed to be encouraging those with dogs to bring the feces home and put it in their garbage.

Mr. Shockley said that he had attended a Fairfield County Deer Alliance Meeting. If there were interested parties, Mr. Shockley requested that they contact him.

#### ADJOURNMENT

\*\* MR. IANNACCONI MOVED TO ADJOURN.

\*\* MR. CLARK SECONDED.

The meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes  
Telesco Secretarial Services