

CITY OF NORWALK
MAYOR'S NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION MEETING
JUNE 6, 2007

ATTENDANCE: David Shockley, Chairman; Tony Capuano, Health Department; Leigh Grant, NASH; Katherine Griffing, Golden Hill Association; Glenn Iannaccone, Fire Department; Michael Moccia, Recreation and Parks Director; Mark Pierce, Wilton Avenue N.A.; Vladimir Mariano, Zoning Department; Dorothy Romanelli, Harbor Shores N.A.; John Romanelli, Harbor Shores N.A.; Donnie Sellers, Lexington Avenue N.A.; Michael Serrao, Seligson Properties; Nancy Esposito, Al Raymond, Spring Hill/Hospital N.A.; Maribeth Becker CNNA (10:58 a.m.); Laurel Lindstrom, ENNA (10:58 a.m.); Mayor Richard Moccia (10:59 a.m.)

STAFF: Connie Blair, Customer Service Center

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Shockley called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Mr. Shockley then explained that the Mayor had a schedule conflict and would be joining the meeting at a later time. Therefore, the minutes would be approved and Mr. Serrao would give his presentation first.

Mr. Shockley then said that the Mayor's Neighborhood Preservation Meetings have evolved from the City Department heads meeting to address the quality of life concerns, to include the neighborhood representatives and allow them to present first hand information and to allow Customer Service to report to the public on the progress of complaints.

As the size of the meeting grew, it became very inefficient to review each neighborhood item. Customer Service then replaced this process with a printed report of pending and closed issues each month. Also, with a larger group, it is necessary to create a balance between decision making and listening to the various views. In order to allow this to happen, it is necessary to strictly adhere to the agenda.

The neighborhood announcement part of the agenda was intended to serve as an informative session and to address concerns that are being neglected. This part of the agenda was not designed for the purpose of staging debate, personal issues or to divert a meeting from the published agenda. Announcements would be in the nature of progress in the neighborhood, upcoming events, the request for further insight or decision with unsettled neighborhood concerns, reporting the quality of life issues that involve the majority of neighborhoods, such as noise ordinance, graffiti, traffic calming, etc.

It would help tremendously to be notified of problem issues that may need to be reviewed at the meetings by submitting these to the chairman at least ten days prior to the scheduled meeting. The goal of the Mayor's Neighborhood Preservation Meetings is to resolve City related quality of life issues as best as possible with the available resources.

Mr. Shockley went on to say that the July meeting would not have a scheduled speaker in order to allow more time to discuss neighborhood issues.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR MAY 2, 2007

** MRS. ROMANELLI MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR THE MAY 2, 2007 MEETING AS SUBMITTED.

** MR. SELLERS SECONDED.

** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

GUEST SPEAKER: MICHAEL SERRAO, SELIGSON PROPERTIES AND WEST AVENUE REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Mr. Serrao came forward and introduced himself to the group. He explained that he was a Development Analysis with Seligson Properties, who were named as the Master Developer for the West Avenue redevelopment. The area that the project covers is 19.8 acres. Mr. Serrao then gave a brief history of other redevelopment projects underway in Norwalk, including the DiScala and Poco Partners projects.

Mr. Serrao then gave a PowerPoint presentation of the conceptual plans for the Seligson West Avenue project.

Following the conclusion of the presentation, Ms. Esposito asked about the set backs shown on the plans and mentioned that the Frost Building and others like it are located right on the sidewalk. She also asked if the plans call for the widening of West Avenue. Mr. Serrao said that the plans in the presentation are conceptual and the details have not been determined at this time.

Mr. Serrao then explained that the goal of the project is to have an anchor retail store because retail drives retail. The plans also include small shops; restaurants and side walk cafes to drive foot traffic. He also informed the group that there would be 350 residential units, both rentals and owner occupied. This would also include 10% affordable housing.

Ms. Grant commented that it would be important to have some efficiency apartment for singles because people prefer two bedroom apartments. Ms. Esposito commented that she understood that the purpose was to attract singles to avoid adding additional strain on the school system. Fire Marshall Iannaccone said that he believed that the new condos at the Maritime Center had both single and two bedroom units.

Mr. Serrao said that one of the goals was to have people park and walk to their destinations. He also reminded everyone that it was a five minute walk to the Wall Street area. In the plans there are several parking garages that will allow self parking, be well lit and painted.

Mr. Serrao also said that the City had done a traffic study and that Seligson will also be doing a study of its own to determine the best flow of traffic. He also reminded everyone that Mr. Seligson already owns 71% of the property involved in the project and is in negotiation with the remaining property owners.

Fire Marshall Iannaccone asked if there were plans to upgrade the water supply since the new buildings will require sprinkler installation. Mr. Serrao said that it was being worked on by the design team.

Mr. Pierce commented that Mr. Raymond had suggested that a motorized trolley car be used to connect SoNo with the West Avenue project. People were very receptive to his idea.

Ms. Grant asked if there would be a grocery store in the plan. She said that she knows that the Reed Putnam project will have a market of some kind. Mr. Sellers asked if Seligson planned on surveying the current merchants and incorporating them into the project. Mr. Serrao said that this was a good idea, also.

Mr. Sellers then asked if this project was modeled on any other plan. Mr. Serrao explained that Streetworks has been working a similar plan. Mr. Sellers asked if there would be a water taxi. Mr. Moccia pointed out that the City owns property at the Head of the Harbor and that this would not be a bad idea.

Ms. Grant asked what the future of the carriage barn located behind Currie Tires was. Mr. Serrao said that the designers were mindful of its location. Ms. Grant replied that she hoped that pieces of architecture and the type of construction would be preserved in this new development and that it would not end up looking like the Bethesda, Maryland mall-a-minute look.

Mr. Raymond said that he thought if the trolley started in SoNo, came up West Avenue, turned on to Wall and then onto East Avenue, it could do a complete circuit. He then suggested that the carriage house be used as a storage area for the trolley.

Mr. Serrao said that this was a good idea. Mr. Raymond also commented that there did not seem to be much open space in the plans. Mr. Serrao said that the sidewalks will be 18-20 feet wide and there will be pocket parks. He said that the designer hope to create some synergy with Mathews Park.

Mr. Raymond also mentioned Pine Island Cemetery and warned Mr. Serrao that it was a historic cemetery and that great care should be taken in regards to it.

Ms. Grant asked about green energy. Mr. Serrao said that the engineer that is being brought onto the project will be working on that aspect.

Ms. Lindstrom, Ms. Becker and Mayor Moccia joined the meeting.

Mr. Seller asked what will be happening next and whether or not the voices that had spoken would be heard. Mr. Serrao said that the ideas and comments would be discussed in the project meetings.

Mr. Shockley thanked Mr. Serrao for his input.

CUSTOMER SERVICE UPDATE

Ms. Blair distributed printed copies of the Customer Service updates to those who did not have them.

Ms. Grant mentioned that there was a landscaping business that appeared to be squatting on a piece of vacant property in the Silvermine area. She said that she thinks it might be an illegal business operating out of that property and commercial vehicles are being parked on the property. There is an added difficulty in that it is not clear who owns the parcel. Mayor Moccia noted the name of the landscaping company involved and said that he would have the situation looked into.

Mr. Raymond reported that there was a large piece of a dead tree that fell on Harbor Avenue.

He also said that since the development had been put in on Stuart Avenue, the road work that CL&P, the water company and the gas company did has made the road very bumpy. A call will be made to the various utilities involved and to the developers.

Ms. Lindstrom said that the grass at the Fitch School has gotten very high. She said that she had filed a complaint with the Health Department. There was a brief discussion about the possible solutions to this problem. Mr. Pierce mentioned that the grass around the old Nash Engineering property is also very high.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

City Staff

The Mayor said that the City will be having Slow Down Weeks in the near future. He also said that this will be done on Beach Road.

There have been a rash of bank robberies in the area, seven of which occurred in Norwalk. The police have apprehended three of the criminals. There will be a telephone conference with the FBI and the

U.S. Attorney about this in the next few days. Bank robbery has become the crime-du-jour across the nation. Almost all of the surrounding towns have had recent robberies.

Fire Marshall Iannaccone asked that the neighborhood associations have the areas around the fire hydrants cleared of tall grass and brush.

Mr. Shockley said that a grant was obtained through CDBG for the Meadow Street park.

Mayor Moccia announced that the FEMA has declared the area a partial disaster area for infrastructure. He also commented that FEMA is not an easy organization to deal with and preparing the reports and statistics takes a lot of work.

Ms. Grant said that she was collecting flood reports. Davis Pond has become very shallow, along with the Silvermine Pond. The Silvermine Guild dredged the area behind them, but when the water hits Davis Pond, it starts to back up. Mayor Moccia reviewed the flood control process with her.

Neighborhood Associations

Mr. Pierce announced that the Wilton Avenue Neighborhood Association would be having a cook out on Fair Street in Santanella Park on June 24th.

Mayor Moccia left the meeting at 11:15 a.m.

Ms. Grant commented that NASH was signing contracts for approval for studies to be done to create two historic districts. She also said that there a place under consideration for Adopt-A-Spot, but NASH has been unable to contact the stakeholder. There has also been a rash of incidents involving the spray painting of cars in Silvermine.

Ms. Becker said that the Wall Street clean up on May 12th went well.

Mr. Mocciae reported that a spray painting incident in the Calf Pasture beach main bathro oms led to the cracking of a ring of graffiti artists. An alert gate attendant noticed a similar type of graffiti in the bathroom and remembered that he had also seen the same type in Westport. With the help of the police, the offender was apprehended and it was discovered that he had a website devoted to graffiti. Mr. Mocciae said that surveillance cameras will be installed at Calf Pasture, but also noted that the \$16,000 worth of damage was done inside the bathroom during beach hours.

Mr. Shockley stated that the next meeting would be on July 11th.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no additional business, meeting was adjourned at 11:24 a.m. by Mr. Shockley.

Respectfully submitted

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services