

STAMFORD PLANNING BOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES #3560
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2009
4TH FLOOR CAFETERIA
888 WASHINGTON BLVD., STAMFORD, CT

Stamford Planning Board Members present were: Duane Hill, Theresa Dell, Rose Marie Grosso, Claire Fishman and Jay Tepper. Present for staff were Robin Stein and Josh Lecar.

REGULAR MEETING

The chairman, Duane Hill, called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm.

Purchase & Sales Agreement: City of Stamford & PCKT, LLC, High Ridge Rd. & Bedford Street

Tom Cassone, City Corporation Counsel, represented the City in this agreement. John Leyden represented the owner. Mr. Cassone indicated that the City had negotiated the proposed property transfer at the request of the property owner. Research indicates that the purchase price compares favorably to the appraised value of the property. The sale will be voted on by the Board of Representatives.

John Leyden noted that the revised property lines could potentially be used to improve access to the existing two-story commercial structure and would increase the taxable value of the property. Theresa Dell questioned whether the adjacent owner would provide access to the property via Bedford Street. Mr. Leyden indicated that this could be done in the future but was not planned. Josh Lecar noted that there are topographical limitations to access changes due to the elevation of the property on the Bedford Street side.

Ms. Dell moved to approved; Ms. Grosso seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Capital Budget Presentations FY 2010/11 - 2017:

Mayor's Office/Office of Administration - Housing

Timothy Beeble, Director of Community Development, described the request. He stated that the Community Development office had begun to accumulate capital funds for housing development in 1982. A total of \$13 million has been authorized since the fund's inception. Mr. Beeble noted the groundbreaking at 58 Progress Drive by Charter Oak Communities as a part of the replacement of Vidal Court. He also mentioned the ribbon cutting ceremony for Fairfield Court scheduled for Monday, October 19, 2009. The amount of the request for FY 2010/11 is \$3,420,000 to fund construction of new units at Metro Green and Vidal Court sites.

Theresa Dell noted that this was a significant increase from the preceding year. Mr. Beeble explained that it was similar to the prior year with the bridge loan to Metro Green included. Robin Stein added that fee in lieu payments have decreased due to the downturn in new construction. Ms. Dell asked which piece of the appropriation would be most critical. Mr. Beeble suggested that Vidal Court is moving ahead, so that would be the priority, but also noted that the funds are not tied to a specific project.

Scotfield Manor

The director presented the application. She highlighted the key items included within the 2010/11 capital request: replacement of a flat roof over the dining room and kitchen, purchase of electric beds, elevator replacement, replacement of hand rails, design for window replacement and new climate control system. The amount requested is \$115,000. Jay Tepper noted that this amount is \$35,000 less than the current year.

Stamford Historical Society

Dr. Thomas Zoubek, President, presented the application. He mentioned that the Historical Society has requested funding to install a full HVAC system, finish basement windows to seal the building and enhance security, and to replace antiquated light fixtures. Mr. Tepper questioned whether any stimulus funds had been requested. Dr. Zoubek responded that to his knowledge they had not been.

Bartlett Arboretum

Board Members Ken De Larocca and Jackie Cameron presented the request. Mr. De Larocca indicated they were focusing on the educational building for this capital request.

Affordable Housing Linkage

Robin Stein reviewed this program which reserves a percentage of commercial building fees for affordable housing. The program is tied to a formula so it does not impact the safe debt limit. He noted that revenue has been flat due to the poor economy, but could increase with an upturn.

Stamford Museum

Melissa Mulrooney, Executive Director, presented the request and provided a hand-out showing current progress. She indicated they have previously requested capital funds for roof repair to the Bendel Mansion, as well as to enhance drainage on the grounds. The Museum is currently in progress with the terrace roof repair and is preparing to undertake window replacement in the great hall and solarium. Water line extension is under discussion with the WPCA, with an RFP expected in November 2009. The architectural firm of Ty Soo Kim has been conducting a facility Master Plan during 2009, including survey and outreach to Stamford residents and several retreats with staff and Board members. The full Master Plan will be presented to the Planning Board in January 2010. The FY 2010/11 request is for a new phase of repair at the Bendel Mansion including envelope repairs; handicapped accessibility; continuing window repair and replacement; reconfiguration of the entry; pedestrian improvements; and utility work.

Claire Fishman asked whether it was possible to add access further north. Ms. Mulrooney indicated that this had been considered in the Master Planning process but was difficult to implement due to the location on a state road (High Ridge Road). Jay Tepper asked whether fundraising has been addressed. Ms. Mulrooney responded that this was an outgrowth of the Master Plan but that it would need careful consideration given the current economic conditions. She also mentioned future plans to relocate the planetarium in an extension of the observatory building.

Supplemental Capital Requests: OPM/Central Services, Equipment, \$61,515

Robin Stein noted that this item is associated with a budget close-out which does not require action. The requested equipment will allow Central Services to reduce outsourcing.

Mr. Tepper moved for approval; Claire Fishman seconded. Motion was approved unanimously.

**Engineering, Water Main Extension for Alma Rock Road and Mary Joy Lane,
\$750,000**

Ben Barnes, Director of Operations, presented this item. He noted that recent positive test results provide the justification for the project. Affected residents have been provided with bottled water and filters until the work can be contracted. Ms. Dell asked if there is further evidence of leaching. Mr. Barnes responded that there may be multiple sources for the contamination. Ms. Fishman questioned whether additional roads might be affected. Mr. Barnes indicated that there were very few houses remaining to be tested. Monitoring wells have been proposed to pinpoint the source of the contamination.

Mr. Tepper moved for approval; Ms. Fishman seconded. Motion was approved unanimously.

Old Business

Subdivision #3959, Request for an extension to file map. Approved.
Subdivision #3986, Request for an extension to file map. Approved.

Ms. Dell motioned for adjournment of the Regular Meeting at 7:20 p.m. Ms. Grosso seconded. Motion was approved unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING

The chairman, Duane Hill, called the meeting to order at 8:00 pm.

Public Hearing, MP-406 HP Gateway Land I, LLC and HP Gateway Land II, LLC
Ms. Grosso read the notification for this application.

Mayor Dannel Malloy opened public comment with a statement in favor of the application. He noted that it was an unusual situation for him to appear personally at a Planning Board public hearing. He reported that the City and the applicant are in serious discussion with a potential tenant for 250,000 square feet of space within the proposed Gateway development which would justify the construction of a 500,000 square foot office complex. Therefore, this is not an academic discussion. He indicated that the potential tenant has a short time-frame and is not interested in any other Stamford locations. He noted that the proposed project is located within the Mill River corridor and that this should be incorporated within its development program. He added that the project should include a substantial affordable housing component. He noted that based on recent discussion with the applicant the project would include no more than 500 spaces of commuter parking. He suggested that as other applications come forward, more detailed design and siting questions could be addressed. He reiterated the critical nature of the Atlantic Street overpass reconstruction project and the improvement of the Henry Street/Atlantic Street intersection, as well as the widening of Pulaski Street to the west of Washington Boulevard to provide adequate access to the site. He concluded by emphasizing his long term focus on smart growth in Stamford and stated that this project's location adjacent to the railroad station exactly matches the definition of smart growth.

Robin Stein provided a staff report. He noted that it had been prepared prior to the announcement of active negotiations with the prospective tenant. He provided an a

board to illustrate a comparison with a prior application MP-384 in which only the area north of Henry Street had been included within the Category 9 area in connection with the Metro Green development.

Rick Redniss opened the presentation of the application and introduced the applicant's team of consultants. His presentation included boards illustrating the 2002 Master Plan, as adopted, and the current Master Plan, including subsequent amendments to respond to development at RBS, Metro Green, Yale & Town and Pitney Bowes. Another board illustrated the other parts of the City with a Category 9 designation. Mr. Redniss highlighted the different settings and mixes of uses. He stated that Category 4 is not an appropriate choice based on its more limited mix of uses and lower housing density.

Mr. Redniss continued with a chronology of the applications for this site. He noted that early plans had a large parking structure adjacent to the Mill River and did not include commuter parking. He noted that the current program has recently been revised to include for no more than 500 spaces of commuter parking per the Mayor's statement.

Mr. Hill asked why the State's requested number of parking spaces has changed. John Freeman, General Counsel for Harbor Point responded that there was a need for both interim parking spaces to allow the demolition of the old station garage and also permanent replacement parking. It is his understanding that the replacement parking will be more dispersed than the current parking configuration. He affirmed that BLT/Harbor Point wants to be part of the solution to this issue.

Mr. Redniss next addressed the issue of the requested reduction to the Category 16 (open space) area located adjacent to the Mill River corridor. He pointed to the development of RBS where no Category 16 designation existed within the site, but a 50-foot wide strip of landscaped open space was included in the development. He also noted the steep slope of the riverfront area within the Gateway property. Mr. Tepper questioned the purpose of the change. Mr. Redniss indicated that it was intended to allow the garage to be located below grade and to provide 24-foot aisles for the parking facility rather than 20-foot wide aisles.

He then responded to the comparison with MP-384 by noting that housing had existed on the Metro Green site in the past. He stated that the majority of residential buildings which had been located on the Gateway site were derelict or vacant. Only five of the 12 buildings had residential tenants and several of the units were rented at over \$2,000 per month. In response to concerns about gentrification and displacement, he observed that redevelopment can lead to more housing and to the clean up of hazardous materials and natural areas. He provided a hand-out illustrating the removal of debris from the Mill River area of the Gateway site.

Mr. Redniss highlighted several different options for a river crossing if Henry Street were to be discontinued west of Washington Boulevard, including a span connecting Atlantic Street with Selleck Street in the Waterside neighborhood as an option. He also noted the applicant's program to develop a direct link to the railroad platform of the Stamford Transportation Center.

Mr. Stein re-emphasized the need for additional housing within the development program and questioned the necessity of changing the designation of the Category 16 area to Category 9. He stated that with each new development application there was a need to raise the bar so that the City continued to work toward a more sustainable

future. In response, Mr. Redniss noted the inclusion of underground parking within this application in contrast to the typical pattern of surface or structured parking facilities for most office developments within the city.

Ms. Dell questioned how much affordable housing was going to be provided within the proposed development program. Mr. Redniss stated there would be a minimum of 24 units. Ms. Dell then asked whether 12 units had been displaced through the demolition of existing structures. Mr. Redniss responded that it depended on how you count it, since several of the structures had multiple housing units. Ms. Dell questioned whether the potential tenant might object to having affordable housing within the development. Mr. Redniss indicated that a payment in lieu contribution might be an alternative, but that the details were still to be worked out.

Staff Comments

David Emerson, Director, Environmental Protection Board, reviewed his staff report and suggested that park land should not be given up lightly.

Josh Lecar, Transportation Planner, noted the need for a stronger commitment by the applicant to reduce travel demand through all possible strategies to achieve the 30% reduction level incorporated within the Pre-Application traffic report.

Public Comments

Comments in Favor

Katherine Walsh, Executive Director, Stamford Partnership, spoke in favor of the application. She noted her organization's support for mixed use, Transit Oriented Development within walking distance of the Stamford Transportation Center.

Virgil de la Cruz, 94 Davenport Drive, supported the project, but expressed concern about the traffic bottleneck at Davenport Street and Southfield Avenue. He opposed the closing of Henry Street.

Jack Condlin, President, Stamford Chamber of Commerce, stated that this is a smart growth project. He recalled the UConn symposium that the Chamber had co-sponsored which highlighted opportunities for smart growth and was excited by the opportunity this project offers to move forward the Mill River development and to add to the city's job growth. He noted that the Chamber has taken no position regarding the location of railroad parking.

Comments in Opposition

There were no comments in opposition.

Comments neither in favor nor opposition:

Tom Durels, Executive Vice President, Malkin Properties, noted that Metro Green's development program included four times the required number of affordable housing units. He expressed strong concern about traffic and access to the Stamford Transportation Center as indicated in a report he submitted prepared by DLS Consulting.

Jane Freeman, Attorney, Cacace, Tusch and Santagata, representing Pitney Bowes, introduced Leigh Walton, Director of Government Affairs, Pitney Bowes, and Maureen Fahey, Director of Real Estate, Pitney Bowes. Ms. Walton observed that of the 900 Pitney Bowes employees located at the corporate headquarters, approximately 15% use transit for their commute. She presented a traffic study prepared by Tighe & Bond to document 4,200 vehicle trips added to South End roadways by the proposed development and other projected developments in the area. Theresa Dell asked whether all the developments were included. Duane Hill asked whether the traffic analysis was based on 1,000 commuter parking spaces within the Gateway complex. Ms. Walton and Ms. Fahey indicated that their analysis was based on 1,000 commuter parking spaces, but that a large number of intersections failed in both the build and no build conditions.

Ms. Freeman provided a summary of issues that should be considered by the Planning Board in their review of the application. Mr. Hill questioned how this application differed from the process used by Pitney Bowes in their previous assembly of the properties subsequently sold to the Antares Group. Ms. Dell asked whether Ms. Freeman believed the applicant's development program could be accomplished without future zone changes.

Sandra Goldstein, Executive Director, Downtown Special Services District, expressed support for the application, but also concern about the effect on traffic conditions both in the South End and in all of downtown.

Mr. Redniss summarized his previous remarks in favor of the application and indicated that the applicant would be willing to coordinate their future zoning applications with the Stantec consultant team, including the potential for a peer review of traffic assumptions and analysis.

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Hill adjourned the meeting at 11:25 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Duane Hill, Chairman

Note: These proceedings were recorded on tape and are available for review in the Land Use Bureau located on the 7th floor of Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard, during regular business hours.