

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING**  
**CITY OF STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT**  
**URBAN REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**  
**FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 2009**

1. At 12:00 noon, Chairman Stephen C. Osman called the special meeting to order. The following were in attendance:

Commissioners:

Stephen C. Osman, Chairman  
James I. Nixon, Vice Chairman  
Joel P. Mellis, Secretary/Treasurer  
Robert S. Robins  
Jackie Heftman

Staff:

Christopher L. Bergstrom, Executive Director  
Durelle Alexander

Attendees:

Larry Quick, Resilient Futures  
Fred Presley, Resilient Futures

2. Discussion: "Reinventing Stamford Initiative"

Executive Director Bergstrom introduced Larry Quick, noting that he had worked with him on several projects in Rhode Island during his tenure there as Executive Director of the Rhode Island Economic Policy Council. He said, "When I came back to Stamford, there was an agreement with Economic Development Director Michael Freimuth and Mayor Malloy that I would, in addition to running the URC, think about an economic strategy for Stamford that would complement its very good land use strategy. The first thing I did was to distill a report I had done for Rhode Island on five emerging conditions, *Five Changes Shaping Stamford's Competitiveness*, as they applied to Stamford." Executive Director Bergstrom continued, "The idea of this civic conversation on reinventing Stamford is to have a diverse and broad group of people in Stamford and in the Stamford area engage with these conditions in a deep way – really understand them, bring in outsiders, and bring the vast knowledge of the Stamford community together. The way to get to action is by really understanding the conditions and that's what we are ramping up."

A meeting of the core group, which includes The Stamford Partnership (President Kathleen Walsh and Chairman Eric Dale), the Stamford Planning Board (Director Robin Stein and Chairman Duane Hill), the City's Department of Economic Development (Director Michael Freimuth and Chairman Joel Selden), and the URC (Executive Director Bergstrom and Chairman Stephen Osman) was held this morning to begin to structure the initiative. Larry Quick and Fred Presley also attended this meeting. The group is attempting to zero in on the first keynote speaker and hopes to convene the first meeting in March of 2009. Executive Director Bergstrom explained, "The idea of these events is not to talk to the right people. It's to get the right people talking. The speaker's purpose will be to provoke conversation among the people who attend. If this were to lead to a shared understanding among 100 people of what the key conditions are that Stamford needs to address, this would be a success."

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Mr. Quick then addressed the Commission re: his approach to organizational strategies. He said, "You have several choices. These times are relatively unconventional. This is not your typical set of circumstances economically or environmentally, so it doesn't make sense to rely on conventional thinking, particularly since we know that conventional thinking has created some of these problems. It gives us, however, a unique opportunity to fix some of the things that we knowingly created in the past like economic disparity, social dysfunction, ecological disparity, etc." Mr. Quick noted that today's best organizational strategies are based on models from ecological and sociological networking and envision the world as a "network of networks" and the organization as a complex adaptive system that responds to and co-evolves with dynamic, changing conditions. Mr. Quick continued, "If we can't solve problems using the same thinking that created the problems, the situation demands a new conventional wisdom for our unconventional times. The real difference will be made through re-thinking the fundamental assumptions and frameworks we have been using to think about our future, and through Stamford's civic, business and community leaders taking a quantum leap forward in how they approach change, growth, policy-making and planning."

Discussion re: understanding immediate and emerging conditions ensued. Mr. Quick said, "If you are able to understand the conditions ahead of time, the emerging conditions, you can create the next capability before the condition occurs. Communities need to do this ... taking into consideration the key conditions on local, regional, national and global levels and determining their impact." Executive Director Bergstrom explained that, in an attempt to accomplish this, the core group plans to co-host a broadly inclusive conversation to position Stamford to exploit the emerging conditions. This conversation will include local stakeholders from across government, civic, business and academic sectors, convened in a mix of formats designed to enable interaction among the participants, provoked by leading thinkers from outside Stamford and connected to the best network of other cities engaged in similar work. Commissioner Heftman asked what this effort would be called and what might be the goal for Stamford. Executive Director Bergstrom responded, "It's called 'Reinventing Stamford' and the first conversation will probably deal with attacking the opportunities presented by the recession. We hope to position Stamford as a place in which to solve problems in an urban laboratory and get the resources to do it." Mr. Quick added, "Resilient Futures is a model, a method committed to assisting organizations/communities transform and adapt to their future through resilience. Our goal is to raise awareness of resilience and its possibilities, provide a method to show communities, organizations and businesses how they can individually and together become resilient, and convene a network of people to share their experiences in becoming resilient."

Mr. Quick continued, "Once you understand the conditions, the next thing you have to consider is connectivity. We see things in terms of networks. After we map out the strong and weak connections and the networks in Stamford, we can start to understand the capabilities that Stamford has and get them in sync with the emerging conditions."

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Executive Director Bergstrom said, “For example, here in Stamford there are the interlocking Land Use Boards and downtown development sectors; the education network, and Sound Waters, the environmental network. We have all the networks but they are barely connected to each other. The process we’re discussing today starts to break that down and get people from the different networks interacting and good things come from that. Sub-groups will start to work together and their awareness of conditions will create opportunities.”

Commissioner Heftman asked, “What do you hope will come out of this effort in Stamford - that the challenges will be recognized or that once the challenges are recognized, there be processes put in place?” Executive Director Bergstrom responded, “I don’t think it will be sequential. I think that as we start to have this conversation, some opportunities will become obvious and the sub-groups will choose to work together to chase those opportunities. This will be a convening of people around an awareness of conditions that will naturally lead groups of people to self-organize to exploit the opportunities. I can guess what some of those opportunities may be. One will be around rail-enabled regional innovation efforts, a mega-regional opportunity in which Stamford has a role to play. That conversation has already started under the sponsorship of the Regional Plan Association and our effort is going to serve in a fairly powerful way to accelerate that conversation. Another initiative will probably center around building an innovation-capable workforce. Then there is our turf, which is place-making. At the end of the day, you need to have Stamford be a place that’s resilient, that’s sustainable, that fosters interaction among people and is distinctive in some way.” Discussion ensued. Mr. Quick noted that this process is about “getting people to re-orient what they already do – changing mindsets.”

Commissioner Mellis asked, “Does this differ from normal corporate practices where you have traditional strategic planning that looks out five and ten years at the conditions and tries to adapt to those conditions?” Mr. Quick responded, “In some ways it is. However, in corporations they endeavor to produce plans generally utilizing a very confined set of initial conditions. Usually the conditions’ analysis is very weak or fed by trends. Most organizations don’t fully understand their capabilities and can’t take a ‘whole community’ approach.”

Commissioner Robins asked, “Are you proposing a process of planning with a very general objective view?” Executive Director Bergstrom responded, “There is a way of thinking that a planner has and there’s a way of thinking that a designer has. This process is more like a design process than a planning process. Designers think of the whole and do their work iteratively, not linear ... it’s much more like a spiral.” Commissioner Nixon said, “In the real world, the approach wouldn’t be to even discuss the process but rather to pick and identify a common problem or challenge and have a conversation/meeting to address this. Then, as this process goes forward, things will be discovered collectively that otherwise would never have come up.”

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Executive Director Bergstrom responded, “There are a couple of different ways I have worked with Larry. Most participants went through four or five half-day workshops that took place at one or two week intervals. The group went through a process of identifying conditions, identifying the sort of value they were trying to create for a specific constituency, what capabilities they needed to create or link together to produce that value in the context of those conditions, and then what catalytic projects would build those capabilities and networks. We have also convened people in conversations that spanned a year or so. It is important they span enough time for network building and development of ideas. In our planned six evening sessions, we’re basically doing the first half-day workshop on conditions and a little bit of the second half-day workshop on capabilities, but we’re doing it with a much bigger group of people across a much broader swath of idea geography.”

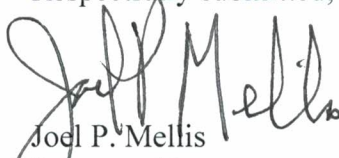
Mr. Quick concluded, “What we try to do is create a bridge between unconventional thinking and conventional thinking, a new conventional wisdom for unconventional times, so you don’t have to take too strong a leap. Stamford, Connecticut can become a center for this new type of thinking. The key things to remember are: (i) understand the conditions; (ii) get connected; (iii) understand the capabilities required, and (iv) understand that there’s a whole system of outcomes.”

3. Adjournment

The next regular meeting scheduled for Thursday, February 12, 2009 at 6:00PM is cancelled due to Lincoln’s birthday. No replacement date has been set.

There being no further business before the Board, Commissioner Nixon made a motion to adjourn. The motion was carried by unanimous vote and the meeting was adjourned at 1:50PM.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Joel P. Mellis  
Secretary/Treasurer

**CITY OF STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT, URBAN REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

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**SPECIAL**  
**MEETING NOTICE**

A special meeting of the City of Stamford, Connecticut, Urban Redevelopment Commission, will be held in the Commission Offices on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor of the Stamford Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard, Stamford, Connecticut, on Friday, January 16, 2009 at 12:00 noon.

**AGENDA:**

1. Roll Call
2. Discussion of "Reinventing Stamford Initiative"  
with Consultant Larry Quick, Resilient Futures
3. Adjournment
  - (a) Discussion – Next Meeting Agenda
  - (b) Confirmation – Next Meeting Date (*holiday 2/12/09 – must be changed*)