

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
CITY OF STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT
URBAN REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14th, 2006

1. At 8:32AM, 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
Edward J. Fuhrman
Robert S. Robins

Staff:

Gerrie Post, Executive Director
Rachel Goldberg, General Counsel
Durelle Alexander

2. Chairman Osman reported that several meetings had taken place with Corcoran Jennison, noting that C-J President Marty Jones attended two recent meetings in an attempt to wrap up/resolve ongoing negotiations. Executive Director Post said, "There are five issues being worked on at this point, with two of the most important being the connecting of the two garages with the ramping system and the proposed mezzanine." The Executive Director explained, "Because of the placement of the transformers outside of the basement area, it is now imperative to find space to put the switching gear and electrical rooms on the first and second levels." Executive Director Post showed a diagram indicating proposed locations for the four six-foot high transformers. Discussions are under way and C-J is studying moving the equipment further away from the walkway areas where people would be coming in and out of the garages. Executive Director Post continued, "Because the transformers are outside now, it affects the way the layout is in the ground floor of the building. We're working on keeping our garage open and airy, with a perception of safety and the ability to see through the garage onto the street."

Chairman Osman said, "The URC originally perceived a four-level garage, and somewhere along the way, C-J decided to make it into a three-level garage. In doing this, they were able to expand to 189 units from 175. We're not opposed to this, but we don't want to give up some of the amenities in our garage that we worked very hard to achieve." Executive Director Post added, "The other issue with the garage, in addition to the bump-out which we have eliminated, is where the connecting ramping is situated. It is being proposed in an area which blocks our stair and elevator tower and we are proposing it be moved to the second drive aisle." C-J is in the process of reworking this plan so the drive aisles and the traffic flow will be changed to accommodate this new location.

Executive Director Post said, "The other main issue is the mezzanine area and the ground floor and open arcade that had been the 'design of record' until recently. Part of the reason for the shift in design is that the transformers are not going to be in the basement area. We were supposed to have an open two-story space. What the developer has done is add a mezzanine which in theory did not impact on this until they had to start adding the additional rooms to accommodate the infrastructure."

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Executive Director Post continued, "We are working together to try to cut down on their size, but we cannot eliminate them. Also, the mezzanine area now has two housing units, reduced from previous plans for four. This still doesn't give the appearance and the look that was contemplated by the Commission at the beginning of the project." Commissioner Fuhrman asked, "What alternatives are being looked at?" Executive Director Post responded, "The possibility of shifting the ground floor office space to the mezzanine level and seeing if the pump room and the electrical switching gear rooms can be redesigned so they don't take up as much space." Commissioner Robins asked, "Isn't another possibility for them to give up one or two of those units in the mezzanine area?" Executive Director Post responded, "That's a possibility, too."

Executive Director Post reported that another significant issue is with the western elevation façade of the building. She said, "It doesn't look like the rest of the building in the design. We have worked it out so C-J will have spandrel glass on the top levels, but what they have on this elevation is one bank of windows coming down on each side of the building and then it's just blank brick wall. They have agreed to create openings on the ground level so there would be windows on the retail level. However, we would also like them to put two more banks of real windows that would give light and activity both during the day and at night. We are negotiating with C-J now and they have agreed to give us four windows on each side going down but not up at the top. This is a good addition but it doesn't solve the problem of darkness at the top of the building."

Executive Director Post also reported that the final issue being worked out is the façade of the C-J garage. She said, "At this point, the southern elevation of their garage is going to be brick. It will match the brick of the residential building and both facades will flow as one. The northern, eastern and western facades will be similar to the URC garage." It was noted that in order for C-J to accomplish a lot of things they want to do in the garage, they would have to obtain both building and zoning variances. C-J has also agreed that (i) their garage will be as heavily lit as the URC garage, and (ii) to install an external light from their building that will illuminate the "WAVE" on the URC garage façade at night. Executive Director Post concluded, "C-J is progressing with the Park Square West Phase II negotiations/upgrades and hopefully the URC Sub-Committee will be able to make its recommendation to the full Board shortly."

3. Mill River Corridor

- (a) **Mill River Collaborative** – Collaborative Chairman Arthur Selkowitz gave a brief overview of progress to date, noting the completion of a world-class playground built with tremendous community involvement and spirit, establishment of a full-time ambassador security service accomplished by a joint effort with the DSSD, as well as setting up a weekend maintenance program for the Park. Noting that the Collaborative had initially raised approximately \$250,000 privately, Chairman Selkowitz said, "We are now at a critical juncture and need to keep the sense of momentum going."

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Mr. Selkowitz continued, "Our goals include having programs in the Park on weekends during the summer, working on landscaping and restrooms during the spring, and proceeding with further planning when we determine where we are with the Army Corps of Engineers and funding from Congress. Plans call for removing the dam early in 2008. To accomplish our goals, we need to undertake a major capital campaign." It was noted that support services and maintenance in the Park have increased the Collaborative's annual operating budget of \$300,000 by a third.

Collaborative Chairman Selkowitz said, "Since the Urban Redevelopment Commission is a full partner in this project and since we need additional resources to proceed, I am here today to formally request that the URC contribute \$30,000 a year to the Collaborative's operating funds for the next three years." Attorney Goldberg noted that the use of HUD funds was restricted; further, that Item I funds could not be used for operation, maintenance, or public improvements. Discussion ensued re: (i) does the Commission want to make this contribution, and (ii) if so, how could this be accomplished. It was the sense of the Board that since the URC has been committed to the development of the Mill River Project Corridor, it should participate in the development of the Park through a contribution, and that \$30,000 over a three-year period seemed reasonable. Attorney Goldberg will meet with Mr. Selkowitz, Chairman Osman and Executive Director Post to determine the parameters of how to implement this commitment. The Budget Sub-Committee (Mellis & Fuhrman) will also review the URC's budget prior to making a final decision.

The Chairman called for a brief recess at 10:02AM. The meeting was resumed at 10:15AM.

- (b) **Archstone/Re-Use Parcel 21 Status Report/Extension** – Several design meetings have taken place, with the next one scheduled for Tuesday, January 9, 2007 at 10:00AM at the URC. Chairman Osman reported that he had sent Archstone a proposed Escrow Letter Agreement on December 4, 2006, yet to be executed. This letter states the following: (i) that Archstone will deposit \$200,000 in an Escrow Account on or before December 15, 2006; (ii) that in the event Archstone begins construction on or before July 31, 2007, the escrow deposit shall be released; (iii) that should Archstone fail to begin construction of approved improvements on or before July 31, 2007, the escrow deposit shall be released to the Commission to either construct a park-like setting on the property, construct landscape improvements in the Mill River Park in the vicinity of the property, or create and install public art in the proximity of the property.

Attorney Goldberg reported, "Legally, where we are is that we have found Archstone in default. However, so long as they are working in good faith to come up with a design acceptable to the Commission, we agreed that we would continue to grant reasonable extensions. The last extension expires just before the holiday."

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Following further discussion, Commissioner Nixon made a motion to extend the cure period for Archstone Properties for a period of thirty (30) additional days (one month) through January 25, 2007 providing work continues to progress in good faith toward reaching a reasonable agreement on the proposed design for Parcel 21. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fuhrman and carried by unanimous vote.


4. Adjournment

The next regular meeting scheduled for Thursday, January 11, 2007 at 6:00PM is cancelled. A special meeting has been tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, January 16, 2007 at 8:30AM.

The regular meeting scheduled for Thursday, February 8, 2007 at 6:00PM has been changed to a special meeting at 8:30AM on the same date.

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 10:40AM.

Respectfully submitted,


Joel P. Mellis
Secretary/Treasurer