

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
CITY OF STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT
URBAN REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
THURSDAY, AUGUST 12, 2004

1. At 6:00PM, Chairman Stephen C. Osman called the regular meeting to order. The following were in attendance:

Commissioners:

Stephen C. Osman, Chairman
Joel P. Mellis, Secretary/Treasurer
Neal M. Jewell
Edward J. Fuhrman

Staff:

Laszlo Papp, Executive Director
Rachel Goldberg, General Counsel
Durelle Alexander

Absent

James I. Nixon, Vice Chairman

Commissioner Mellis made a motion to address the agenda items out of order. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jewell and carried unanimously.

6. Mill River Corridor – Proposed Amendment to the Mill River Plan (West Main St. Bridge)

Attorney Goldberg reported that last week, the URC received a request from the Mayor's Office to consider an amendment to the Mill River Project Plan having to do with the West Main Street Bridge. Attorney Goldberg said, "The issue is whether the Plan should be amended to have that bridge changed from vehicular use to pedestrian only with the ability for emergency vehicles to pass over the structure." She continued, "I've put together a draft resolution for the Commission and the Board of Representatives. On Monday morning, the Chairman and I met with the Chairpersons of the Planning Board and Zoning Board to determine whether or not such a Plan if it were to be approved would be a 'substantial' change in the Plan. The Committee Chairs that met on Monday agreed unanimously that they believe if the change were to go into effect, it would be a substantial change and should go to the full Board of Representatives. Tonight, the Commission must decide whether or not it is appropriate to accept the proposed plan change and whether or not the proposed plan change is substantial or non-substantial."

City of Stamford Land Use Bureau Chief Robin Stein gave a brief history of the bridge, noting that when the Sasaki study was done in 97/98 and when the Urban Renewal Plan was done for the Mill River, the bridge was open. He said, "Neither plan gave much consideration to the bridge as far as should its use be changed. Then around 2000, engineering first approached the City boards and said design money was needed to look at reconstruction of the bridge. Initially, they presented some options including a pedestrian bridge but, at that point, they went into design of a full vehicular bridge. Subsequent to that, the State closed the bridge, first to one-way traffic, and approximately two years ago, it was closed entirely for vehicular traffic. It was realized, at this point that, that the impact from the full closure of the bridge was almost non-existent." Mr. Stein concluded, "At this point, the Mayor asked engineering to explore and design a 'pedestrian only' bridge. I think there are four critical factors to consider:

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(i) the issue of traffic – not only what happens today but what happens in ten or twenty years with future build-out; (ii) the issue of the continuation of the Mill River trail; (iii) safety, in terms of pedestrian traffic with senior housing on both the north and south sides of Main Street; and, (iv) cost, about a million and a half dollars difference between a full vehicular bridge and a pedestrian bridge.” Mr. Stein also noted that the merchants with stores along the corner of Clinton Avenue and Main Street are concerned mainly with parking. In this regard, Engineering has designed a plan that will maximize the amount of parking by reducing the sidewalk in front of the buildings from 10 feet to 8 feet and changing the parking to a row of spaces from parallel style. This change will increase the number of parking spaces from eight to ten.

City of Stamford Transportation Planner Tom Bruccoleri showed a rendering of the Mill River off-street path, noting the design of a continuous walkway for the Main Street portion. He said, “Eventually, at least from Richmond Hill Avenue all the way up to Broad Street, you will have a continuous path. You will be able to go under Tresser Boulevard and not have to cross the street at grade or have to stop for vehicle traffic in any way.” Mill River Project Director Milton Puryear said, “In terms of what the Park can be, with certain limitations due to its segmented nature, size, the river, etc., it can be part one of a larger freeway network that the City is planning that goes to the sound and initially up to Scalzi Park and eventually further up where people can get their exercise walking, biking, jogging.” Mr. Puryear continued, “In most of the studies that were done, the need for pedestrian access between the West Side and the downtown came up. On multiple occasions, West Side residents have expressed their desire for better pedestrian access. Also, in a separate study paid for by the City for the West Side and the City, *The West Side Story*, the same theme came up. This report also emphasized the need for improved pedestrian access to downtown from the West Side and recommended rationalizing pedestrian movement by expanding sidewalk areas, reducing unnecessary width or space given over to travel lanes.” Mr. Puryear also noted that during the Sasaki Study, the West Side residents specifically asked for a pedestrian bridge.

City of Stamford Engineer Paul Ginotti discussed the removal of the existing structure and the rebuilding of a portion of the abutments and pier to accept the new super structure. The replacement bridge will utilize the existing stone abutments and massive central pier of the existing bridge. It will be constructed of prefabricated steel trusses that are galvanized and painted. Mr. Ginotti said, “The existing bridge is about 56 feet wide, whereas the new bridge will be about 16 feet. With the existing pier becoming substantially wider than the proposed bridge, observation platforms will be constructed on both side of the bridge over the ends of the pier to provide scenic views of the river.”

Chairman Osman thanked the presenters and asked them to remain for the Board’s discussion. He said, “As you will recall, the Mill River Plan requires that when there’s a question of a major or minor change, that the Chair of the other Boards (Planning, Zoning, Land Use Committee) meet with us and discuss it. We’re not obligated in any way to take their recommendations but their recommendations are very important to us and, without question, they unanimously recommend that this is a major change.”

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Chairman Osman continued, "Harry Day, Co-Chair of the Land Use Committee of the Board of Reps, was unable to attend our meeting due to illness but e-mailed me to say how important it was that this be considered a major change." Draft resolutions in this regard have been sent to the Board of Reps to place this item on their agenda, should it be approved tonight. Discussion followed. Commissioner Fuhrman said, "I think it's wonderful but I would like someone to summarize what the major issues have been." Mr. Stein responded, "I think there is very little disagreement about whether this is a major or a minor plan change. There are some who will argue that historically the bridge was part of Route 1 and we can't afford to reduce the number of travel lanes anywhere. Also, there is a large group who feel that the Board of Reps should have a say in the decision." The Chairman asked West Side Action Movement Representative Novlyn Hall her opinion. She said, "The majority of the people on the West Side prefer having a pedestrian-only bridge." Mr. Bruccoleri noted that a number of public hearings had been held and there was no opposition to limiting the bridge to pedestrian usage. Mr. Stein added, "We also have the advantage of having had the bridge closed for the past two years."

Following further discussion and upon recommendation of counsel, Commissioner Jewell made a motion to identify the proposed plan change as "significant." The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fuhrman and carried by unanimous vote.

Attorney Goldberg read the proposed resolution into the record (attached as part of these official minutes). Commissioner Jewell made a motion to amend the Mill River Corridor Project Plan, subject to approval by the Board of Reps, by adding a new Section 601.e as follows: "601.e – The West Main Street Bridge will be changed to a pedestrian bridge capable of providing emergency vehicle access." The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mellis and carried by unanimous vote.

3. Announcements

Attorney Goldberg announced that she had been named Employee of the Month for the City of Stamford along with the Stamford Urban Transitway team of Laura LaBosky, Lou Casolo and Wareeya Stripa for their development of a RAMP (Relocation Assistance Management Program) for the Transitway. This was the first RAMP approved in the nation. A celebration hosted by the Mayor will be held in their honor on Wednesday, August 18th at 11:00am.

9. New Business

Attorney Goldberg reported that she had received a request from the designated developers of Trinity Place (Lowe Enterprises along with the St. John's Roman Catholic Church) to initiate the process of acquiring ownership of a Sliver Parcel owned by the URC. Land Use Consultant Rick Redniss said, "This 159 square foot parcel recorded as Map #10434 on the Stamford Land Records fronts on Tresser Boulevard and is needed to complete the developer's land assemblage in order to avoid cross-easement and egress issues for the proposed development."

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Mr. Redniss explained that this Sliver Parcel would be purchased and owned by the church, under a process that would be managed by the developer, as ground lessor for the Trinity Place site. Redniss & Mead is preparing an updated survey of the Sliver Parcel for the URC. Attorney Goldberg said that the next step in the acquisition process is for the URC to obtain a current appraisal of the Sliver Parcel at a cost to be paid for by the developer. Following discussion, Commissioner Fuhrman made a motion to authorize Staff to obtain an appraisal of the Sliver Parcel at the developer's expense. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mellis and carried by unanimous vote.

5. **Southeast Quadrant**

- (c) **Re-Use Parcel 36** – It was noted that three applicants have expressed an interest in the Parcel: Rick Redniss (for Milstein Brothers Capital Partners), Attorney Donald Gustafson (for Tom Rich), and Robert Wilson. Attorney Gustafson reiterated that “my client is still willing to pay for the appraisal, still wants to put housing on this parcel, and is ready to go forward.” Chairman Osman responded, “We would like to see something, perhaps sketches, that would stimulate us to sell the parcel.” Discussion followed. Commissioner Fuhrman said, “I think that other people should have the opportunity to submit proposals.”

Attorney Goldberg suggested the following alternatives: (i) have a wide-open Request for Proposals (RFP); (ii) limit the RFP to residential proposals; (iii) limit the RFP to commercial proposals, or (iv) begin the process by issuing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ). It was noted, for the record, that the URC is under no obligation to accept or reject any offer and/or proposal. The Chairman proposed opening the process by issuing an RFP to multiple bidders. Following discussion, Commissioner Mellis made a motion to issue an RFP, which would include a price, for Re-Use Parcel 36. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fuhrman and carried by unanimous vote. It was noted, again, that the URC is under no obligation to award a contract.

- (d) **Re-Use Parcel 19B/Proposed Operating Agreement for Temporary Parking Lots** – Attorney Goldberg briefly reviewed the last few minor changes, noting that none were significant enough to prevent moving forward. The changes include elimination of the 1½% penalty for late payment, extending the default period from 10 to 30 days, and removing the \$10 million insurance umbrella requirement because the City is self-insured. Following discussion, it was the sense of the Board that Attorney Goldberg be authorized to continue negotiations pertaining to the above referenced Operating Agreement.

Attorney Goldberg continued, “While we are talking about the parking lot, there is the concept of a fence around the property. We have created a new entry off Washington Boulevard and it has been our plan to close off the access from West Park Place.” Following discussion pertaining to the size of the fence, materials and fence companies, Commissioner Fuhrman made a motion to retain Atlas Fence Company and to authorize

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the expenditure of an amount not-to-exceed \$25,000 (twenty-five thousand dollars) for the installation of the fence and any related work. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mellis and carried by unanimous vote.

2. Approval of Minutes

- (a) **July 8, 2004 Regular Meeting** – Commissioner Fuhrman made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mellis and carried. Commissioner Jewell abstained.
- (b) **July 13, 2004 Special Meeting** – Commissioner Fuhrman made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jewell and carried. Commissioners Mellis and Osman abstained.

7. Agency Administration

At 7:30PM, Commissioner Mellis made a motion to go into Executive Session to address Agenda Items 5(d) – Contract Negotiations and 7(b) – Personnel. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fuhrman and carried by unanimous vote. Durelle Alexander was excused from the meeting. Executive Director Papp and Attorney Goldberg participated in the discussion. No motions were made and no votes were taken. At 7:50PM, Executive Director Papp and Attorney Goldberg were excused from the meeting. No motions were made and no votes were taken. At 8:37PM, Commissioner Mellis made a motion to return to Open Session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jewell and carried by unanimous vote.

Commissioner Mellis made a motion to award a bonus to General Counsel Rachel Goldberg in the amount of \$5,000 (five thousand dollars) for her unusual and superior services during the 2003/04 calendar years. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jewell and carried by unanimous vote.

It was noted that former URC Vice Chairman Eric Wormser has been ill. The Executive Director was asked to draft a letter of recognition to be signed by the Commission and Staff.

The remaining agenda items were tabled.

10. Adjournment

The Annual Meeting & Regular September Meeting will be held on September 9, 2004 at 5:45PM & 6:00PM respectively. There being no further business before the Board, Commissioner Mellis made a motion to adjourn. The motion was carried by unanimous vote and the meeting was adjourned at 8:45PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Joel P. Mellis
Secretary/Treasurer

RESOLUTION NUMBER 430

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT
URBAN REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION AMENDING THE
URBAN REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE
MILL RIVER CORRIDOR PROJECT

WHEREAS, on October 11, 2001, this Commission approved an Urban Redevelopment Plan for the Mill River Corridor Project (hereinafter referred to as the "Plan") and on February 11, 2004, approved the first amendment of the Plan; and

WHEREAS, on November 7, 2001, the Board of Representatives of the City of Stamford approved the Plan and on April 7, 2004, approved the first amendment of the Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Commission wishes to add a new section 601.e. changing the West Main Street Bridge to a pedestrian bridge capable of emergency vehicle access; and

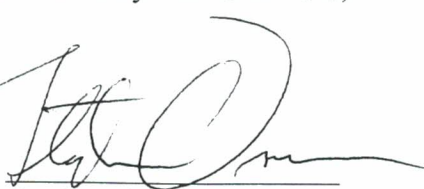
WHEREAS, it is in the public interest, consistent with the historical use of the properties in the Mill River Corridor Project Area and consistent with the Plan and with Chapter 130 of the General Statutes of the State of Connecticut to so amend the Plan; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the provisions of section 1001 of the Plan, the Commission has determined that the Proposed Amendment is a Substantial Change which requires the approval of the Board of Representatives of the City of Stamford.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the City of Stamford, Connecticut Urban Redevelopment Commission, that:

1. Subject to the approval of the Board of Representatives of the City of Stamford, Connecticut, the Urban Redevelopment Plan for the Mill River Corridor Project shall be amended by adding a new section 601.e. as follows: "601.e. The West Main Street Bridge will be changed to a pedestrian bridge capable of providing emergency vehicle access."
2. This resolution shall become effective upon the approval of the Proposed Amendment by the Board of Representatives of the City of Stamford, Connecticut.

Approved


Stephen C. Osman, Chair
August 12, 2004