

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
CITY OF STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT
URBAN REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2004

1. At 6:10PM, Vice Chairman James I. Nixon called the regular meeting to order. The following were in attendance:

Commissioners:

James I. Nixon, Vice Chairman
Neal M. Jewell
Edward J. Fuhrman

Staff:

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

Absent

Stephen C. Osman, Chairman (arrived at 6:25pm)
Joel P. Mellis, Secretary/Treasurer

2. Approval of Minutes

- (a) **September 9, 2004 Special Annual Meeting** – Commissioner Fuhrman made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jewell and carried unanimously.
- (b) **September 9, 2004 Regular Meeting** – Commissioner Jewell made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fuhrman and carried unanimously.

3. Announcements

- (a) Executive Director Papp announced that the Commission and staff had received invitations to a “Cornerstone Setting Presentation” at Mill River House, 35 West Broad Street, scheduled for Sunday, November 14th at 1:00PM.
- (b) Executive Director Papp announced that he had ordered a clean-up at the Archstone site. J. Brown is expected to reimburse costs incurred by the Commission.
- (c) Executive Director Papp also announced that he had received a call from Archstone Vice President Diego Benites requesting a meeting with the URC Sub-Committee prior to the December 9th Commission meeting, at which he is scheduled to give a quarterly progress report.
- (d) Vice Chairman Nixon announced that he had been in touch with former Commissioner Eric Wormser’s wife, Linda. She said that Mr. Wormser appreciated the commendation issued by the Commission as well as the get well notes and good wishes. He is back at home now and feeling much better.

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- (e) Vice Chairman Nixon also announced that he had previously spoken to the Director about the possibility of having a group of students at the Academy of Information Technology make a presentation to the Commission that they made to the architects who were designing the new AIT high school on the Rippowam High School campus. Vice Chairman Nixon said, "In their classes, these architectural/engineering students also developed a series of proposals for the use of Re-Use Parcel 38 and I would like to invite them to share their ideas with the Commission." It was the sense of the Board that the students be asked to make a presentation at a Commission meeting. Land Use Consultant Rick Redniss, who was in the audience, said he would be happy to invite the property owners to attend this meeting.

Chairman Stephen C. Osman joined the meeting at 6:25PM and resumed the Chairmanship for the balance of the meeting.

4. Correspondence

None.

5. Mill River Corridor

Speaking on behalf of The Stamford Housing Authority, Mr. Redniss reviewed the Pre-Application Zone Change to Mill River District (MRD) for properties at 108 Clinton Avenue and 17, 21 & 23 Richmond Hill Avenue. He said, "Last year, as part of the Hope VI application for Fairfield Court, we came before you to amend the regulations for parking standards essentially for public housing, reducing the residential off-street parking requirement of 1.25 spaces for each unit to a minimum of one space for every three dwelling units." Mr. Redniss continued, "We did not get the Hope VI grant last year but got it this year, so we are back to make this preliminary presentation. Now, as part of the Hope VI effort to revitalize Fairfield Court, the Housing Authority is in contract discussions with St. Luke's Community Services to acquire their property directly adjacent to the site to the north on Clinton Avenue and add to the sites in contract with the City of Stamford (formerly owned by Dreyfus) on Richmond Hill Avenue near the Mill River. A total of 59-60 below market units for individuals with special needs, i.e. elderly, handicapped, people who require services/assistance, is proposed for the 21,000+/- square foot site."

Mr. Redniss explained that the Housing Authority has a plan that was submitted in September for what's called a "pre-application." This pre-application requests a change in zone for all four properties (108 Clinton Avenue & 17, 21 & 23 Richmond Hill Avenue) from their respective zones to the Mill River District (MRD) in order to maximize the number of residential affordable units for the assembled site. Preliminary development plans, prepared by Herbert S. Newman Architects in conjunction with Johnson Jones Architects, were distributed. Mr. Redniss continued, "We are in the Mill River Corridor so we have to go for a pre-application for a zone change first, then an application, followed by submission of a preliminary site plan and then final site plan."

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It was noted that this presentation was being made at this time to the URC "for informational purposes only;" further, that a Pre-Application Conference before the Zoning Board had been scheduled for Monday morning, November 15th, at 10:30AM. Project architect Joe Schiffer of Herbert Newman & Partners will be available to meet with staff following the meeting to review the design and answer questions about the proposed project. Mr. Redniss explained that the Housing Authority needs to have approval from the City of Stamford by the end of January 2005 to be eligible for their multi-million dollar federal grant and tax credits.

Chairman Osman asked, "Do they want to build this as a temporary site?" Mr. Redniss responded, "No, this is a permanent site for people who are moving out of Fairfield Court." Chairman Osman asked, "Is this project new? Why didn't the Commission hear about this before?" Mr. Redniss responded, "No, it's not new. It came before you in concept last year when we amended the text to allow the parking standard to be reduced in the Mill River Corridor Plan to accommodate this site." Chairman Osman asked, "Do we have to vote on this?" Mr. Redniss responded, "This is the same process as required for a Mill River project. If the URC recommends approval, the Zoning Board only needs three votes. If you recommend denial, the Zoning Board needs four votes to approve this project."

Discussion continued. Vice Chairman Nixon asked, "Is there an on-site outdoor recreational area indicated on these plans?" Mr. Redniss responded, "An outdoor area has been created in the latest plan. The large meeting room has been divided into two smaller rooms with a door out to a garden area so that people would have a place to go off of Richmond Hill Avenue." Following further discussion, Chairman Osman appointed Commissioners Fuhrman & Nixon to a Sub-Committee responsible for overseeing the proposed Stamford Housing Authority project.

Commissioner Jewell made a motion to address the remaining agenda items out of order. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nixon and carried by unanimous vote.

6. Southeast Quadrant

- (a) **Status, Summer Place Parking Garage** – Attorney Goldberg reported that the bond sale had closed. She said, "A little over \$15 million dollars in General Obligation Bonds were sold. The City has the funds and our first application for reimbursement is being submitted." Vice Chairman Nixon asked, "What do the bonds pay?" Attorney Goldberg responded, "I believe that the rate is 4.11% over twenty years."

Chairman Osman noted that design meetings with LZA, Staff, Commissioner Fuhrman, Director of Operations Tim Curtin, Traffic Maintenance/Operations Supervisor Ernie Orgera, Jeff Pardo and Nancy Domiziano of the City's Engineering Department, representatives of Corcoran Jennison, Haley and Aldrich and Redniss &

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Mead, had taken place bi-monthly and that everyone had cooperated in making this a “consumer friendly” garage. Chairman Osman said, “Besides being consumer friendly, we wanted to make it a really attractive and different garage and we have succeeded in doing that. This came together at the last moment, when I suggested we hire an architect to come in and make our garage look different. LZA responded that they had an architect on staff and asked for the opportunity to come up with something, which they did. And I think it’s terrific!” Commissioner Fuhrman concurred, saying “I think this is going to be a destination point garage, a place people will want to come in contrast to some of the others!” Chairman Osman said, “We have taken the garage and wrapped it with a screen. The garage will have glass elevators, it will be painted white, and we are going to put as much lighting in the garage as possible. It will have a Police Sub-Station within and potentially some retail pavilions along the covered street ... activities which will make the pedestrian feel safe.”

Chairman Osman continued, “There are no meters in the garage. You don’t pay when you enter. You pay at a unit similar to an ‘iron mike’ after you are parked. There are multiple units throughout on every floor as well as multiple units throughout the City which will all be inter-connected, so if you are at a restaurant, for example, and you want to stay longer, you can pay at the station located there as opposed to having to walk back to the garage.” Executive Director Papp said, “Commissioner Fuhrman, Attorney Goldberg and I saw a demonstration of the unit. At this time, the DSSD requested, and the Committee agreed, that the five remote units be increased to eight, in addition to putting one machine on every garage level and two in each lobby.”

Attorney Goldberg said, “In addition, we will change the management system at the Bell Street and Bedford Street garages, in the Bedford Street and St. John’s Street parking lots, so they will all be on an inter-connected, hard wired system.” Chairman Osman added, “There will also be a remote wireless station in Palace Way and in Columbus Park, and all of these stations will be inter-connected.” Commissioner Fuhrman said, “There needs to be a lot of instruction and signage, but when you go up to the machine, you will have four ways you can pay – coin, bill, credit card and smart card. There will be consumer-friendly signage/instructions, and there will be a very nice voice that will help you through the steps explaining how to use the system.”

Executive Director Papp reported that LZA is finishing up the Request for Proposals (RFP) package to be distributed to the five finalists on Friday, November 12th. A Bid Conference is scheduled for 9:00AM on Thursday, November 18th, at which time LZA will make a presentation and answer any questions the recipients might have.

Commissioner Fuhrman left the meeting at 7:30PM.

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6. Southeast Quadrant

(b) **Status, Demolition** – This item was tabled due to the absence of a voting quorum. The Chairman had previously recused himself from action pertaining to the demolition.

(a) **Park Square West Status Report** – Executive Director Papp reported that the next design team meeting has been scheduled for November 23rd at Herb Newman's office in New Haven. The Chairman, Executive Director, General Counsel, and Sub-Committee member Neal Jewell will be attending.

Attorney Goldberg reported that she had met with Marty Jones, Harry Nash and Gabrielle Jones of Corcoran Jennison and their Counsel, Michael Cacace, in Boston to discuss zoning issues; that is, how to create the development sites to ensure enough land density for each phase of the development.

(c) **Re-Use Parcel 36, Approval of RFP** – The Executive Director reported that comments received from the Commission and City of Stamford Purchasing Manager Robert Ruszkowski had been incorporated into the draft document. Executive Director Papp noted that Mr. Ruszkowski questioned the \$5,000 bid deposit, seeing it as a "possible negative factor that might limit the number of responses." Attorney Goldberg responded, "I think setting a higher amount would indicate a serious interest." It was the sense of the Board that the URC did not want to receive proposals from anyone not committed to this development. Following further discussion, Commissioner Jewell made a motion to issue the RFP for Re-Use Parcel 36 on November 15th, raising the amount of the bid deposit to \$20,000 (twenty thousand dollars). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nixon and carried by unanimous vote.

8. Old Business

Executive Director Papp reported that the Downtown Special Services District was unhappy with the appearance of the newly installed fence at 62 West Park Place. It was his recommendation that plantings be put behind the fence to create a green barrier. This will be done in the spring.

Attorney Goldberg reported that City's Health Department is concerned with the garbage storage area at Curley's Diner. The URC has agreed to open up a portion of the fence to enable Curley's to comply with the Health Department's request to remove existing debris from the rear of their property.

9. New Business

None at this time.

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7. Agency Administration

- (a) **Ratification of URC Office Lease** – Commissioner Jewell made a motion to approve the URC's office lease with the City of Stamford, previously approved by voice vote via telephone. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nixon and approved unanimously.
- (b) **Budget** – Commissioners Fuhrman and Mellis met with Fiscal Officer Sheila Kilcoyne and requested quarterly reports showing the URC's current cash position, expenditures to date, and balance to budget. A draft format, with numbers, will be presented at the January Commission meeting, when both Sub-Committee members are present. Attorney Goldberg was asked to assemble a 7-year projected cash flow budget on an annual basis.

(c) Committee Reports

- Archstone – Archstone Vice President Diego Benites has requested a meeting with the URC Sub-Committee & Staff prior to the December 9, 2004 regular Commission meeting, at which he is scheduled to give his quarterly report. This will be scheduled in early December.
- Web Site – Commissioner Jewell reported that Commissioner Fuhrman is meeting with the Chairman tomorrow to review a draft of topics to be included on the City of Stamford web site. He noted that a key part of this will be a "mission statement" which he and Commissioner Fuhrman have also drafted

There were no further Committee reports.

10. Adjournment

The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 9, 2004 at 6:00PM.

There being no further business before the Board, Commissioner Nixon made a motion to adjourn. The motion was carried and the meeting was adjourned at 9:10PM.

Respectfully submitted,



James I. Nixon

Vice Chairman/Acting Secretary