

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
CITY OF STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT
URBAN REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2003

1. At 11:00AM, Vice Chairman James I. Nixon called the Special Meeting to order for the specific purpose of visiting the robotic/automated parking garage in Hoboken, New Jersey. The following were in attendance:

Commissioners:

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

Staff:

Laszlo Papp, Executive Director

Commissioner Jewell moved to recess the meeting and reconvene at 916 Garden Street in New Jersey. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Nixon and carried unanimously. At 12:15PM, Commissioner Jewell moved to reopen the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fuhrman and carried unanimously.

2. Robotic/Automated Parking Garage

In Hoboken, New Jersey, the Commission and its Executive Director met with Filipe Sousa, Operations Manager for Robotic Parking, Inc. Mr. Harry Nash, Executive Vice President of Development for Corcoran Jennison Companies, joined the group and participated in the demonstration of the facilities and in subsequent discussions. The following issues were covered:

Physical/Technical Performance

- Mr. Gerhard Haag, president of Robotic Parking, is responsible for the patented design. The plant facilities are in Clearwater, Florida, where all components of the garage system are manufactured and then transported to other locations.
- The design provides for full redundancy and eliminates any possibilities of breakdowns. Any size car (except Hummers) can be accommodated in the entire or in part of the garage.
- The exterior of the garage is independent from the steel structure and can be built as required by the architect.
- The waiting lobby can be designed to be as accommodating and spacious as required, unlike the one in Hoboken. It can have specific amenities included; i.e., coffee, lounge, etc.
- The computer program can be set to monitor frequency of use by individual cars and provide preferred (easily accessible) spaces for the most frequent users.
- Usage can be programmed by credit card, E-Z pass, cash, etc.
- The completed garage can be the ultimate "user-friendly" facility by offering a "valet" system without persons handling the cars.

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Financial Issues

- The construction can be provided on a "turn-key" basis, financed by Robotic Parking through a reliable bank, investors or others.
- If preferred, the contract may be with another entity (GE, for instance), with Robotic Parking serving as the sub-contractor.
- The cost estimate for the Robotic Parking System is comparable, or less, than a conventional garage structure would be.
- Cost of maintenance is to be provided, but it was noted that several items, such as insurance, cleaning, security, etc. will be less than for a conventional garage.

Construction Issues

- Construction can be completed in less than one year.
- The system is not so unique that it could not be completed by others, if necessary. Similar storage systems are used for shipping containers, material handling, etc.
- Even though there are no Robotic Parking facilities under construction at this time, six or seven are in various stages of negotiation.
- There are no other fully compatible technologies available, even though there are other automated parking systems.
- The computer program monitors all aspects of the system and indicates the need for change/maintenance of component parts.
- The software was developed with GE technical assistance.
- Demonstration unit can be viewed at the Robotic Parking factory in Clearwater, FL.

Consumer Acceptance

- During the meeting, the Commission interviewed one lady with a child, who expressed total satisfaction with the facility.
- The average waiting/recovery time was indicated as 2 - 2½ minutes.
- The 300+ capacity garage has a waiting list of more than 100.

Other Issues

- An independent customer survey will be needed.
- URC should seek a market/revenue projection.
- Cash-flow projection should also be developed.

Next Steps

- Cor-Jen approval is essential. Without this, the Robotic Parking project is not feasible. Cor-Jen will need a zoning variance (new regulation will be required) and financing approval.
- Decision to go robotic should be made by the end of February, 2004, after inspecting the Clearwater facilities and conducting an in-depth review of the company's operation.
- City of Stamford and DSSD review/inspection should take place as soon as possible at the Hoboken garage site (reschedule from 12/17/03).

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Commissioner Jewell moved to recess the meeting and reconvene back at the URC Offices. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fuhrman and carried by unanimous vote. The meeting was reconvened at 2:30PM. URC General Counsel Rachel Goldberg and Special Representative to the Commission Eric Wormser joined the meeting at this time. Mr. Wormser had visited the garage on two previous occasions.

Executive Director Papp gave a brief summary of the issues addressed at the Robotic Parking Garage in New Jersey. He reiterated the fact that "this type of garage would not be more expensive than a conventional garage ... that it might even be cheaper to construct." Commissioner Fuhrman said, "The consumer experience is clearly a positive one, although the name (Robotic) works against it." Commissioner Jewell said, "This might become the garage of choice if we build it ... there were a lot of pluses to this system that I did not expect to find." Attorney Goldberg noted that the URC would need to update the use analysis based on the use of this type of structure." Commissioner Fuhrman asked, "Why would the revenue projections differ?" Attorney Goldberg responded, "Because it may take people longer to acclimate to a different type of parking garage." Attorney Goldberg also noted that the URC needs to determine Cor-Jen's time-frame for making a decision.

Attorney Goldberg outlined the next steps as follows:

1. Determine if Cor-Jen is seriously interested in moving forward.
2. Obtain cash-flow projections from the operator.
3. Obtain a study on market conditions from the operator.
4. Obtain our own independent market study.
5. Determine compliance with current zoning regulations.
6. Potentially submit proposed new zoning regulation to permit robotic/automated parking for approval.

It was noted that if Cor-Jen decides to move forward with this new concept, they would need their own market research study to ensure that people would still rent their apartments with this type of parking. Discussion continued. Vice Chairman Nixon asked, "Should we consider retaining a consulting firm to advise us on a marketing analysis?" Attorney Goldberg responded, "This is the time to think about our contacts ... to come up with potential marketing companies for a market analysis to fully understand whether or not people in Stamford would use an automated garage."

3. Adjournment

The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 8, 2004 at 6:00PM.

Having completed the business for which this Special Meeting was called, Commissioner Jewell made a motion to adjourn. The motion was carried by unanimous vote and the meeting was adjourned at 3:45PM.

Respectfully submitted


Neal M. Jewell
Acting Secretary