

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
CITY OF STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT
URBAN REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
THURSDAY, MAY 8, 2014

1. At 6:00pm, Acting Chairman Peter Sciarretta called the regular meeting to order. The following were in attendance:

Commissioners:

Peter Sciarretta, Vice Chairman
Michaëlle Jean-Pierre, Secretary/Treasurer
Taylor R. Molgano
Mayra M. Rios

Staff:

Dr. Tommie Jackson, Executive Director
Rachel A. Goldberg, General Counsel
Durelle Alexander

Also Attending:

Attorney Michael Cacace, Cacace, Tusch & Santagata
Attorney Jane Freeman, Cacace, Tusch & Santagata
Norman Cole, Land Use Bureau Chief, City of Stamford
Joe Schiffer, Newman Architects
Chris Kelly, F.D. Rich Company
Glenn Haydu, Minno & Wasko Architects
John Wuestneck, Project Manager, RB Stamford

2. Approval of Minutes

- (a) **April 10, 2014 Regular Meeting** – Commissioner Molgano made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jean-Pierre and carried by unanimous vote.
- (b) **April 16, 2014 Special Meeting** – Commissioner Rios made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jean-Pierre and carried by unanimous vote.

3. Southeast Quadrant

- (a) **Re-Use Parcel 38/Draft LDA Amendment & Status of Plan Amendment** – Drafts of the proposed LDA & Plan amendment were submitted to the President of the Board of Representatives, the Land Use Co-Chairs and the Chairman of the Planning Board by Attorney Goldberg on May 6, 2014 in preparation for inclusion on the Steering Committee agenda for discussion on May 19th. Attorney Goldberg briefly reviewed the changes to the Fourth Amendment to the 1968 Contract for Sale of Land for Private Redevelopment between the City, the URC and Stamford New-Urban Corp., noting that the changes will only apply to Re-Use Parcel 38. Attorney Goldberg pointed out the following: (i) the addition of a new definition of the successor redeveloper; (ii) a revision of the design review/submission review and approval procedure, noting that the Commission is agreeing to complete its review and notify the successor redeveloper of its findings on or before June 12, 2014; and, (iii) a change in the remedy section requested by the successor redeveloper to also include changes in the financial market.

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Attorney Goldberg reported that the Planning Board has already scheduled a date for the presentation on May 20th. She said, “They have to provide a written opinion indicating that the proposed changes to the Urban Renewal Plan are consistent with Stamford’s Master Plan. The hope is that the URC and the Land Use Committee of the Board of Representatives will hold a Joint Public Hearing on or about May 27th or 29th. The URC will meet immediately following the Public Hearing to vote on the Plan amendment. Our vote must be in place before the full Board of Representatives meets.”

Commissioner Rios asked if all the concerns pertaining to the TIF had been dealt with. Attorney Goldberg responded, “There are no agreements with any parties for how TIF funds would be directed other than the general language that it is to be used for two types of improvement, specifically construction of improved pedestrian-friendly infrastructure and construction of related improvements including but not limited to crosswalks, sidewalks, lighting, traffic signalization and the westerly façade of the Stamford Town Center mall.” She added that nothing can be expended except pursuant to an approved budget – a budget approved by the URC, the Planning Board, the Board of Finance and the Board of Representatives in accordance with the city charter and state law.

Parcel 38 Design Review by URC Architectural Consultant Joe Schiffer – Mr. Schiffer said, “First of all, the project is very elegantly conceived. This is a modern, contemporary, and in many ways, a very striking design, a handsome and very interesting piece of work that deserves credit for dealing with the given limitation and challenges faced in five-six story low-rise construction. On a long site (450’ on Tresser and 400’ on Greyrock) the idea of how you manipulate the buildings and make them something other than one long wall is a challenge that the designers took on. I think that bringing attention to the southwest corner, raising the height there, is very strong. Creating a public space there is very strong as is moving the facades back and forth. The overall design has many excellent qualities. The feeling of architectural character is at home and consistent with the Tresser Boulevard office and business district. It would be nice if there was a little more height on Tresser, if there was a place on one of the blocks where more height could be added. On Tresser we would suggest adding more variety animating both the street and roof levels with the use of awnings or trellises, flags or flower boxes. Perhaps the six apartments at ground level on Greyrock which are practically on the sidewalk could have some type of alternative treatment to give them added privacy from the public. It is a little disturbing to the urban pattern to have that condition. Is there a way to layer and create a sense of privacy there?” Mr. Schiffer concluded, “We realize economic feasibility constraints limit most of the structures to five stories. However, we would propose that the Tresser Boulevard street elevation would benefit with more variation in roof lines.” Mr. Schiffer suggested revisiting the roofscape and considering green roofs to benefit the environment. He said, “Since this building is low rise, the roof will become a major part of the landscape as viewed from the adjacent buildings, many of which are considerably taller.” He summarized where improvements might be made/considered as follows: (i) life on the street, currently too gray, too quiet & too similar; (ii) pattern of the building facades; and (iii) where/how the proposed buildings meet the sky.

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Counsel for the developer Michael Cacace said, “I think that Mr. Schiffer has correctly analyzed the situation and each issue he has brought up has been fully explored and vetted by the developer. However, this project is driven by economics for this site. To make a really signature building on the site, something that would have been very tall and stand out in the skyline of the City frankly would have made a more powerful statement but would be a completely different financial arrangement. This is a project which is quite honestly on the edge financially and I think this whole community wants to see a project completed on this site. The height becomes very important. This is stick construction and there are fire code regulations in terms of how high you can go and the architects have made a good faith effort to articulate the buildings in terms of how far they are from the sidewalk and to measure different heights. I think we can look at things like putting in flags, window boxes, other things, but we cannot consider a substantial increase in height because that is driven by the building code and fire code for wood stick construction or the greening of a roof because these concerns do not fit into the economics of the project. I want to be sure we don’t propose something that makes this project unbuildable.” Acting Chairman Sciarretta said, “Everyone here is very tied to this community. We all share your view and I want to go on record about the positivity of this project. I don’t think anyone in this room is even thinking about any restrictions or requirements that would hinder this project.” Attorney Goldberg said, “Our job, and our consultant’s job, isn’t to say ‘change this here, change that there’. It’s to say ‘here are our areas of concern’. We leave it to the developer to come back with responses to Mr. Schiffer’s and the Commission’s comments.”

Attorney Goldberg asked when the developer anticipated getting the formal schematic design set to the Commission for its approval following the joint public hearing with the Land Use-Urban Redevelopment Committee. Attorney Cacace said they would aim for May 21st. The final design set will be posted on the URC’s web site.

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

At 7:07pm, Commissioner Rios made a motion to go into Executive Session to specifically address negotiations with Trinity (3b) and personnel matters (6c). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Molgano and carried by unanimous vote. Executive Director Jackson and Attorney Goldberg participated in the discussion. Durelle Alexander participated in the (6c) discussion. No motions were made and no votes were taken. At 8:15pm, Commissioner Molgano made a motion to return to Open Session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rios and carried by unanimous vote.

4. Correspondence/Communications
None at this time.
5. Announcements/Media Update
None at this time.
6. Agency Administration

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(a) **Chairpersons' Report** – OTHRA representative Commissioner Molgano reported that discussions with existing tenants are continuing. The next meeting is scheduled for May 15th.

(b) **Budget/Status of Reimbursables** - Executive Director Jackson asked that a Budget Committee meeting be held within the next thirty days in order to finalize the 2014/15 operating budget for adoption at the June 11th Commission meeting.

(c) **Personnel** – Commissioner Rios made a motion to change the cost share formula for the Administrative Assistant to 14.5% to make the contributory rate consistent with other employees. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Molgano and carried by unanimous vote.

7. Executive Director's Report - Executive Director Jackson said, "We continue to move forward with diligence and speed to ensure that the URC receives its full credit for everything it's involved in including Parcel 38, Park Square West/Trinity and the new proposed development on Washington and Main. We continue to engage various City agencies and developers for the well-being of the City of Stamford."

8. Old Business

Action on the October 30, 2013 minutes was tabled, pending further corrections.

9. New Business

None at this time.

10. Adjournment

The regular meeting scheduled for Thursday, June 12, 2014 at 6pm is cancelled. There will be a special meeting on Wednesday, June 11, 2014 at 6pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35pm.

The meeting was reconvened at 8:40pm. At this time Commissioner Rios made a motion to authorize the Vice Chairman/Acting Chairman Sciarretta to execute an Engagement Letter with Executive Director Jackson retroactive to October 30, 2013. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Molgano and carried by unanimous vote.

There being no further business before the Board, Commissioner Sciarretta made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Molgano and the meeting was adjourned at 8:42pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michaëlle Jean-Pierre
Secretary/Treasurer