

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
CITY OF STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT
URBAN REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11, 2014

1. At 6:00pm, Acting Chairman Peter Sciarretta called the special 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
Attorney Bill Hennessey, Carmody, Torrance, Sandak & Hennessey
Attorney Lisa Feinberg, Carmody, Torrance, Sandak & Hennessey
Tom Rich, F.D. Rich Company
Chris Kelly, F.D. Rich Company
Glenn Haydu, Minno Wasko Architects & Planners
Randy Salvatore, RMS Main Street
Marty Levine, Special Assistant to the Mayor
Representative Gail Okun

2. Southeast Quadrant

(a) **Re-Use Parcel 38** – Michael Cacace, attorney for the developer RB Stamford LLC, thanked the Commission for approving the amendments to the Land Disposition Agreement (LDA) and the Urban Renewal Plan. He noted that the only remaining open item for the Commission is approval of the schematic plans. Attorney Cacace said, “In March we made a full presentation of what we thought was an exciting and cutting edge project. Since then, and in consultation with your architect Joe Schiffer, our people have been in constant discussion about these plans. The fact that the plans were not changed until very recently was not a reflection of our resisting Mr. Schiffer’s suggestions/changes. We had to go in front of the Planning Board, the Zoning Board and the Board of Representatives and we wanted all of that input before we made any changes.” Architect Glenn Haydu briefly reviewed the proposed changes, as follows: (i) rooftop art at Building A - continue working with zoning to develop an appropriate final art piece, a cultural crown that currently states ‘This Is Where The Fun Stuff Happens’ and arrive at something acceptable to everyone. Some of the other committee members and members of the public have expressed concern over just plain text and see it as a sign whereas the architects continue to believe it is art connected to the cultural aspects of the urban fabric. This element has to go back to zoning for final approval; (ii) window treatments – as part of the urban living brand concept, interior window blinds are provided to all interior units. The architects are also considering using a horizontal two inch slat blind at the ground floor service areas in a closed position in lieu of a non-transparent glazing. Subtle changes such as an off-white blind or a silver blind are being considered.

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Mr. Haydu said that the two items they had exhibits for related to Buildings B and H. He pointed out the colored cedar treatment proposed for the central Building K in what is being called “the oasis.” Building A is a dark granite block. The architects have proposed changing the material at the floor lines to cedar at Building B, noting that the wood provides a warmer material and additional variety to the project. A similar proposal to Block B could be introduced in Block H. It was noted that the URC’s architectural consultant Mr. Schiffer is on vacation and had not seen the latest proposed design changes. Attorney Goldberg suggested that any approvals be made subject to review by Mr. Schiffer. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Molgano made a motion to approve the schematic design plans for RB Stamford Associates LLC for Re-Use Parcel 38 dated May 19, 2014 and submitted to the Commission on June 11, 2014, subject to staff, specifically Executive Director Jackson, working with Joe Schiffer to review and reach resolution of the outstanding issues raised in correspondence from Mr. Schiffer dated May 7, 2014 and responses by Mr. Haydu dated May 15, 2014 and June 9, 2014, and receipt of a full set of final updated documents including additional drawings. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rios and carried by unanimous vote.

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

2. Southeast Quadrant

(c) **RMS/Washington & Main** – Executive Director Jackson noted that the primary concern for the Commission was to determine whether the proposed amendments to the Mill River Corridor Project Plan constituted a substantial (major) or non-substantial (minor) plan change. Attorney Goldberg said, “The Mill River Corridor Plan, as do most redevelopment plans and the state statute, differentiate between substantial changes and minor changes. The Mill River Plan has a process from which to determine whether or not certain plan amendments are major or minor. Some are major by definition, others are not. This falls into the latter category. There is a process in the Plan for making a determination in cases such as this, and the procedure requires a consultation with the Chair of the Land Use Committee of the Board of Representatives, the Zoning Chair and the Planning Chair, who each subsequently make a recommendation. The Commission considers the advice it receives from these Chairs and makes its determination. The difference is, if it’s a minor plan change, it’s basically a two-step process - a submission to the Planning Board for determination that the plan amendment is consistent with the Master Plan, followed by a public hearing held by the URC, and a decision by the URC Board. If it’s a major plan amendment, we go to the Planning Board and the Board of Representatives, hold a joint public hearing, and then both boards will decide.” Executive Director Jackson noted that the the Board of Representatives Land Use Committee Chair and the Zoning Board Chair recommended that this was not a substantial plan change. Attorney Goldberg said, “The one proposed plan amendment of substance is the change in the minimum lot size from 60,000 sq. ft. to 40,000 sq. ft. which is a 30% reduction.” Acting Chairman Sciarretta said, “We were at that May 27th meeting where they said they did not believe it was a substantial change.”

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Acting Chairman Sciarretta continued, “At that meeting, I said I don’t think it’s a substantial change and therefore I don’t think it should have a substantial change cumbersome process. I used the rationale that in order for this property to have its minimum lot size, it actually would need the entire parcel, which would include the two-family house and the streetscape to the park. It is possible, but I was under the belief that this developer was willing to develop and maintain the streetscape and the park and that could very arguably be considered to be included into the project and therefore take the percentage down.” Discussion ensued and Attorney Goldberg said, “There are not great definitions of a ‘substantial change’ anywhere. It’s really about the nature of the project and the plan as a whole and how this proposed change relates to the goals of the project.” Acting Chairman Sciarretta said, “I think it is important to note that, after the conversation/dialogue we had at that joint meeting, the members present also agreed and came on board with the recommendation that it was not a substantial change, and that is my opinion as well.” Attorney Hennessey, representing the developer Randy Salvatore, said, “What the developer has proposed and will be formally proposing to the Zoning Board is that as part of his obligations, he do off-site improvements which will include redoing the street, doing the realignment of the street, rebuilding the park and thereafter taking responsibility for the maintenance of the park.” Attorney Goldberg noted that she does not believe the reduction is a substantial change in what the Mill River Plan was trying to accomplish.

Commissioner Jean-Pierre made a motion to accept the recommendation of the Land Use Chairs that the proposed plan amendments are not substantial in nature and are minor. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rios and carried by unanimous vote.

Attorney Hennessey asked if everyone was clear about the process going forward. Attorney Goldberg responded, “I have to draft the proposed plan amendment, submit it to the Planning Board and make a formal presentation to them. They must determine that the proposed plan amendments are consistent with the City’s Master Plan. We have to hold a public hearing following receipt of that determination. There are statutory requirements in terms of notice.” Attorney Goldberg noted that she also has to write a contract for Joe Schiffer of Herb Newman Architects to act as the URC’s architectural consultant for this project. The developer will incur costs for the architectural consultant and has agreed to pay up to \$5,000.00 (five thousand dollars).

Developer Randy Salvatore gave a brief overview of the proposed project, noting the following: (i) construction material is real brick masonry; (ii) actual pre-cast on the ground floor; (iii) active use, retail/restaurant, on the ground floor; (iv) the existing pharmacy will be relocated to the southern side of the property next to the Government Center in a whole new store environment; (v) amenities on the ground floor with an exercise facility in the main lobby; (vi) the whole corner stretching down the street will be a restaurant with outdoor seating with expanded sidewalks; and, (vii) additional retail store on the western side of the property. Mr. Salvatore said that the intention is for the whole ground floor to be activated.

Acting Chairman Sciarretta called for a brief recess at 6:48pm. The meeting was resumed at 6:53pm.

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3. Agency Administration/Budget - Attorney Goldberg noted she had emailed the Commission Chairman copies of the proposed budget for fiscal year 2014/15, annual cash flow projections for FY 2013 through FY 2017 and an annual expense report to date which were distributed at the meeting. Following discussion, it was the sense of the Board that the Budget Committee schedule a meeting to review the proposed budget prior to the next Commission meeting.

2. Southeast Quadrant/Re-Use Parcel 38

(b) **Trinity (including loan agreement)** – Commissioner Rios made a motion to go into Executive Session to specifically discuss contract negotiations with Trinity. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jean-Pierre and carried by unanimous vote. Durelle Alexander left the meeting. Executive Director Jackson and Attorney Goldberg participated in the discussion. No motions were made and no votes were taken. At 7:37pm, Commissioner Molgano made a motion to return to Open Session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rios and carried by unanimous vote.

4. Adjournment

The next regular meeting will be held on Thursday, July 10, 2014 at 6:00pm.

There being no further business before the Board, Commissioner Rios made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jean-Pierre and carried by unanimous vote. The meeting was adjourned at 8:09pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michaëlle Jean-Pierre
Secretary/Treasurer