

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
CITY OF STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT
URBAN REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2014

1. At 6:00pm, Vice 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 Bill Hennessey, Carmody Torrance Sandak & Hennessey
Attorney Lisa Feinberg, Carmody Torrance Sandak & Hennessey
Randy M. Salvatore, President, RMS Companies

2. Approval of Minutes – March 13, 2014 Regular Meeting

Commissioner Jean-Pierre made a motion to approve the March 13, 2014 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Molgano and carried by unanimous vote.

3. Southeast Quadrant

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

(b) **Re-Use Parcel 38 – Plans & Plan Amendment** – Attorney Goldberg emailed the Board copies of a draft plan amendment and resolution including exhibits prior to the meeting. She said, “The resolution is primarily technical to comply with the requirements of statute. There is language to insert; i.e., the date the proposed amendment is posted on the Commission’s website; the date the notice is published in *The Advocate*; the date of the public hearing, and the date the Planning Board issues a written opinion confirming that the plan as modified is consistent with the plan of conservation and development of the City Master Plan.” Attorney Goldberg briefly reviewed the proposed text and map changes to the Urban Renewal Plan. She said, “We’ve added a new section – Tax Increment Financing (TIF) – the provisions that we’ve talked about using as a source of funds for the construction of improved pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, sidewalks, streetscapes and other construction-related improvements. The proposed boundaries for the TIF District will basically be the west side of Atlantic Street, the north side of Broad Street, the east side of Elm Street, and the south side of Tresser Boulevard.” It was noted that since there are no other undeveloped properties with the exception of Re-Use Parcel 36 within that area, it would just be that one area that would contribute funds to the TIF District.

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Attorney Goldberg continued, “If the Board were to decide tonight to proceed with approval of the draft as presented, we would have to post it on our website and present it to the Planning Board and Board of Representatives for their review. We’re required to hold a public hearing and we try to hold a joint public hearing with the Board of Representatives Land Use-Urban Redevelopment Committee.” Vice Chairman Sciarretta asked, for the record, “Do you see anything adverse ... any potential problems for the Commission?” Attorney Goldberg responded, “The redeveloper expressed some questions about whether or not the TIF piece could go separately from the items related specifically to his project. I explained we have to go before the Board of Representatives and do a decennial review of the plan, another statutory requirement. If there appears to be a problem that the City does not want to do a TIF, we can always uncouple it.” Following discussion, it was the sense of the Board that Attorney Goldberg post a draft of the proposed plan amendment on the Commission’s website and move forward with the process.

3. Southeast Quadrant

(a) **Washington & Main Project Presentation** – It was noted that this will be an informal presentation as the developers have not submitted an application at this time. Attorney Hennessey, representing the developer Randy Salvatore, said, “The property we’re talking about is right outside the window at 909 Washington Boulevard, about 40,000 sq. ft. in size, just under an acre. It encompasses all the buildings from the front of the Government Center parking garage entrance going up to Rippowam Place and then across Rippowam Place. Rippowam Place is that little street that is the southern piece of the triangular park that is on Washington Boulevard. The reason we’re here tonight, in addition to being in a particular zoning category (CG zone), this property is also included in the Mill River Corridor Plan (MRCP). These are two completely different and distinctly separate sets of controls. The zoning controls allow everything we are going to present tonight, but the MRCP does not. What we want to do is basically build this project in accordance with the zoning regulations. This meeting tonight is the preface for something else that needs to occur. When a request is put in by the developer to make a change in the MRCP, a decision needs to be made as to whether or not those changes are ‘substantial’ or ‘not substantial.’ If they are substantial changes, then the process for making the changes is more cumbersome, more time consuming and requires that those requests not only come to this Commission for your determination but also go to the Board of Representatives and through their Committee process. We hope to avoid that but we don’t make that determination.”

Attorney Hennessey continued, “The MRCP has a very unique process for determining whether or not a plan change is substantial or not substantial. The Plan mandates that a group of people get together and those people include the Chairman of the Zoning Board, the Chairman of the Planning Board, the Chairman of this Commission, and the Co-Chairs of the Board of Representatives’ Land Use Committee. They meet and make a determination as to whether or not the request before them to change the Plan is substantial or not substantial.” These changes will be addressed by Attorney Feinberg later in the meeting.

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Attorney Hennessey showed artistic renderings of the site prepared by Beinfield Architecture. He said, “The idea is to demolish everything on site and put a level of parking below grade and a level of parking at grade. What you will see from Rippowam Place and Washington Boulevard is a 6 ½ story building with a very active street front. The developer is in discussions now with an established restaurant that would take a large portion of the space. Above the retail there will be approximately 118 one and two bedroom rental apartments and the proposal would be to park those according to the zoning regulations. We are now showing 136 spaces so the project will be moderately over-parked. The building has a very modern look with a lot of glass and will be heavy on tenant amenities.”

Attorney Feinberg briefly reviewed the proposed plan changes, as follows: (i) modify the minimum redevelopment site from 60,000 sq. ft. to 40,000 sq. ft; (ii) modify the maximum density to conform with zoning regulations; (iii) modify the open space requirement; (iv) modify the setback requirement to conform to zoning; (v) modify the parking requirement to conform to zoning; (vi) modify map MRCP-7 to remove the pocket park and Rippowam Place from ‘to be acquired’; (vii) modify map MRCP-8 to remove pocket park and Rippowam Place from the development site; (viii) waive model requirement; and (ix) remove Rippowam Place from list of streets to be discontinued. Attorney Goldberg asked, “Are there any changes in the design guidelines?” Attorney Hennessey responded, “I don’t think so but we will double check to be sure.” Executive Director Jackson noted that he had contacted Joe Schiffer of Newman Architects to possibly assist the URC in its design review. Attorney Hennessey suggested that Mr. Schiffer and the project architect connect to ensure an orderly process. Attorney Goldberg said, “The one concern I have is that the 30% reduction in the minimal lot size may push this into the substantial plan change category, adding potentially a month to the process.” She also requested that if the developer agreed to reimburse the Commission for up to \$5000.00 in design review fees, it be included in their proposal.

(c) **Trinity Including Loan Agreement** – At 6:50pm, Commissioner Jean-Pierre made a motion to go into Executive Session to specifically discuss negotiations with Trinity and the negotiations concerning the requested modifications to the Land Disposition Agreement (LDA) for Re-Use Parcel 38. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Molgano 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 8:10pm, Commissioner Molgano made a motion to return to Open Session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rios and carried by unanimous vote. Ms. Alexander returned to the meeting. At this time, the Acting Chairman called for a brief recess. The meeting was resumed at 8:18pm.

4. Correspondence/Communications

None at this time.

5. Announcements/Media Update

Executive Director Jackson reminded the Board of the Mill River Gala on May 1st and asked anyone interested in going to contact him directly.

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6. Agency Administration

- (a) **Chairpersons' Report/Discussion** – OTHRA representative Molgano reported that discussions with existing tenants are ongoing. The next meeting is scheduled for April 17th at 8:30am.
- (b) **Budget/Status of Reimbursables** – The Budget Committee meeting originally scheduled for tonight was cancelled because the Chairman could not attend. It will be rescheduled.

Executive Director Jackson spoke with Attorney John Leydon this week re: the conveyance of the sliver parcel on Tresser Boulevard. Payment of the \$18,000.00 is anticipated by the end of June. Attorney Goldberg noted the funds will have to be put in escrow until the contract for the sale of land is approved by all of the requisite Boards.

- (c) **Personnel** – Executive Director Jackson requested a special meeting be held to address outstanding personnel issues. The tentative date for this meeting is Wednesday, April 16, 2014 at 6:00pm.

7. Executive Director's Report

- (a) **Auditor Considerations** – Executive Director Jackson reported he had spoken to some of the Board members regarding the Chairman's request for a forensic audit. He said, "The forensic audit can be narrow and deep or broad and superficial with a wide range of costs and we need to be specific about our needs and what we hope to accomplish." The Executive Director has spoken with four firms, including the accountants who do the audit for the City of Stamford. He was asked to obtain estimates/proposals in writing from all four firms to present at the next meeting.

8. Old Business - Commissioner Rios asked, "Where do we stand today, as a Commission, as far as not making payments before we actually have the money?" Executive Director Jackson responded, "If there are entities we engage to do work we should ask for a retainer. I have also met with Director of Operations Ernie Orgera and suggested the City consider paying individuals/contractors directly as opposed to our having to advance the money."

9. New Business

None at this time.

10. Adjournment

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 8, 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 Molgano and carried by unanimous vote. The meeting was adjourned at 8:29pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michaëlle Jean-Pierre
Secretary/Treasurer

