

CITY OF MIDDLETOWN CONNECTICUT
Department of Planning, Conservation, & Development

C O M M U N I T Y D E V E L O P M E N T

Middletown Redevelopment Agency

Meeting Minutes -- 13 February 2001

The meeting commenced at 6:05 PM.

W. Warner provided the Agency with a status report on the Miller & Bridge Streets Redevelopment Plan (Plan). Ms. Jones, owner of 17 Miller Street is still setting her sale price at \$50,000. The Mount Hope Church, at 115 Bridge Street, is actively looking for a site to relocate to. W. Warner presented the agency with an overview of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) Section 108 Loan program and its potential for expediting the Plan.

A quorum being present, the minutes were approved. Present were S. Leinwand, Chairman, J. Blancato, H. Novicki, J. Fortuna, J. Makrogianis, and G. Daley, Deputy Mayor. Also present were W. Warner and M. Johnson.

S. Leinwand, Chairman, asks about the Plan's intention for the Miller & Bridge Streets neighborhood once acquisition, relocation, and demolition were completed.

W. Warner responded – Rail operations or other industrial uses. Remington Rand is nearby and potentially relevant to the future of the site.

H. Novicki inquired into the availability of state money for Plan implementation and talking to legislature

W. Warner responded that the Mayor had written a letter to the Department of Transportation (DOT) but that their time horizon is extremely long and vague.

S. Leinwand, inquired if there had been any follow up regarding Joe Serra.

G. Daley will be looking into this.

Next followed a presentation by the North End Action Team Housing Committee (NEAT) of their revised and supplemented North End / CBD Urban Renewal Plan (Plan).

M. Johnson introduced NEAT and the Plan.

Krishna Winston of the NEAT Housing Committee presented the Plan's background, principles, and features.

Next, Michael Taylor, also of the NEAT Housing Committee, presented the Plan's phases.

Next, C. Rodenhizer, also of the NEAT Housing Committee, presented the Plan's funding sources.

G. Daley inquired if the sale of homes was counted as part of financing?

C. Rodenhizer responded that they were and that new homes would be acquired from flipped properties.

H. Novicki stated that if the project involved Riverfront, it could go much better, noting the issue of coming off Bridge, alternatives to jamming Main Street, etc.

L. Brewster, also of the NEAT Housing Committee, responded that Carol Kettleon, head of Middletown Property Owner's Association, was a NEAT member and was working with the group.

H. Novicki continued that one idea would be to tunnel Rt. 9.

J. Makrogianis then inquired what NEAT's definition of "Mixed" Housing was: what's the range?

C. Rodenhizer responded that it ranged up to \$150,000. NEAT is currently doing a market study due at the end of the month and studying market rents. Now, rents for the area are sub-market. NEAT will try to maintain a balance between not forcing good (but low income) households out and upgrading the housing stock and the neighborhood's average income.

H. Novicki then inquired if, as in the past, relocated families would need to be given relocation assistance.

W. Warner responded that they would.

C. Rodenhizer repeated that NEAT would try not to displace people.

Next W. Warner inquired if much of NEAT's funding sources wouldn't preclude market dictated rents.

C. Rodenhizer responded that yes, some of it -- for example the Tax Credits, would.

W. Warner followed up inquiring into the fate of the Nehemiah building (Green Court), asserting that, especially for properties fronting on deKoven Drive, it was a bad idea to limit market forces; the Plan should allow for modified gentrification in that section.

C. Rodenhizer responded that deKoven Drive properties, and some of the other homeownership opportunities would be financially un-tethered.

W. Warner noted that, in New London's recent redevelopment, the plan was to do high-priced housing development on the waterfront.

M. Taylor stated that Phases II and III of the plan could all be un-tethered and market-driven. Green Court, however, had mortgages that precluded profitable development.

J. Blancato inquired into the project's timeline.

C. Rodenhizer estimated that the plan might be underway by the 3rd quarter of 2002.

Next, S. Leinwand inquired into the issue of who the developer for the project would be. In traditional redevelopment projects, the City of Middletown take over a property, and then turn it over to a developer. Under the Plan, would the Agency be a collaborative developer with NEAT?

R. Lisker, President of the North End Action Team, noted that the NEAT Housing Committee -- with representatives from Liberty Bank, the Connection, Nehemiah Housing, and Habitat for Humanity -- had been convened by NEAT.

C. Rodenhizer, responding to S. Leinwand, said that the Connection and Nehemiah Housing, together, would be the developer.

S. Leinwand then inquired what the Agency's function would be.

C. Rodenhizer responded that the Agency was needed to Bond the new road, acquire and flip NEAT properties to be redeveloped.

G. Daley added that the Plan needed the Statutory Powers of the Agency in order to move the Plan along and the MRA was responsible for continuing to play a leading role in the process. The Agency is grateful for the volunteer efforts of the NEAT Housing Committee, but ultimately MRA would be responsible for executing the plan. The Agency could, however, designate certain developers for projects or many sub-projects in the plan.

W. Warner suggested that the Plan might benefit from the formation of a CDC like New London's NLDC.

L. Brewster responded that in any scenario, NEAT should play a continuing role for preserving the initiative's grass roots.

H. Novicki next inquired into what the overall design would be; would it be a hodge-podge?

C. Rodenhizer responded that they were developing ideas that would be compatible with existing typologies, and would also plan to exercise design review to avoid a hodge-podge look.

H. Novicki said some presentation boards to review the look that was being developed would be helpful.

Next, S. Leinwand inquired if a public hearing would be required in order to officially adopt the plan.

W. Warner responded that one would be required.

S. Leinwand requested M. Johnson to establish a time, etc. in order to have the public hearing and do a PERT Chart --for at least Phase I of the Plan to clarify public procedure for adopting and implementing the Plan.

M. Johnson responded that the public hearing could be held at the next regular meeting of the Agency, on 12 March 2001.

S. Leinwand also noted that some of the numerical details of the Plan were inconsistent on different pages and in the slides. These inconsistencies should be reconciled in advance of the public hearing.

G. Daley noted that the proceedings should move ahead in a manner anticipatory of the road bond scheduled for the November ballot and the Department of Public Works would be preparing for this in July and August.

H. Novicki inquired who would present at the public hearing.

S. Leinwand suggested that M. Johnson should determine.

G. Daley said that it was important to advertise the hearing and make copies of the plan available in the North End, at the Bank for example.

S. Leinwand suggested that the presentation be short as the Agency had already seen it several times and that the focus should be on Q& A with the public.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Munro W. Johnson
Community Development Specialist