

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

### MINUTES February 14, 2000

#### Present

G. Daley, Chair  
R. Santangelo  
S. Gionfriddo  
S. Shapiro  
J. Robinson

#### Absent

#### Also Present

W. Warner, Director PCD  
R. Kearney, EDS

**Public:** Jane McMillan, Chris Widmer, Lou Trajcewski (CHIF), Tom Hibbard, Tom Gionfriddo (MHA) Myron Poliner, Richard Kamens, Zogran Zogorn, Mark Misselli, Press: Bill Daley, Mark Christie

**A. Call to order:** Daley called the meeting to order at 7:09 PM.

#### **B. Public Session**

**Old Business E 8: Old Police Station:** T. Gionfriddo, Middletown Housing Authority described proposal to construct 3-6 single family housing units and keep the maintenance building for use by MHA. MHA traffic would use the Williams ST or Church ST entrances. The MHA would demolish the structure. The demolition contractor for Long River Village viewed this site and felt that a budget of \$100,000 is appropriate. Shapiro asked if \$100,000 was not enough where would the funds come from. T. Gionfriddo stated CDBG. Shapiro asked the source of remediation funds. T. Gionfriddo stated that grant or CDBG funds would be sought depending on the results of the study. Shapiro asked if the houses would go on the tax roles. T. Gionfriddo affirmed. The houses would resemble the ones recently constructed by Wesleyan on Pine ST and would sell for \$120,000-\$140,000. MHA would take a silent second mortgage of \$15,000. Robinson asked if MHA was aware that the deadline for CDBG applications is tomorrow (2-15-00). T. Gionfriddo stated that the need for funds would depend on how serious the remediation problems would be. Warner stated that a good demolition contractor would understand the lead problem. T. Gionfriddo stated that MHA has funds available. Hibbard, Hibbard Rose Architects, presented historic site information describing lots sizes running from 45-50' and row houses near the hospital. 60' lots were sometimes split-up. Three scenarios were presented showing houses from 3-5 single families to a 6 unit row house. Shapiro asked if multi units would require handicapped access. T. Gionfriddo stated that the units would be like condos. Warner stated that the driveways would be private. Santangelo asked if the driveways were private not requiring handicapped access. Daley asked if the Committee needs to indicate a preference on the 3 scenarios. T. Gionfriddo said the commissioners would decide their preference and then discuss this with City officials. Parking needs would be analyzed in relationship to usage at Traverse Square. The police, tenants and the synagogue might share the parking. An agreement to share could be drawn up. Daley asked if MHA has interest in the garage if no housing was built. T. Gionfriddo affirmed. Warner stated this would be subject to P&Z. Daley asked if a special exception would be needed. Warner stated that single family usage would require a subdivision application, row houses require special exception. Shapiro asked if MHA has goals to continue to build housing or infilling of properties. T. Gionfriddo stated there are no goals, but if property becomes available the NGRS, non-profit, would consider housing proposals, with conventional homeownership with CHFA & banks. Shapiro stated the MHA has no goals to build public housing but would look at opportunities if they developed. MHA feels that Broad ST must stay viable and is concerned about Broad Street, Combs house next to Atticus, which is deteriorating. MHA has sponsored scholarships in the past few years with surplus funds. S. Gionfriddo questioned whether the housing would be for Middletown residents only. T. Gionfriddo stated that the demand for single family housing would be easily met by City residents. The MHA commissioners were not legally bound to residents only. No problems filling houses with City residents. Robinson asked what the MHA's rolls is in this proposal. T. Gionfriddo stated that securing a maintenance facility while turning the old Police Station conversion to a tax generator and homeownership are the goals.

Poliner distributed a handout and described the origins of Congregation Adath Israel. Originally members walked to the synagogue. Most members drive and cars have spread the membership requiring greater needs for parking. The Methodist congregation is rarely available to share parking due to increased usage of their facilities. Dadatos lot is often busy. The Williams ST lot of 20 spaces is often

used by the Senior Center even though there are signs posted for synagogue use. On busy days congregation members must park all over the place. Limited parking deters new and existing membership. broad ST is part of downtown. The synagogue brings 100 people and the school has 80 students. Shops benefit from members coming into town, many shops were owned by members. The congregation wants to stay in Middletown and believes that adequate parking would attract an additional 75-100 members. 50% of members are from other towns. Younger members are predominantly from Cromwell and Portland. The Chair of Endowment now has the funds to develop the site with landscaping, fencing to make a parking lot attractive to the neighborhood. The congregation would offer the William street lot to the City. Since 1935 to present, 66 Church ST was used as Vynal School and the Police Station. It has not been on the tax rolls. The congregation owns property on Mile LN and Ridgewood and would sell these properties to get them back on the tax rolls. The proposed golf course is on the boundary since Mori Schwarm did not deed this property to the City. Although the congregation does not pay taxes, they considered offering funds to support the Police Department, but no other religious organization does. The congregation understands that the Village District zoning encourages protection and growth of housing but believes a well designed parking lot would be a plus for the neighborhood. There is the possibility that a school might be added, but this is only a speculation, the plan is to use this site for parking. The cost of environmental evaluation and remediation estimate is \$100,000 and \$180,000 for completion of the total project. The congregation would be responsible for all expenses.

S. Gionfriddo asked if the congregation has enough funds. Poliner affirmed. S. Gionfriddo asked if the 85 spaces could be constructed with the maintenance building remained. Poliner stated that this was not evaluated. S. Gionfriddo asked if 85 spaces were needed. Poliner stated that they would be if the congregation gave up the Williams ST 20 spaces. Daley asked if this amount would fit the site. Warner affirmed. S. Gionfriddo asked if the Traverse Square lot was usable. Poliner stated that sometimes there were spaces available. S. Gionfriddo asked if the congregation would be making long term commitment. Poliner stated that the congregation could consider moving to Pine ST (10 acres). This would impact downtown but might be more convenient to the younger out of town members. S. Gionfriddo asked if the 85 spaces were secured would the congregation look for additional spaces relative to building a school. Poliner stated that the intention to stay is indicated by the investment in renovation and a new elevator in the synagogue. Zogran stated that the elevator made the synagogue more accessible to the congregation. The building is land locked and nothing may come available. Membership is 300 people. Shapiro stated that 20 years ago when the City constructed the park, the synagogue was told that when parking became available the City would give it to the synagogue, Poliner was on the synagogue committee. the congregation is willing to yield the Williams ST spaces. The sanctuary cannot be replaced. A modern sanctuary at a new site could never replace or duplicate the sanctuary. Poliner stated that the synagogue is a museum of artifacts and is often opened for tour groups. This sanctuary is unique in the US. Daley asked if the congregation is growing or experiencing the consolidation of Catholic churches and declining population of priests. Poliner stated that there is no problem finding rabbis, the membership count has remained stable despite declines in the economy and loss of jobs in CT. Daley asked whether young people were staying with the congregation. Poliner stated that we are exporting children to other states. Moodus and Chester recently opened a new synagogue. Middletown serves 12 towns. Zogran stated that the board and rabbi are very active. Robinson asked if a school were built would there be a need for parking and what requirements P&Z would have regarding this. Poliner stated that parking is the primary need. Daley questioned on how to go forward to explore this issue and the fact that the Police Station was using 69 spaces. Warner stated that Village District was passed by P&Z to enhance the streetscape and housing. Daley questioned what are permitted uses. Warner stated that housing, offices, are permitted but parking lots are not permitted. Poliner stated that parking was allowed for religious use. Warner stated that the use must be adjacent. S. Gionfriddo questioned whether P&Z's willingness to interpret this rule. Daley asked that both parties sit down and discuss their needs and see if a compromise can be reached. The Committee supports both parties and would like to see a remedy that helps both parties. Misselli stated that he will meet with Congregation Adath Israel to seek a compromise solution. Daley requested a motion to table this item until the March 13, 2000 meeting of the Economic Development Committee. Gionfriddo made the motion, Robinson seconded. The Committee approved the motion unanimously.

## **F. New Business**

- 1. 646-654 Main ST:** Warner stated that one proposal was received by Alderhouse Residential Communities. Widmer stated that the housing units were reduced from 10 to 9. The project would be an artists cooperative with retail gallery on the first floor. Widmer discussed the sources of funding. Warner discussed the history of the property including foreclosure on \$61,000 taxes owed and the lack of response at the public sale 2 years ago. He stated that the \$800,000 investment from private sector was

probably not economically feasible. Alderhouse has a good track record. The proposal offers the City \$1.00 for the purchase price. The proposal follows the planning discussions and intentions to bring artists residences to the North End. Daley asked if a 1 year option is feasible. Trajcevski stated CHIF would need 9-11 months to assemble the financing with DECD Home, the City of Middletown. DECD requires site control with a 6-12 month option. The planned start of construction is October 2000. Shaprio stated that this is a good proposal. Shapiro questioned why the RFP was available for only 7 days indicating that other parties were interested in responding but did not have enough time. Kearney stated that the Committee requested at the 1-10-00 meeting that the RFP be published and the results be submitted to the 2-14-00 meeting. This allowed for a 2 week response period. Daley confirmed that the Committee set these parameters. S. Gionfriddo recommended a 6 month option for Alderhouse to report back on progress for assembling a financing package. Daley stated that if there are other people interested in the property they should be present at today's meeting. Daley questioned whether the proposal is for 9 or 10 units. Widmer stated 9. Daley stated he would entertain a motion for a 6 month option. S. Gionfriddo made the motion, Robinson seconded. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the motion. Daley asked whether the Mayor has the power to sign the option. Daley asked McMillan to draft an option and contact the City Attorney.

**C. Minutes:** November 22, 1999, December 13, 1999, and January 10, 2000. The Committee approved these minutes. Members listed as absent in the meeting minutes abstained.

**D. Communications:** none

**E. Old Business**

**1. North End Industrial Area**

- a. Remington Rand: Warner stated rent is generating \$11,000/mo, electricity is a single meter running at \$3,000/mo. A request to hire architectural services is being made to DECD.
- b. Leibman property
- c. Package Store

**2. Industrial Park area and vicinity**

**3. Brownfields-Riverfront Properties**

4. **Armory:** Robinson questioned status. Warner stated that this is the primary site for hotel development.

**5. Brickyard Industrial Park**

6. **Sumner Brook Realty:** Warner stated that a letter in the package describes environmental issues.

**7. JOBS Loan Program Guidelines**

8. **Reuse of Old Police Station, 66 Church ST:** (see Public Session)

**9. REINVEST Loan: Touch of Class, Bankruptcy discharge**

**10. Main Street BID Ordinance**

**11. Local Workforce Investment Area, Interlocal Agreement**

12. **Meriden Gas Plant:** Warner referred to letter from City Attorney. The Commissioner of DEP will not have a hearing and will issue a tentative decision in 30 days. Gionfriddo made a motion to authorize the City Attorney to notify the DEP that the City wants to be notified of the decision. Robinson seconded the motion. The Committee unanimously approved the motion.

**F. New Business**

1. **646-654 Main Street** (see Public Session)

**2. INFORM Realtor Reception:** Gionfriddo recommended the Wadsworth Estate as the site and to seek a night where no expense to the City, the Committee agreed. Daley questioned how important the event is. Kearney stated that this is an opportunity to update the commercial real estate market on the many accomplishments and emerging projects and opportunities in Middletown. Shapiro made a motion to transfer \$500 to assist in the funding of the reception, Robinson seconded, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the motion.

**3. JOBS LOAN**

**A. The Music Shop:** completed application not received, no discussion

**B. Huckleberry Press:** completed application not received, no discussion

**G. Status Reports**

- 1. Economic Development Specialist's Report:** Kearney stated that recent activity is in the Status of Items on the Agenda report
- 2. REINVEST monthly summary report:** no discussion
- 3. Economic Development Fund Status Report:** no discussion
- 4. INFORM monthly report to Mayor and Economic Development:** no discussion

**H. Other**

- I. Adjournment:** There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.