

City of Middletown, CT

Economic Development Committee

Minutes from the meeting of April 10, 2006

<u>Present</u>	<u>Also Present</u>
Mayor Sebastian N. Giuliano	W. Warner
G. Daley, Chair	M. Wackers
J. Bibisi	R. Kearney
D. Bauer	
R. Santangelo	
P. Szewczyk	
Public: J. Pugliese, N. Stamler, L. Marino, J. Hayes, D. Brandini, J. Kovner, K. Johnson	

- A **Call to Order:** Daley called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.
- B **Public Session:** none
- C **Minutes:** Bibisi made a motion seconded by Santangelo to approve the minutes. The committee voted to approve the minutes. Szewczyk was not present.
- D **Communications**
- E **Old Business**
- 1) **CBB Parking**
    - a) **\$18 million Federal Funding:** No discussion.
  - 2) **Landmark Development Group, LLC EXECUTIVE SESSION- discussion of the selection of a site or the lease, sale or purchase of real estate by a political subdivision of the state when publicity regarding such site, lease, sale, purchase or construction would cause a likelihood of increased price until such time as all of the property has been acquired or all proceedings or transactions concerning same have been terminated or abandoned, exempt from disclosure under Section 1-200(6)(D) of the Connecticut General Statutes.** No discussion.
  - 3) **Coffee House Recording Studio discussion of documents, specifically confidential personal financial data plan submitted by the Michael Arafah, The Coffee House Recording Studio from the City of Middletown as authorized by Sections 1-18a(e)(5) of the Connecticut General statutes, which Sections allow for the discussion in executive session of documents which would result in the disclosure of public records i.e. commercial or financial information given in confidence, not required by Statute, exempt form disclosure under**

**Section 1-19(b)(5) of the Connecticut General Statutes.** Santangelo made a motion seconded by Szewczyk to enter in to executive session. The committee approved the motion and entered executive session at 6:42 PM. Szewczyk made a motion seconded by Bauer to exit executive session at 7:03 PM.

- 4) **Riverfront Development-Middletown Development Associates EXECUTIVE SESSION-discussion of the selection of a site or the lease, sale or purchase of real estate by a political subdivision of the state when publicity regarding such site, lease, sale, purchase or construction would cause a likelihood of increased price until such time as all of the property has been acquired or all proceedings or transactions concerning same have been terminated or abandoned, exempt from disclosure under Section 1-200(6)(D) of the Connecticut General Statutes.** Hayes presented the concept plan for the project. Hayes described the RT 9/17 interchange as the driving the process. Hayes stated the goals of expanding the downtown and bring retailers to the city. Hayes stated the need to garner the community and downtown merchants support. Hayes stated he met with Amato & Levine and will make a presentation to the Central Business Bureau May meeting. Hayes stated he has retained Williams & Gallitto, Sterling Realtors for the land acquisition budget. Retailers are interested in both sides of the highway but must have the interchange. Hayes will meet with URS on Wednesday to discuss how the plan will function moving people through the area and downtown. Hayes stated the project will expose the city to a larger demographic.

Daley questioned how the plan would encourage the movement of people from downtown to the South Cove area. Hayes stated this is still a difficult area due to the ownership along Union Street in trying to craft a consistent land acquisition for a homogeneous pedestrian experience.

Daley questioned whether the two highway projects had been combined. Warner stated they had not and that the Federal Transportation Bill funding is there and that DOT needs the right push. Hayes mentioned the topography, the hospital's positive impacts on the project and a free transit bus loop between the areas like the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Mall in Denver. Hayes described the marina as day slips. Warner discussed the concept of retail as not competing but complimenting existing businesses and the need for modern size buildings to accommodate national specialty retailers. Hayes stated national retailers all come together and require 20-50,000 square feet of space. Hayes stated the retailers would contribute to a marketing fund to promote the entire downtown. Hayes stated that although Blue Back Square was planned as an extension of West Hartford Center, the marketing is creating a separateness that he wants to avoid in Middletown. Kearney reminded Hayes of the existing DBD. Warner & Daley questioned whether a self-taxing business district be made.

Santangelo asked about the plans for housing. Hayes stated he had not spent a lot of time on housing but that the buildings would be multifamily and dependent on market demand. Hayes stated that once the area was cleared and more attractive then housing which has a 6-12 month window would follow.

Hayes stated that the Middletown retail market is underserved and the city would benefit by attracting retail dollars and keeping retail dollars that are being spent in other cities. Retailers can make commitments for 4-5 years in the future.

Bibisi asked about a public boat launch. Hayes and Warner noted the DEP has \$100,000 in funding available for the project and the site is the former Peterson Oil site. Bibisi stated the site had the depth and asked whether a boat launch would be in conflict with the developer's plans. Hayes stated he did not know and discussed the needs to accommodate trailer and truck parking. Bibisi stated that the plan was for a 50 car lot which would not fit the site or the need for turning

movements. Hayes stated that there is not enough information to engineer the retail and the time frame for the project is too uncertain. If the launch was put in and at some future point did not fit in with future plans, Hayes would pay up to \$200,000 for relocation of the launch. Bibisi stated the depth requirement would make it difficult to find another site for future relocation. Bibisi stated the site could not be expanded due to the location of the water treatment plant.

Warner questioned Hayes on whether the plans for new retail were to compliment v/s compete with existing businesses and whether zoning to not allow restaurants was needed to protect the existing restaurants. Hayes stated there would be a need for a limited amount of restaurants particularly along the waterfront. Daley questioned Hayes regarding the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Denver Mall transit system. Bibisi described the Ogunquit, ME trolley system. Bauer described the Burlington, VT free transit circuit. Hayes described the success of Denver's system is based on frequent, predictable, free service which encourages people to use it which makes it successful. Kearney discussed the convenience of the Denver system with an easy on easy access to multiple retailers. Santangelo questioned the use of the rail line. Hayes stated the project was designed to pedestrian friendly and that did not include using the railroad. Warner stated that the Deep River to Hartford was 40 years away since the entire line would have to be rebuilt and that the critical mass was not there to support this.

Daley summarized that for the project to progress there is a need for the resolution of the interchange time frame. Hayes stated that if the traffic issue is resolved more people would be attracted to the area to shop and dine. Daley affirmed that Hayes should revisit the committee. Hayes stated he will be working with DOT & URS. Daley stated the DOT goal of safe and efficient highway operation needs to be balanced with the economic concerns of the city. Daley noted the economic potential of integrating the project with the downtown. Warner stated that DEP, DECD and DOT need to be made aware of the project's potential economic generator to both the city and the state.

- 5) **Lady Katharine Cruises (LKC):** Warner presented the draft agreement. Warner stated LKC would like to operate on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July by loading the boat and leaving prior to the closing of the river and would disembark after the reopening of the river. General discussion of where the ship would move to. Daley stated it would be up to the Coast Guard to determine locations based on the controlled zone. Bibisi questioned adding a calculation for administrative costs beyond the usual 40 hours. Daley recommended a schedule of hourly rates be given from the Finance Department. Warner stated the call back time is a 2-hour minimum. Warner stated LKC would offer senior citizens two free cruises for a total of 400 tickets. In general discussion termination language was modified as for good cause shown.

Bibisi made a motion seconded by Santangelo to approve the agreement to provide docking facilities at Harbor Park for LKC and to include a schedule of overtime rates. The committee voted to approve the motion. Bauer abstained.

## **F New Business**

- 1) **Tax and Business Incentive Application: North End Development Group:** Warner described the application. General discussion ensued. The applicant is referred to the WPCA regarding the request for extension of water and sanitary lines into the property and waiving of hook-up charges.

Santangelo made a motion seconded by Bibisi to recommend to the Common Council the approval of the tax abatement. The committee voted to approve the motion.

## **G Status Reports**

- 1) **Economic Development Fund, monthly report**
- 2) **Economic Development Specialist Report**
- 3) **REINVEST Loan Program, monthly summary report**
- 4) **JOBS Loan Program, monthly summary report**

**H Other:** Commercial Realtor Reception: Kearney & Warner presented information on previous events. General discussion ensued on potential locations and themes. Szewczyk made a motion seconded by Santangelo to approve the transfer of \$1,000 from the general Economic Development Fund to the Realtors Reception line item.

**I Adjournment:** The committee adjourned at 7:05 PM.