
**CITY OF MIDDLETOWN
REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY**

MINUTES

July-18-2006

Present

G. DALEY
M. LONG
J. ALEXANDER
J. MAKROGIANIS
S. BROWN
J. TINE
F. GANGULI
L. RUSSO
S. SHAPIRO
J. INGLIS
P. BUSARI

Absent

R. SANTANGELO
H. NOVICKI
J. FORTUNA

Also Present

M. WACKERS
L. BREWSTER
P. MIKUSOVA
R. ROSENTHAL
D. BERTO
J. SAINES
J. SARBAUGH
L. HANSON
E. ROBERTS
M. TAYLOR
M. CASSIOLA
A. JOHNSON
I. GREENBERG
E. MCKEON
J. BRADLEY
G. JOHNSON
C. JOHNSON
M. KATS

Gerald Daley called the meeting to order at 5:02 PM.

Gerald Daley moved to review the minutes from the previous meeting. Steven Shapiro motioned to approve the minutes as presented. Joe Tine seconded and the motion was approved with nine in favor of the motion and one abstention.

Gerald Daley opened the floor to public comments.

Lydia Brewster representing the North End Action Team stated that she wanted the view points of the neighborhood clarified. First, NEAT supports Richman Group and Broad Park, because it develops decent housing with opportunities available to the existing residents. Second demolition should not be the first course of action for genuinely historic structures. Third the goal is to create a mixed income neighborhood.

Jim Sarbaugh representing Middlesex Historic Preservation Trust commented that the Trust has taken action to achieve intervener status in any application before the Planning and Zoning Commission within the redevelopment area. The trust is seeking a seat at the table. 37 buildings remain that are noted in the historic inventory and no review has been conducted. There are historically significant properties, such as 51-55 Ferry Street.

Catherine Johnson commented on her experience to rebuild the Gulf Coast and they are putting more planning into their communities that we are in to ours. The current proposal is not a prudent use of our heritage.

Luke Hanson a resident of the North End commented that the crime rate has dropped as a result of the Richman project and the conditions prior to the project were horrible and people should not be allowed to live in those conditions.

Lois Santiago replied to the praise of 51-55 Ferry Street and exclaimed that it is an unsafe building. She expressed a belief that it would cost more to renovation than start new. She added that she understood the talk about historic buildings, but the talk should be about people living in them and how they are valued less. We should be working together, the problem is the lack of communication from various neighborhoods.

President of NEAT asked where was everybody when the negative activities were going on in these historic properties. Now that the City does something nice for the neighborhood, everyone outside the neighborhood wants to stop it. That is not right.

Susan Allison of 8 Miles Avenue expressed her hope with the charette's plan 15 years ago. This project is not the charette plan and I do not think that Richman is the developer we want. If they are getting such a good deal, we can get better.

Tom Hibbard, an architect, commented that the problem is a small number of landlords and tenants that cause the neighborhood to decay rapidly. Why is the answer demolition. The root of the problem is not being addressed. We are wiping out our sense of who we are and where we came from. I think this neighborhood is completely salvageable.

L. McKessen stated that houses do not cause problems. The history of public housing is deplorable.

The Committee corrected Mr. McKessen that this is not a public housing project, rather a private development.

Susan Owen, business owner and member of the NEAT board, who was born and raised in Middletown stated that we need to work together. We need to stop treating this as a low income project.

Earle Roberts commented on the Agency's vote on a new chairman. His advise is to have an open mind and select someone that is open and willing to achieve the best result for the City.

Rob Rosenthal commented that the fundamental responsibility for saving historic properties is the land owner, and people should not be demanding that they be saved unless they purchase a home and restore it.

Jim Sarbaugh asked that a cost comparison be done to see if renovation is less costly than new construction.

Tim Hubbard explained that the City did try to rehab these buildings but the residents and landlords did not want to take advantage of the City program.

Lois Santiago added that she did take part in the City program, but many did not and the landlords just did not care.

Gerald Daley expressed his thanks for the comments. This project needs to move forward and meet the challenge before us.

Gerald Daley called for the election on a new Agency Chair and called for nominations.

Louise Russo nominated Gerald Daley for Chair. Steven Shapiro and Joe Tine seconded. No other nominations were put forth. The Agency voted 9 in favor, 1 against and 1 abstaining the nomination.

Gerald Daley called for nomination since there is now a vacancy for Vice-Chair. Joe Tine nominated Michael Long for Vice Chair. The nomination was seconded by Peggy Busari. The Agency voted 10 in favor and 1 abstaining the nomination.

Gerald Daley with consent of the Agency shuffled the agenda to allow for the updates from Broad Park and the Richman Group.

David Berto from Broad Park reported that the Connecticut Housing Trust Fund application for \$1 million was submitted and waiting to hear a determination. DECD meeting Friday July 21, 2006 to open the applications process up again for the same funds. David Certo reported that the designs for the properties is up on the City's website and David Berto asked the Agency where are the project is going, because we need to know how to proceed. We are flexible, but need affirmative answers to stay on our timetable.

Gerald Daley replied that the Broad Park project is a very important part of the redevelopment project to create a mixed income diverse neighborhood. What buildings are renovated or demolished for new construction is an economic matter. It is my understanding that you feel it is not economic al to renovate. We put our faith in you the developer to respond to the issue of historic renovation to se reveal if it is economical.

David Berto replied that this is possible but it will require additional time and an extension of the agreement. And any evaluation will be to rehab these buildings for homeownership not rental. What properties should we look at.

Gerald Daley replied that the Trust should designate which properties should be examined for rehab potential.

Jennifer Alexander applauded this proposal and felt it was a right step.

Michael Long asked if this can be done before the next meeting.

Gerald Daley stated that the August meeting will be cancelled to allow the Trust and Broad Park to examine a building and do an evaluation of the cost estimates. And we will move the September meeting up a week to September 12th.

Pam Mikusova from the Richman Group presented an update stating that everything was on schedule with leasing to begin in the spring.

Jennifer Alexander asked if there were any delays and the reply was that there was nothing that Richman can't handle.

Gerald Daley took the opportunity to introduce three new members, Shannon brown, Joan Inglis, and Grady Faulkner.

Michiel Wackers explained how the site walk of the North End would work after the meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:27 PM, upon a motion from Joe Tine and seconded by Michael Long.

Respectfully submitted,

Michiel Wackers, Deputy Director of Planning, Conservation and Development