

MIDDLETOWN REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY  
Minutes: August 24, 1992

PRESENT

D. Russell, Chairman  
S. Gionfriddo  
T. Hutton  
E. Rak-Roberts  
J. Tine  
H. Novicki  
T. Raczka  
G. Russo  
G. Woods  
J. Coughlin  
S. Shapiro  
D. Campanelli

ABSENT

S. Leinwand  
J. Makrogianis  
L. Russo

ALSO PRESENT

S. Beinhorn, Press  
G. Nichols, WCNX  
W. Kuehn, Staff  
L. Ozga, Staff  
C. Wilcox, Staff  
Members of the public  
(list attached)

Chairman D. Russell called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. in the Council Chamber of the Municipal Building and noted that the purpose of the first part of the meeting was to hold a public hearing on the North End/CBD Urban Renewal Plan. D. Russell explained that the format of the hearing would include first, a report from Staff regarding the plan, followed by comments from the public. He urged speakers not to be repetitive and opened the Public Hearing by calling on Municipal Development Director W. Kuehn to read the call of the Public Hearing, as published.

Mr. Kuehn went on to give a history of plans for the North End dating back to a 1964 study which was to be considered by Redevelopment. Since then, there have been many plans and programs including DOT studies; CDBG target funding for rehab projects; and in 1988, the North End Task Force came out with the most comprehensive study of all. As a result, DeCarlo and Doll was hired in March of 1989 to develop an urban renewal plan, which process lasted until May of 1990. In September 1990, a public hearing was held on the plan, whose project activities (then) were principally rehabilitation and code enforcement. In mid-1991, the Common Council recommended to staff and the Middletown Redevelopment Agency, that the plan be expanded to include new land uses and some boundary changes. The end of 1991 was spent in modifying parts of the plan; however, much of it remains the same. Mr. Kuehn went on to explain the specific changes using maps from 1990 and current maps.

1. On the Project Boundary map, there were expansions of the redevelopment area on Kings Avenue, Washington Street, and to the rear of the Arriwani Hotel.
2. The Structural Conditions map had been revised to reflect (mostly improved) conditions as identified by the Greater Middletown Community Corporation and the Health Department.
3. There were very few or no changes to the existing Land Use map, Existing Zoning map, two existing Utilities maps, existing Traffic Flow or Floodplain maps.

The proposed Land Use map shows a consolidation of all commercial uses into one (the 1990 plan showed four separate Land Uses); and the proposed Zoning map reflects some of the changes the Middletown Redevelopment Agency is proposing. Mr. Kuehn went onto explain this in more detail; i.e., the 1990 proposed Neighborhood Revitalization Zone, which was mainly residential, has been eliminated in favor of a neighborhood mixed-use zone. The old B1 Zone designation has been changed to B1A except in the Main Street area south of Washington Street; and he noted that the only difference between these two is building height - B1 having a 12 story maximum and B1A, a 6 story maximum. Mr. Kuehn pointed out specific features of the plan which were new, such as, the multi-modal transportation center on Rapallo Avenue, general location of the Police Station near the new Courthouse, a public/private plaza and cultural center near City Hall, acquisition of the Arriwani and surrounding properties, and elimination of the utility corridor behind the Main Street buildings on the east side. Finally, Mr. Kuehn noted that the Acquisition and Disposition maps were considerably altered to reflect the aforementioned changes. He then pointed out that the plan must address the process whereby properties are acquired, and called on Assistant Director, L. Ozga to explain the Relocation Plan.

Ms. Ozga explained that there were two parts to the relocation plan: one to address non-residential concerns and the other for residential relocations. She pointed out that as soon as the project plan is approved, and prior to hiring appraisers, the Municipal Development Office staff will start notifying all non-residential concerns which need to be relocated of all the benefits available. A file on each will be opened and Ms. Ozga advised against moving before service of a 90 day notice. She estimated 22 non-residential concerns would be involved, and noted her office will work with the owners to find new similar, suitable locations.

As for residential relocations, Ms. Ozga noted the plan estimates the relocation of 101 households. She pointed out that residential relocation was a different process and that the City will have a tenant advocate working with City staff on behalf of each household. She gave a typical scenario; and assured the audience and Agency that the plan requires that people must be relocated to comparable safe, decent, sanitary housing, which would improve the quality of life for those displaced by the plan. Ms. Ozga also addressed the office's concern that special needs will be attended to carefully; that she will make herself available for questions during the week; and that people know that no one is being asked to move at this point.

Mr. Russell then opened the meeting to the public asking speakers to give their names and addresses for the record; to not repeat an already stated opinion except to say that they agree; that questions would not be answered during the hearing - only testimony (commentary) would be accepted; and that staff will be available after the meeting to answer questions.

Chairman Russell further explained that, after the close of Public Hearing, the Agency would vote on whether to recommend Council approval at their special meeting the next day. If so, the Council will then vote on whether to approve the plan and whether to put appropriation for partial funding for the first phases of it (\$2 million) on the ballot in November. Until approval by the voters in November, the plan cannot move ahead. He commented that he had heard that some people felt approval of the plan was "Hasty" but noted that 1964 to 2007, when it may be finished, is over forty years and not too hasty.

The following people gave their testimony regarding the North End/CBD Urban Renewal Plan (the transcripts are a part of these minutes):

Joan Hedrick, Reverend Michael D. Fox, Jane Fleming, Travis Hedrick, William Ryder, Larry McHugh, Bobbie Chapman, Joe Lombardo, James Murray, Marty Knight, Ken Humphrey, Bernard Mitchell, Alice Cummings, Krystin Bowers, Edward J. Mich(?) (139 Broad Street), Carolyn Shaw, Prince Starr, Russell St. John, Ron Reeve, Chester Tibbets, Stephan Allison, Sister Eleanore Farren, Lew Adams, Jerry Casella, Edith LaPaugh, Dortha Willetts, Jonathan Martin, Martin Wheeler, Tom Malark(?) No one else from the public wished to speak.

The following documents (attached) were also read into the record: a resolution from the Middletown Housing Authority approving the amended plan; a letter from DOH dated August 11, 1992 requesting replacement housing, and notice of Planning & Zoning Commission action of 8/12/92 granting approval of the plan under Connecticut General Statutes 8-24. Written testimony was also received.

T. Raczka moved to continue the public hearing until September 14th; H. Novicki seconded the motion. Discussion: Mr. Raczka felt two weeks was not long to wait; and S. Gionfriddo commented that the plan and its issues was not new, and that a delay of two weeks was crucial and would prevent it from getting on the November ballot. He felt it was important to have a large turnout of voters on this. Vote: T. Raczka, H. Novicki and G. Russo voted in favor; remaining nine members opposed; the motion failed. Upon a motion by S. Gionfriddo, seconded by S. Shapiro, it was voted (9-3) to close the public hearing at 9:10 p.m. All voted in favor except T. Raczka, H. Novicki and G. Russo.

#### THE AGENCY TOOK A SHORT RECESS

Chairman Russell reconvened the meeting of the Middletown Redevelopment Agency at 9:20 p.m.

#### Minutes

Upon a motion by S. Shapiro, seconded by S. Gionfriddo, the minutes of July 27, 1992 were accepted by all, with the exception of J. Coughlin who abstained. H. Novicki commented about the August 1991 minutes, indicating the Agency's wish to get these tended to.

Correspondence

Most of the correspondence had been referred to in the public hearing; i.e. Housing Authority Resolution, DOH letter requesting replacement units for those lost by the plan, and memo from Bill Warner regarding P&Z 8-24 review. E. Rak-Roberts asked that Mr. Warner put in writing the specific's about "prohibited uses" mentioned in the memo.

Resolution to Adopt the Revised North End/CBD Urban Renewal Plan

S. Gionfriddo read a resolution (attached) and moved its approval regarding the Agency's formal adoption of the plan. S. Shapiro seconded the motion. Discussion included: T. Raczka asked where the \$2 million figure came from; S. Gionfriddo replied the plan would be implemented on a piece by piece basis and this was for the first acquisitions... i.e. Arriwani and Soup Kitchen and related properties. T. Raczka thought that these details should be in the resolution. S. Gionfriddo pointed out the Agency is being asked to adopt the plan, and the funding is the responsibility of the Council; in fact, the resolution on the table includes all five acquisition areas. G. Russo commented he thought that keeping the public hearing open was right on target and felt the plan had not addressed a lot of issues to date. He felt it did not have enough details or parameters for relocation and the "uncertainty level" was too high. He said it was a good plan but was uncomfortable about the timing. E. Rak-Roberts asked staff when this plan was last in front of the Council - W. Kuehn replied April or May of 1991. Mrs. Roberts then asked whether the Agency was not, therefore, complying with the request of the Council at that time by considering approval of the plan now. W. Kuehn replied "correct". H. Novicki noted that the Council asked that consideration of the actions regarding the Arriwani and Soup Kitchen be included, and that the plan more or less followed the edicts of the Council. S. Shapiro urged the Agency to speak to the motion on the table indicating: 1) the plan was addressing issues that had been studied for decades and this version represented modifications done for various groups; 2) that it "will materially improve" conditions in the project area; and, 3) sufficient housing will be nearby and affordable. ... That is what the resolution says. G. Woods asked for clarification that this decision was the first in a three-step process to which Chairman Russell concurred. He noted that it is the start of getting something done... "if we don't get something on line, nothing will happen." S. Gionfriddo assured the Agency that discussion will continue and negotiations will occur; people will not just be thrown out of their residence or place of business. T. Raczka agreed the Agency should move forward but was uneasy and uncomfortable with the sufficiency of money, of new housing, and of Municipal Development staff. G. Russo noted he had some of the same concerns about alternative housing, but agreed with Edith LaPaugh that it could be better. He said the Agency had not looked into this enough. There being no further discussion, the motion passed 9-3; all voted in favor except T. Raczka; G. Russo and H. Novicki, who opposed.

Cost of Copies of the Plan

Upon a motion by S. Shapiro, seconded by S. Gionfriddo, it was voted unanimously to charge \$10 to residents and \$15 to non-residents for copies of the North End/CBD Urban Renewal Plan on condition that copies be furnished free of charge to the Library, Soup Kitchen, Community Health Center and CAGM to be made available to their clientele to read.

College/Court Street - County Lane

W. Kuehn reported that County Lane will be complete with the accomplishment of the following items: railings, electric switchover to underground lines on Saturday, seeding and backfilling in some areas, removal of pole, removal of Fleet's oil tank.

Upon a motion by S. Gionfriddo, seconded by S. Shapiro, it was voted to pay the invoice from Maguire in the amount of \$4,674. G. Russo asked what remained for them to do; W. Kuehn replied only inspections. All voted in favor except T. Hutton who abstained for reasons of location of his business.

Upon a motion by S. Gionfriddo, seconded by S. Shapiro, it was voted to pay the invoice from Building Supply Corp. \$33,323.15. Upon inquiry, W. Kuehn clarified they were working with funds from Farmers & Mechanics on this. All voted in favor except T. Hutton abstained for reasons of location of his business.

W. Kuehn explained that the project was currently out of cash but would be reimbursed by Farmers & Mechanics Bank upon transfer of the land. An action to request a loan from the General Fund was therefore on the agenda. Upon a motion by D. Campanelli and duly seconded, it was voted to ask the Common Council for a loan not to exceed \$50,000 to pay current bills and to be reimbursed by Farmers & Mechanics Bank.

Chairman Russell commented on the Annual Report and variety of endeavors in the Municipal Development Office; as well as the resignation of Agency member, M. Berlin who is staying on the West Coast for a while.

Upon a motion by S. Shapiro, seconded by D. Campanelli, meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

  
Cynthia G. Wilcox

CGW/lmk