

CITY OF NORWALK
MAYOR'S NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION MEETING
JANUARY 3, 2007

ATTENDANCE: David Shockley, Chairman; Hal Alvord, Department of Public Works Director; Maribeth Becker, CNNA; Helen Bryan, West Main Street Neighborhood Association; Jim Clark, Golden Hill Association; Tony Capuano, Norwalk Health Department; Glenn Iannaccone, Norwalk Fire Marshal; Moravia Langley, Meadow Street; Laurel Lindstrom, ENNA; Mayor Richard Moccia, City of Norwalk; Michael Moccia, Recreation and Parks Director; Don Nelson, Norwalk Tree Alliance; Diana Paladino, Spring Hill/Hospital Neighborhood Association; Mark Pierce, Wilton Avenue Neighborhood Association; Al Raymond, Spring Hill/Hospital Neighborhood Association; Lt. Paul Resnick, Norwalk Police Department; Aline Rochefort, Zoning Department; Dorothy Romanelli, Harbor Shores Neighborhood Association; John Romanelli, Harbor Shores Neighborhood Association; Robert Wagman, West Norwalk Neighborhood Association; Ernst deFlines, Rowayton Civic Association; Frank Strauch, Zoning Department.

STAFF: Connie Blair, Department of Public Works Customer Service

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Shockley called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

WELCOMING REMARKS, REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 6, 2006 MEETING.

- ** MR. IANNACCONO MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.
- ** MR. CLARK SECONDED.
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Shockley said that he was pleased that Attorney Maslin, who is the Assistant Corporate Counsel for the City was able to be present to address the Mayor's Neighborhood Preservation Meeting.

Mayor Moccia joined the meeting at 10:10 a.m.

CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTER

Ms. Blair stated that she had planned to have the neighborhood reports go out in the mail the week before. Presently, the neighborhood report is combined, but Ms. Blair hopes to have it broken out into the various neighborhood zones in the future. She also reviewed the Mayor's Press Release on snow removal. Ms. Blair announced that the Health Department has been following up on the Liberty Square issues. The Health Department has also issued violations in regards to the abandoned home on Winfield Street.

Mr. Alvord took this opportunity to encourage all of those present from the Neighborhood Associations to pass along to their members that it is important to have as many cars off the streets so that when the streets are plowed, the plows have full access.

Mr. Iannaccone also commented that it would be helpful if the local residents would note where the fire hydrants are and shovel them out after a snowfall.

Mr. Shockley said that the Park and Seawall issue are still being researched. The committee is working on the issue.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program

Mr. Shockley explained that there is a program to assist homeowners who want to rehabilitate their homes. The Redevelopment Agency is willing to help those who are interested to apply for these funds.

Neighborhood Associations

Mr. Iannaccone commented that the emergency responders have noticed that many of the houses do not have their numbers on them. He stated that there is a City ordinance about this. Mr. Clark asked Mr. Iannaccone if he had this in email format because then he could pass it along to his association. Mr. Iannaccone said that he would email it to Mr. Clark.

Mayor Moccia commented that he had some quality of life issues about those residents who park on their lawns and others who park on the sidewalks. Recently, someone parked on the sidewalk on Strawberry Hill Avenue, which forced the students to walk in the road. He stated that there would be a press release on this subject forthcoming.

Ms. Becker commented that there would be a CNNA meeting with Spinnaker Developers later today at 7:30 p.m. in Room A300.

The West Norwalk Neighborhood Association held their annual party and were pleased that over 100 people turned out for the event.

Ms. Langley reported that the Police had stepped up their patrols in the Meadow Street area. She asked if it was possible to get another school bus stop sign for the area. The drivers don't see the one that is presently there until they are already almost at the stop. Both Mr. Alvord and Ms. Blair noted this request.

MEADOW STREET PARK AND CLEANLINESS PROGRESS REPORT

The Mayor commented that he had spoken with LaJoie's about removing abandoned vehicles from the street. The Mayor said that the City would continue to work on improving the area around Meadow Street.

Mr. Clark said that he would like to publicly thank Mike Mushak for his quick action regarding a recent graffiti incident. This type of incident affects the quality of life. He concluded by saying that it was important not to underestimate the power of this type of quick action. Mr. Shockley agreed, saying that he supported this. He also said that he would inspect the area. Because there are many different types of paint involved, sometimes more elaborate removal methods are required. He also said that if the Neighborhood Associations were interested, he would help them acquire the necessary tools to remove the simpler types of graffiti.

THE LEGAL ASPECTS OF ZONING REGULATIONS

Attorney Maslin stated that he has lived in Norwalk since 1965 and has been practicing law since 1990. Prior to that, he worked as a State Policeman. Atty. Maslin explained that his practice focuses on zoning and land use. He is the Town Counsel for the Town of Darien and also began to work for Norwalk as the Assistant Corporation Counsel in March of 2006. Atty. Maslin said that one common misconception is that the residents should bring their appeals to him. He explained that he is there to support the Planning and Zoning boards and commissions because they are his clients. Residents with planning or zoning problems need to bring their appeals to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Atty. Maslin explained that the City issues well over 1,000 permits of various types during the year. He stated that there are only 10 people who work in the Zoning Department and that because of the volume of work, and therefore enforcement is workload management issue.

One of the biggest issues for the Neighborhood Associations are illegal multiple family units. Another issue is when contractor vehicles or materials are on the property. Atty. Maslin stated that the process starts when someone files a complaint. The complaint must be written but at the present time, it need not be signed. Once that happens, a letter is sent to the property owner requesting an inspection. If the letter is ignored, a second letter is sent. If that second letter is ignored, then the matter is sent to the Legal Department, who request an inspection. Once the inspection has taken place, a decision is reached about if there are violations and the types that exist at the site. Atty. Maslin stressed that the decisions would be in regards to Zoning, not Health or Fire. A resident could pass a zoning inspection but may have health violations or fire violations that are not recognized. Once a determination has been reached, the owner may choose one of three avenues of response. . The owner may choose to comply by correcting the violation or the owner may choose to file an appeal with the Zoning Board of Appeals within 15 days of the decision. Many property owners do not realize that they must file within the 15 day time period. If they miss the deadline, the Board will not consider their application. Finally, the owner can ignore the violations; in which case a cease and desist order may be issued.

Most cases actually are resolved in some manner before they get to the Law Department. However, when a property owner applies to the ZBA, the ZBA must render a decision. Following this, the property owner may appeal to the court system. This process can take up to a year or 18 months. The case may also go on to appellate court, which could add another 18 months on to the process.

Many people become upset after they file a complaint and nothing happens right away. This is because the City must contact the property owner, and then depending on the property owner's response, the problem can be resolved in months or may drag out for years. In one particular case, the appeal process has been in the court system for decades. In 1942, a two family variance was granted for a parcel on Bayview Street. By 1972, there were more than two units in the structure, most of which were illegal. Atty. Maslin reviewed the thirty year time line of events in regards to this case.

In conclusion, Atty. Maslin reviewed the term "non-conforming use" for the Neighborhood Association representatives.

ADJOURNMENT

** MAYOR MOCCIA MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services