

**REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
AUGUST 4, 2011, 7:30 A.M.  
LINCOLN CENTER HEARING ROOM**

Members Present:                   Tim Devanney, Chair                   Bob Schneider, Vice Chair  
  John Topping                           Sue O'Connor  
  Michael Darby                         Terry Bogli  
  Phil MacVane                         Gary Sweet  
  Aaron Ansaldi                         Aaron Wlochowski  
  Michael Farina

Also Present:                       Mark Pellegrini, Director of Neighborhood Services  
  and Economic Development  
  Gary Anderson, Senior Planner

Adoption of Minutes of June 16, 2011 and July 14, 2011

Ms. Bogli moved to adopt the minutes as written. Mr. Wlochowski seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

Status Report: Nichols Foreclosure

Mr. Anderson said he spoke with Attorney Sullivan about the status of the Nichols property foreclosures. Attorney Sullivan said the judge originally scheduled the case for June 25, however the attorney for the owner could not be present, nor can he be present at the rescheduled date of August 1. Mr. Anderson said the date will likely now be either August 8, 15 or 22.

Attorney Sullivan said the foreclosure will likely now be by sale and not a strict foreclosure. Mr. Darby explained that in Connecticut, a judge can order a strict foreclosure if the amount of taxes owed is more than the property is worth. If the judge decides equity still exists in the properties a foreclosure by sale is usually ordered. Mr. Darby said the Town can bid the amount of taxes owed, but the Agency will need to develop a bidding strategy in case another party bids more than that.

Mr. Pellegrini said all bidders will have access to the environmental assessment, which is now part of the public record. Bidders should have an understanding of how much it would cost to demolish the buildings and to remediate the site.

Mr. Topping asked if the Town could use the nuisance or blight ordinance to fine the current owners until the foreclosure of the property. Mr. Pellegrini said typically, the Town contacts a property owner in violation of the nuisance ordinance and requests the owner fix the violation. If the owner does not respond to the Town's requests, the Town would take the owner to court. That is unlikely in this scenario, since the foreclosure will be happening soon. Mr. Topping suggested action could be taken through state law as well.

Mr. Schneider asked who would attend the auction on behalf of the Town if the foreclosure is by sale. Mr. Pellegrini said the Town Attorney is typically the Town's representative.

Mr. Pellegrini distributed a summary of the appraisal value and delinquent taxes for the Nichols properties. He suggested the Agency should make a recommendation to the Board whether the Town should bid more than the taxes owed on the properties if another party bids on one or more of the properties. He said the Agency should also have a plan for what it recommends the Town do if we acquire any or all of the properties as far as disposition by re-sale, demolition of the buildings, or demolition and site remediation.

Mr. Farina asked from what source the money to purchase the property would come from, and to what account it would be reimbursed by the state. He said he would like to ensure the money be returned to the Broad Street bond account. Mr. Farina requested staff provide a definitive answer to that question before the Agency's next meeting. Mr. Pellegrini said he would research the question and get back to the Agency with an answer.

Mr. Ansaldi asked if there would be a specific order in which the properties were auctioned. Mr. Darby said he was unsure, but it is possible the Town Attorney could request an order. Mr. Schneider asked if the auction would take place on the property. Mr. Pellegrini said that it would. The Agency agreed to hold an executive session during its next meeting to discuss its strategy for the foreclosure sale.

#### Status Report: Parkade Demolition

Mr. Anderson said he spoke with Gerald Dupont, the Town General Services Administrator, who reported the hazardous materials removal portion of the Parkade demolition project has been awarded to the lowest bidder. The winning bid was \$525,000, nearly \$400,000 lower than the Town consultant's estimate. The selected contractor has experience completing similar work in the greater Hartford area. Mr. Pellegrini shared the bid sheet, showing there were 13 bids for the project, ranging from the low winning bid to the high bid of just over \$1.2 million. Mr. Ansaldi asked why the removal of the Parkade sign was a separate bid request. Mr. Pellegrini said he did not know and that decision was made by the Town Engineering division.

Mr. Pellegrini said reviewers at the EPA have been in contact with Town's consultant for the PCB removal plan, so EPA staff has seen the plan is actively reviewing it.

#### Status Report: Street Reconstruction Project

Mr. Anderson said staff is currently meeting with Broad Street property owners to secure easements related to the Broad Street reconstruction project. He said the project should be out to bid in the next couple of weeks. The Town expects most of the street reconstruction work to take place during the 2012 construction season. However, small-scale utility and preparation work could begin this fall and final landscaping or other final work could be going on in 2013.

#### Status Report: Budget

Mr. Pellegrini distributed a spreadsheet outlining the Broad Street bond funds spent to date. Including all spent, obligated, or estimated expenditures, \$1.62 million remains in the bond account. Spent funds include \$1.85 million for the Parkade acquisition, and \$175,056.09 for predevelopment expenses. Two million dollars has been allocated for the Broad Street streetscape improvements and \$2.3 million for the Parkade demolition.

Mr. Anderson said the request for proposals (RFP) for schematic design work for the greenway and park extension is out to bid and proposals are due on August 19. The selection process will take place in September. Mr. Pellegrini said the first task of the selection advisory committee is to read all of the proposals and select a short list of five or six firms to be interviewed. After interviewing those firms, the committee would make a recommendation to the Agency. Mr. Farina, Ms. Bogli and Mr. Devanney volunteered to serve on the selection advisory committee.

### Parkade Murals

Mr. Topping said he has not heard anything positive from the community with regard to the Parkade mural project. He said Broad Street businesses are unhappy with what they see as graffiti and suggested the Town paint over all of the graffiti. Mr. Darby said the project did not turn out as the Agency hoped, but the problem could be easily fixed. Ms. Bogli said she and Mr. Devanney visited the project when it was being created and said it did not turn out the way she thought it would.

Mr. Sweet said it was his intention to resign at the end of the meeting and it was irresponsible of the Agency not to define parameters around the qualifications of the invited artists and the scope of the artwork would be done. He said he thought the Agency's decision on the mural project was reflective of other questionable decisions as well, and that he and the rest of the Agency will be held accountable for them.

Mr. Sweet said in a conversation with the General Manager, he was told he did not know how government worked and to let staff lead the redevelopment process. He said he thought the Agency needed to make its own decisions and should not be led by staff. He said when he, Mr. Devanney, Mr. Schneider and Mr. Tomko came to the Agency with a proposal regarding the possible sale of the Parkade property, Mr. Pellegrini said the Agency should follow the process.

He said he felt the same way about the \$1.5 million for the park extension the Board of Directors is considering including in this fall's bond package. He said the Agency was not consulted about this matter. He said as an Agency member he will be held accountable for his participation in something he first read about in the newspaper.

Mr. Farnia and Mr. McVane asked Mr. Sweet to reconsider. Mr. Farina said Mr. Sweet brings a valuable perspective to the Agency.

Mr. Darby said he hoped Mr. Sweet would stay and that the mural issue is easily fixed. He said the Agency is an entrepreneurial board and includes members with strong personalities. He views disagreements among Agency members as healthy tension.

Mr. Wlochowski said there have been times Agency members have not been briefed on particular issues and Agency members first heard about them in the newspaper. He said he thinks the Agency will lose respectability and needs to have information and talking points for when residents ask them about pending actions.

Mr. Sweet said Mr. Devanney has said in the past he relies on Mark Pellegrini when making decisions. Mr. Devanney said his expertise is as a grocer, not in planning or real estate development and that he does rely on Town staff to offer expertise in matters in which he does not have knowledge or experience. He said one of the Agency's strengths is that each member brings certain strengths and areas of expertise to the group.

Mr. Sweet said he would reconsider resigning with the condition that everyone on the Agency gets involved in discussions and acts independently. He said members need to be prepared to make decisions and to stick by them. Ms. Bogli said she felt that all members do participate and state opinions. Ms. O'Connor said the Agency is an arm of the government and must abide by the rules of the public sector, even though many members are entrepreneurs.

Mr. Ansaldi said the Agency should act on resolving the matter of the deed restrictions because the Town cannot build anything on the property without the consent of adjacent property owners. Mr. Darby said he does not know if he agrees that the Town must obtain consent, but did agree the matter should be resolved.

### Other Business

Mr. Pellegrini said every two years the Board of Directors develops a public works bond referendum question in consultation with Town staff. He said in discussions about the bond for this November, some Board members expressed an interest in including some funding for a project in the Broad Street Redevelopment Plan. The Board proposed \$1.5 million for repairing the Edgerton Street culvert and extending Center Springs Park to Broad Street. The culvert work is estimated to cost approximately \$700,000, so approximately \$800,000 would remain for the park extension. Mr. Pellegrini said some Board members wanted to be assured that the Edgerton Street culvert would be repaired even if the park extension could not be accomplished with the remaining funds. He said Public Works Director Mark Carlino presented to the Board the engineering concepts for the park extension which were developed as part of the Agency's joint meeting with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board in 2010. The Board thought it would be wise to leverage the culvert work and do both projects at the same time.

Mr. Darby asked about the status of the Town's purchase of the rail line. Mr. Pellegrini said the Board of Directors approved the purchase but the Town has not yet closed on the property.

Mr. Sweet said when Mr. Carlino brought the engineering plans before the Agency in 2010 he or Mr. Pellegrini mentioned other possible funding sources for the culvert project. Mr. Schneider asked where the Town would get the \$700,000 for repairing the culvert if it were not tied to the park extension. Mr. Pellegrini said it would likely be a project in the public works bond issue. Mr. Pellegrini said the Board wants to ensure the culvert will be repaired and requested that language in the question ensure bond money can be used for that purpose. He said at this point, the Board could leave the proposed question as it is, leave money for the culvert but remove that for the park extension, or split the question into two separate questions, one for the culvert and one for the park extension. He said they Agency could decide to say it is not ready for the park extension yet and request that a bond referendum for that purpose not occur until 2012 or 2013.

Mr. Farina said there should have been someone from Agency in the room when the Board was deciding on the amount and the wording of the question. He said the Town should not go through with any plans related to the culvert that preempt plans for the park. Mr. Sweet said he was not certain \$1.5 million would be enough to complete the culvert work and park extension.

Mr. Farina said town staff should never have presented the number to the papers without getting input from the Agency. Mr. Wlochowski said the Agency members were not consulted about the bond question and were now being forced to defend it. Mr. Darby said the Agency was told that because the Board used \$2 million in Broad Street redevelopment funds for the streetscape project, those funds would be returned to the Broad Street account.

Mr. Topping suggested the Agency should recommend that the Board of Directors not include the park extension in the bond question because the final design and the cost to complete the park extension is not known at this time.

Mr. Pellegrini said the bond question was tabled and the Board will have to make a final decision at its September 6 meeting.

Mr. Schneider said another cost that hasn't been discussed is for land acquisition. He said he did not think it would be prudent to spend money on something the Town does not own. He said he feels the Agency is being used as a front for town staff who is essentially saying they can handle things from here.

Mr. Topping moved to go into executive session. Mr. Farina seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

The Agency came out of executive session at 9:04 a.m. No decisions were made.

Ms. Bogli said the Agency has discussed a wide range of issues and that it needs to prioritize its activities. She suggested the Agency make a list of everything that needs to be accomplished and prioritize them at its next meeting.

Mr. Wlochowski moved to recommend the Parkade murals be painted over. Mr. Topping seconded the motion and the motion carried 8-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 a.m. The next meeting of the Manchester Redevelopment Agency will take place on Thursday, August 18, 2011 at 7:30 a.m. in the Lincoln Center Hearing room.