

STAMFORD PLANNING BOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES #3561
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2009
7TH FLOOR CONFERENCE AREA
888 WASHINGTON BLVD., STAMFORD, CT

Stamford Planning Board Members present were: Duane Hill, Theresa Dell, Rose Marie Grosso and Jay Tepper. Present for staff were Robin Stein, Todd Dumais and Josh Lecar.

REGULAR MEETING

The chairman, Mr. Duane Hill, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Capital Budget Presentations FY 20010/11-2017

a) Office of Public Safety, Health & Welfare

Moved in order on agenda.

f) Short-Term Capital—Vehicles

Alex Tergis, Public Service Bureau Chief

Thanked the Board for their support last year. He explained that he was looking to replace vehicles that are 10+ years old. Mr. Tergis then distributed a supplemental request sheet highlighting each of the requested vehicles. He explained that Public Services would like to purchase 6 additional snow trucks to cover North Stamford; a bulk waste truck that has a grappling arm and is a multi-purpose vehicle.

Mr. Hill stated request is \$8.6 million and that last year approximately \$4 million was approved and then asked if this request was consistent with last year. Mr. Stein answered that last year the Department requested \$9.3 million and the Planning Board put in \$5.1 million, which was cut further after going through the additional Board approvals.

Mr. Tepper asked if there was an analysis on replacing contractors with City vehicles with snow equipment. Mr. Tergis said that he was unaware of an existing analysis.

Mr. Hill said it would be helpful to attach the dollar amounts to the vehicle requests.

a) Office of Public Safety, Health & Welfare

William Callion, Director of Public Safety, Health & Welfare

b) Police Department

Brent B. Larrabee, Police Chief

The Chief explained the department's needs and explained that they have done a space analysis and determine that they are not going to find another location. He said they are before the board because of a \$2.8 million expense to do full architectural drawings and time-line project in order to plan for a new Police Station.

Mrs. Dell asked if this should be a capital project onto itself?

Mr. Stein replied yes and that it will be a challenge for the new administration to find a way to pay for this. Mr. Stein asked if Mr. Callion have any thoughts on this subject?

Mr. Callion agreed that having the project listed as a stand alone capital project could be helpful.

Mrs. Dell asked if any funding should be allocated to it or as a separate project. She also asked if the bird situation has been remediated. Chief Larabee answered yes.

Chief Larabee next discussed the Police Academy. He explained that the Police Department lost its space and no longer has an academy. The City must now send new recruits to other locations and has to pay travel and overtime costs. He added that they can't use space associated with Dommus and need to look for space to make it happen. The academy is working all of the time as people are always going through recertification.

Mrs. Dell asked what would the requested \$170K help to do? Chief Larabee said it's designed to be the funding for Academy space fit-up if they found a new space.

Mr. Tepper asked if Wright Tech could be a short term answer? Mr. Callion said they haven't heard anything and that the state owns the building but the police would love to have it.

Police Headquarters Infrastructure Improvements

Chief Larabee stated that the front lobby space needs improvement and doesn't work. He added the Department is looking to reconfigure this area.

Storage Structure for Oversized Vehicles

Chief Larabee described how the department has several different types of vehicles and they need a place to store them, especially an oversized vehicle location.

Driveway Repaving

Lt. Sean Cooney detailed the funding previously allocated. He described the driveway as strewn with potholes and that risk management in the government center has encouraged them to make repairs and that they are asking for an additional \$20K to supplement the \$100K from last year.

Police Garage Renovations

The Chief and Lt. Cooney described how space in the garage has been reallocated and now must be reconfigured to allow three units more working area. He also added that 2 or 3 doors need to be replaced and the heating system is old and inefficient and should be replaced.

Swing Space

Lt. Cooney said the funding was previously approved but no new requests for the project.

Marine Safety

Bill Callion described that there is an increased interest in the shoreline which requires additional patrols in this area. Accordingly, he explained that the Police Department needs a facility to properly house watercraft.

f) Police Short-term Capital Vehicles

Lt. Cooney stated they are requesting 13 new patrol vehicles. These vehicles have only a 3-year life span.

The Chief stated this is the fourth year in a row they have asked for 13 vehicles. He described how the police supervisor vehicle is a 4wd, equipped with more specialized equipment and would like 1 more police motorcycle which gets much use. The police motorcycles operate about 11 months of the year. They have five unmarked vehicles which are used for plainclothes work and not equipped with lights and sirens.

Mr. Tepper asked if these are additional or replacements?

Lt. Cooney said the black & whites are replacements, the Tahoe and motorcycle are additional and the unmarked would be replacements.

c) Stamford Fire Department

Long Ridge Fire Department

Chief Bob Bennett – explained that most of his projects are on-going; that Station 2's floor is completed, turn out gear washer almost in and that they are in the midst of rebuilding the chimney. He explained that he has a new generator request in the out years, Station 1 roof repairs have been completed. Need to replace fill station and parking lot needs to be redone.

Stamford Fire Department

Peter Brown, Assistant Fire Chief explained that he also has many ongoing projects but that the big dollar item is if we want to proceed with an East Side fire station. He also touched on the following items, the Fire Training Center upgrades which are constant; the hydrant replacement project – replacing between 20 and 30 a year out of a total of 1500 in the city and the Fire Safety House Trailer – a public outreach/education which adds to fire prevention program.

d) Health Department

Dr. Johnny Lee, Director

Requested a new health record immunization system record. He explained that the existing system is difficult to use and creates a problem at the beginning of each school year.

Mr. Tepper asked if funding was for hardware or software? Dr. Lee answered that it was a combination of both.

Mr. Callion stated they were requesting three hybrid vehicles to replace the existing outdated vehicles.

d) Volunteer Fire Companies

Turn of River Fire Company

Matthew Maounis, Assistant chief explained that they are replacing the roof at Building 1 which has been a drawn out process because of trouble with the contractor. He added that they have another \$85K for this year to go along with code compliance work. Mr. Maounis stated that they need to replace the roof at Station 2 which is a flat roof over 17 years old. He also added that the windows and doors need replacement.

Belltown Fire Company

John Didelot, Chief explained that they Department is currently working on upgrading heating and cooling and windows and is getting prices to replace furnaces and A/C units. He added that the bathroom renovations need to be replaced and that the overall requests were mostly ongoing projects.

Mrs. Dell suggested redoing the way the paperwork is listed. They should have a dollar amount listed.

Regarding vehicles, Mr. Didelot explained that they are asking for a tower ladder, to replace a 1972 truck and that it is time for Belltown station to be considered for an apparatus. Adding that the City has never bought one of these for Belltown Station.

Mr. Tepper asked if there was residual value to the old unit? Mr. Didelot answered around \$25K - \$50K.

Springdale Fire House & Glenbrook Request.

Glenbrook interior renovations; a lot to do with housing firefighters there 24/7. Also generator request.

Springdale is requesting life saving apparatus.

Mrs. Dell said to check to make sure there are a minimum request each year. Should look into out years to ensure something gets done.

g) Smith House

Barbara Fleisher, Executive Director

Mrs. Fleisher explained that the requests were renovations to two buildings to upgrade hallway and room flooring. She stated that the toilets need replacing; some of the nursing stations should be replaced and that the support infrastructure is challenged. The Smith House looks rather institutional and people react to this. She further stated that they need to be competitive with other homes. Mrs. Fleisher commented on the following additional projects which are being requested; air condition unit on E-Wing is 24 years old and it is a state mandate to keep temperatures at certain levels; the parking lot in front of building needs repair – needs to be resurfaced; the windows and doors are leaky – they are 22 years old and could go to an out year and that the roof replacement – have had a small leak for the last year and could need replacement.

Mr. Hill asked what the occupancy rate was? Mrs. Fleisher responded 120 out of 128 beds are filled.

Mrs. Dell said they need to fill in amounts in out years.

Mr. Hill placed the Board on a 5 minute break.

MP-406 HP Gateway Land I, LLC and HP Gateway Land II, LLC

Mr. Hill called the meeting back to order at 8:15pm.

Mr. Stein recapped the presentation from the Planning Board meeting of October 13, 2009 when the Mayor came and spoke in support of this application and announced to the Board that there was a tenant for the site for 250,000 s.f. of office space. He explained that the Mayor emphasized that given the current economic climate; this would be a real opportunity. Mr. Stein further recapped that Mayor's comments by stating that he said the developer would make a substantial commitment to affordable housing and would construct and committee no more than 500 spaces required for a commuter garage.

Mr. Stein then went on to describe the orientation of the site, explaining that there is a strip of Category 16 which the Planning Board placed into effect.

Mr. Tepper said the Mayor indicated something about new jobs.

Mrs. Dell said the Board should not take this into consideration and that the Board should base its decision as a Land Use issue only.

Mr. Stein read a condensed version of the Staff Report and explained that the applicant argued that Category 4 wasn't appropriate and should allow for more intense development. He added that Mr. Redniss explained that Category 16 line had to be modified to accommodate parking.

Mr. Stein described public comments made during the Public Hearing.

Mr. Hill opened discussion among the Board members and asked for their opinions.

Mrs. Dell said she feels the City has paid for a traffic study and thinks the Board should wait for the study to be completed to make sure about traffic and that another 4 to 6 weeks of waiting may benefit all of us.

Mr. Tepper said the Board has approved everything else in the South End and it is unfair to select this project out.

Mrs. Dell said she thinks the Board should wait until the City's Traffic Study is submitted and any possibility of a tenant should not sway the Board's decision.

Mrs. Grosso said the Board should wait for details to come out.

Mr. Tepper said these are difficult steps to have to go through and from what he has seen of the application, he is in favor of it right now.

Mr. Hill asked if there were other issues in addition to Traffic.

Mrs. Dell said moving to the other side of Henry Street is a major concern because it sets a precedent and before you know it, it could spread further south.

Mrs. Grosso said everything is sketchy.

Mr. Tepper said these are lines on a map that someone decided to put in. In the aggregate, if the City picks up more housing units, the city ends up benefiting.

Mr. Hill said at the end of the day, the City will get as much or more affordable housing. He added that traffic is a legitimate issue and on the housing issue, they are putting in a substantial amount of affordable housing.

Mrs. Dell said not as persuasive. With parking, it's up in the air if it is 500 spaces or 1000 spaces needed.

Mr. Hill said on the traffic issues, by changing from a Category 4 to 9 it won't impact traffic and the change doesn't foreclose our option to deal with traffic. He said that it is very important concern to development of downtown and south-end. He is confident about changing this from a Category 4 to a Category 9 – and doesn't see a lot of downside.

Mr. Tepper said a considerable amount of planning is looking at what it might lead to. Mr. Tepper agreed with Mr. Hill.

Mrs. Dell restated that she would like to review the study and vote immediately after reviewing it. She added that she feels that waiting until our paid study comes out will not hurt anything.

Mr. Stein explained that the scope of study will focus on the Transportation Center in the short term and over the next 15 years as part of this they will look at parking and vehicular access and that the consultant has not been asked to do a detailed traffic analysis. He stated that the initial recommendation was to look at the parking issue sooner rather than later. Mr. Stein added that the consultant's review is that parking replacement should be dispersed and not concentrated which would help disperse people. The State is looking at 3 sites in addition to rebuilding at the existing Train Station. Initial consultant's suggestion is that tenants requirement will be some number well below 1,000.

Mr. Hill said whatever goes there will require some level of traffic mitigation. We still have tools to manage this traffic issue.

Mrs. Dell asked why the need for Category 4?

Mr. Stein described a rough computation of build-out analysis of C-G & RM-F versus TCDD development for both the north of Henry Street site and total site.

Josh Lecar, City of Stamford Transportation Planner, commented on traffic issues, specifically the commuter parking spaces.

Mr. Hill said if they get more than 500 spaces in the future it is highly unlikely.

Mr. Hill said the Santec study is likely to say something other than X amount of spaces on the site is recommended.

Mrs. Dell said for the size of the building, could combine this.

Mr. Stein stated there could be other zones TCDD in Category 6.

Mr. Hill asked where this leaves us, answering protected on the downside and moves towards planning.

Mr. Tepper felt the Board could control aspects of traffic and wanted to move to approve application.

Mrs. Dell said she understands where the other Board members were coming from but was leery of moving forward at this time.

Mr. Hill said he felt the Board should allow the project to move forward.

Mr. Tepper said he didn't feel additional information would give additional insight into this Master plan change.

Mr. Hill said having the potential developer helps the City to negotiate and added that the applicant should heed comments of the Board.

Mr. Stein said next stage is on zoning and there are still a lot of details to be addresses and that it is important to know who the tenant is going forward.

Mr. Tepper moved to recommend approval of Master Plan Application 406. Mrs. Dell seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 4-0. (Hill, Dell, Grosso and Tepper)

Old Business

Mr. Stein spoke about next weeks meeting. He explained that Operations is scheduled for capital budget review and would begin at the normal time of 7:30 pm. Mr. Hill noted

New Business

Mr. Stein stated that on November 10th, the meeting will begin at 6:00pm.

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Hill adjourned the meeting at 9:35 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Duane Hill, Chairman

Note: These proceedings were recorded on tape and are available for review in the Land Use Bureau located on the 7th floor of Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard, during regular business hours.