



John L. Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR JEFF WRIGHT

October 12, 2010

Minutes

REGULAR MEETING

Mayor Wright called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Helen Nelson Room of the Newington Town Hall.

I PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II ROLL CALL

Councilors Present:

Councilor Banach
Councilor Casasanta
Councilor Cohen
Councilor Klett
Councilor Lenares
Councilor McBride
Councilor Nagel
Councilor Nasinnyk
Mayor Wright

Staff Present

John Salomone, Town Manager
Mary Richard, Council Clerk
Ed Meehan, Town Planner

III PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - NONE

IV. CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

RESOLVED:

That the Newington Town Council will hold a Public Hearing on Tuesday, October 26, 2010, at 6:55 p.m. regarding the acceptance of Waverly Drive as a Town Road.

MOTION BY: Councilor Casasanta
SECONDED BY: Councilor Nasinnyk
VOTE: 9 – 0

V. CONSIDERATION OF NEW BUSINESS

A. Presentation: Victory Gardens Newington (V.A. Housing)

Mayor Wright introduced Mr. Kurt Mischke, Site Manager of VA CT Healthcare Systems. Mayor Wright continued that there were several people present to discuss this program, including Nancy Hanley, President of Hadley Group, Paul Bailey, Director of Bailey Architects, Maria DeMarco, Property Manager of DeMarco Management, Laurie Harkness, Director of VA CT Errera Center and Preston Maynard, Director of VA CT

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Homeless Programs. The Veterans Hospital had come to the Town Manager and himself a few years ago. He said that this project is focused on getting housing for veterans that come back across the State of CT and provide them good facilities and services to help them get going on their own.

Mr. Mischke said that the project is Victory Gardens which is permanent homeless housing, working with the Women's Institute, one of the developers for this program. Giving a bit of history on this, the Department of Veterans Affairs did a request for a proposal in 2009 and the request was to develop 11 acres and to use the vacant building, which is building 5 which is on the property on the Newington Campus of the VA CT. The Women's Institute was accepted as the developer of this program. Some of the project goals is to re-use under utilized VA land to create supportive housing for individuals and families. The underutilized property here is more than the 11 acres, but this is the amount that we're putting forward for the proposal for Victory Gardens.

Mr. Mischke supplied a slide presentation (attached) showing the plans and development of the project. He introduced Ms. Betsey Crum, the Director/Developer of the Women's Institute. Ms. Crum offered a history on the Women's Institute Housing and Economic Development. She gave a brief background, Boston based and she said she opened the CT office almost six years ago, and have undertaken just about 65 different projects in MA and CT and have a lot of experience with affordable housing, supportive housing, and have grown a particular interest in the housing for Veterans. She went on to say that their contractor is Enterprise Builders, Newington based who have done many projects throughout the State and the Property Manager DeMarco Management, and Maria DeMarco is present tonight to answer questions. Ms. Crum went on to explain the Project Vision, which would include 74 units for individuals and families with priority for Veterans and their families, Comprehensive support services, 2 types of services which include clinical and healthcare for Veterans and case management and family services. Also available will be on site property Manager DeMarco Management for maintenance, rent collection and ease endorsement and security. She said that there would be a mix of one, two and three bedroom apartments with a total of 41 bedroom apartments, 22 two bedroom apartments and 12 three bedroom apartments for a total of 74. She went on to explain the various services as shown in the folder she submitted to the Council.

Mr. Paul Bailey spoke of the design for the site with some postcards from 1945 that show historic character of the site, the hospital which is a handsome Georgian building you can see as you drive up Veterans Drive. On our site he said that there are also some Georgian style buildings. He went on to explain many sites and how things have changed, except for the trees having grown up. He said that the goals in laying out the Veterans Housing were to maintain as much of this open feeling as possible and to save as many trees as possible. Ms. Crum said that most of the financing will come from a bank but the focus is really on lower income people who can't support a huge mortgage so we'll be going to the State and the Federal Government to underwrite this. Most of 2011 she said they anticipate will be in assembling financing. She said they hope to start construction around the beginning of 2012 and if all goes well we'll have occupancy in 2014. In summary she said that they really want to be a partner in this Community, and working with a great team hopes that this will work well in every aspect.

Mayor Wright said that this is an informational presentation and ultimately this will go to the Town Planning and Zoning Commission and complimented the VA and Betsey and everyone involved in this and remember that this is Federal land that this project is going on so they don't necessarily have to be as open and gracious and reaching out as much as they are to the Newington Community to make this fit in with our Community. He said that one of the great things done was that this will be for Veterans and also we don't want to overburden our school system and drive our expenses out of whack with what the property taxes this project will pay. Also there has been some discussion with the VA staff and our Police Department as far as security issues.

Councilor Nasinnyk said that she appreciated the presentation, she questioned being the "Women's Institute" would there be focus on women veterans. Ms. Crum explained that the "Women's Institute" was the name taken on years ago and at that time there was a lot of shelter and transitional housing programs. That focus, she continued is no longer part of their mission but have no gender focus in this work at all. **Councilor Klett** asked if Veterans Drive would remain open and Ms. Crum explained that Veterans Drive will be unchanged in any way, where coming in would be Veterans Circle and will become a one way road around the perimeter then onto Veterans Drive. Ms. Crum went on to describe many other projects in which they have been successfully involved. **Councilor Cohen** noted the units for the homeless, she presumed that they cannot afford this expense and asked how would this be funded. Ms. Crum said that the VA has put a fair amount of resources into vouchers, where people pay what they can afford and the government will pay the difference. The VA has put vouchers into each of these 37 of these units, which will allow the project to be well maintained, with good security, with on-site management staff. **Councilor Cohen** asked what happens if the status of these, now

being subsidized, changes. Ms. Crum explained that if these people get jobs and don't need the voucher anymore, as long as they need the voucher it will be there for them, but over time if the voucher is not needed it won't be utilized. **Councilor Cohen** asked about transportation and Ms. Crum said that there is currently a bus that runs to the site and will continue to be available.

Mayor Wright said that this Federal land is leased and therefore property taxes will be paid to the Town of Newington. He said that in a nut shell we have a great project to help a lot of Veterans and their families and it will not cost us extra money in property taxes. **Councilor Klett** asked about other projects that have been done in the Northeast and said that being married to a Veteran she is certainly sympathetic to the need but it has to be said that the project is being put right next to the high school and anyone who has done any research will question that the homeless are usually homeless for a reason and that reason can include addictive or substance abuse disorders and asked if there is a requirement or any way to enforce any individual to get any services they might need. Ms. Crum said that there is a Bridgeport project, 48 units, directly across from an elementary school and there will be someone in that community building and in building 5 will have office space on site for services. There will be people trained in mental health and substance additions. There will also be a service provider watching people walk around, seeing how they behave, and if anything looks like it needs attention it will be brought to the attention of the management right away. Ms. DeMarco said that just to clear that what Betsey said the units will be subsidized by the voucher, those vouchers come with mandatory VA services. So 37 of those units for the homeless we will be providing on site mandated services. Secondly, it should be made clear that people with sexual histories, pedophiles, aggravated crimes are not allowed. Do some of our people have criminal histories, yes, but as long as they are responsible for their behavior in the most recent past they will be given a chance, but we are very strict. Mr. Maynard explained that no one would be coming right off the street, we have transitional houses, and always have people go through the transitional programs to make sure that they're staying with their appointments, staying sober and doing those constructive activities including vocational programs that help them get work. Also everyone has to be screened by our in-house clinical team before they are recommended for an apartment. **Councilor Klett** said she felt good about the responses given to the questions from the Councilors.

Mayor Wright said that there have been some questions from some of the neighbors and he said that there will be more in-depth meetings with the Old Farms Drive area, so folks can have more detail and those questions can be answered and also the Sunrise area and get answers to their questions. He said that the history from what has been explained to us is if someone is misbehaving there, because of the terms of the lease they can be evicted rather quickly.

Councilor McBride asked if people who have a history of domestic violence or a sexual predator does that mean that people with that type of background will be disqualified. Ms. Crum said that with background checks, including credit checks, and sexual offenders are not allowed along with violent crime offenders so those backgrounds would be automatically excluded. It was explained that in the regular apartment buildings, you have people acting crazy, what can be done? Here there are so many resources with someone to work with. Also remember that building 74 units, and will the initial marketing there will be about 1000 applicants where everyone is on their best behavior. People who come out of homelessness and get into their own home, the last thing they want is to be homeless again.

Councilor Casasanta thanked the number of people here today with the presentation and the Veterans here and she thinks that being next to the High School could be a teachable moment for students in learning the value and respect those Veterans who have served us and it's a very positive thing. **Councilor Nagel** thanked the folks for being here and answering the hard questions that needed to be asked and he requested that they continue giving those honest answers repeatedly in every venue coming up because the fear, for lack of a better word, needs to be subsidized. He asked about the 37 units, are they mixed. Ms. Crum said that 24 units will be in building 5, the other 25% will be scattered throughout, most likely focused on the one bedroom, and also two and three bedroom apartments open. **Councilor Nagel** asked about the roadway, might there be a problem in terms of it being one way around. Ms. Crum said that there is an area where there is another way to get out.

Councilor Cohen asked about parking and Ms. Crum said that there are 154 parking spaces. Each of the buildings have several parking spaces, and everyone will have more than enough parking spaces. It was also established that many of these Veterans are already coming to this medical center for treatment and treated very well and will continue to be.

Mayor Wright thanked everyone who came tonight, many Veterans and all those involved. He said that there will be some community interaction meetings and all Veterans or neighbors are welcome and he complimented

everyone on their responses. Also he reminded the public that during the Town Council meetings there is no interaction of questions, but there will be a Public Hearing session later in the evening.

B. 8-24 Report: Sidewalk Easements – Market Square

Mr. Ed Meehan, Town Planner said that these are two sidewalk easements going through the process of review and acceptance, both located adjacent to Market Square properties, one being the sidewalk that comes in from Market Square adjacent to the drive-way serving Steve's and the second one is the area behind where the laundromat is located.

VI. RESIGNATIONS/APPOINTMENTS - NONE

VII MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

A. Regular Meeting, September 28, 2010

B.

Councilor Nasinnyk read into the minutes several corrections that Mr. Clarke Castelle requested be entered. In the Public Participation should read that **“He quoted the Mayor as saying that he, the Mayor”**.

Line 5 should read **Mr. Castelle asked how the Mayor could make such a statement when....**

Regarding Councilor Casasanta's request...should read ...**Mr. Castelle asked the Mayor..**that is what you characterize.....?....

The line that reads “He said that the Mayor knows....should read **“He then quoted the Mayor as stating.....** and ‘as not’ should read **it’s not**

The line reading....after a Board meeting in which our ‘Business is’ ...should read with **“Business Manager”**.

The line reading ‘standard’ to the system’... should read **scanned into the system”**.

The line reading....the students’ names ‘or’.. should read **“on”** Purchase Orders.....

Line reading...Mr. Castelle said that the Mayor said **that he was** under the understanding...

Line reading...Mayor Wright saw a slide on January 13th showing a total ‘budget in” should read **“budgeted”** staff salary increase.

Public Participation XI – line reading....individuals and their salaries ‘and’ should read **“that”** to him....

Line reading....He continued that you..... should read **“said that you”**.

Line reading....attach on certain individuals and their salaries ‘and’...should read salaries **“that”**.

Line reading....He continued that you **“said that you”** were under the understanding.

Line reading...He said to Mayor Wright that ‘seeing’....should read **he saw”**

Line reading....the first major slide showed a total ‘of budget and’should read **“budgeted”** staff salary increase....before additions and reductions ‘was’ should read **“of”** 5.08%.

Line reading ..The only thing ‘possibly incurred’ should read **“you could possibly infer”** from that figure...

Line reading....the Mayor had no qualms about humiliating ‘and’....should read **“if not”** reducing to tears.

Councilor Cohen noted that the top of page 4,...’the budget read \$57,000 should **read \$57,000,000**

Mayor Wright asked for a motion to accept the minutes with corrections. Councilor Nasinnyk moved to accept.

Councilor Casasanta seconded. Vote 8 – 0 Councilor Banach abstained.

VIII WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE TOWN MANAGER, OTHER TOWN AGENCIES AND OFFICIALS, OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES AND OFFICIALS AND THE PUBLIC

Councilor Nagel reported that the AT&T connection is moving along with the NCTV, and has sub-contracted to another group, and according to the time line of the sub-contractor AT&T should be possibly be broadcasting these meetings at the end of this month. Also there's talk about “Newington's Got Talent” and tentatively the plan is to do that in early April possibly at Newington High School, but that is subject to change. They're also putting together a booster club and NCTV will discuss more of that in their broadcasts.

IX COUNCIL LIAISON/COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilor McBride reminded everyone that the Downtown Revitalization Committee meeting will be on Monday, October 18 at 5:30 PM and are still in the very early stages of gathering information, and no decision have been made on any aspect of that street as of yet.

X PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – IN GENERAL

Mady Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive – she said that none of the public realized tonight that there would be no dialect for the public, and perhaps in another situation like this it might be wise to state that there would be no dialogue and that it would take place during Public Participation. Also it might be considered to hold a public meeting where the public could be heard. Also, at the voting polls there will be boxes for the food bank, and she asked that each voter bring one item for the food bank.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive - thanked Councilor Klett for asking the questions regarding the High School, she said that she is more comfortable hearing the screening process that will take place.

XI REMARKS BY COUNCILORS

Councilor Cohen said that on Monday, October 25th at Paradise Pizza there will be a very interesting Kiwanis program by the Skipper of the replica of the Amistad.

XII ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Wright entertained a motion to adjourn.
Councilor Nasinnyk moved to adjourn at 8:30 PM
Councilor Casasanta seconded
Vote - 9 – 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Richard
Council Clerk