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2017 MAY 17 P 12: 15

*Cerrie Wald*  
TOWN CLERK

## REGULAR MEETING

Mill Sites Redevelopment Advisory Committee (MSRAC)  
Friday, May 12, 2017 – 9:00AM  
Merrill Seney Community Room  
Thompson Town Hall

### MINUTES

PRESENT: J. Blanchette, Chair  
N. O'Leary  
J. Hall  
B. Davis  
S. Lewis  
R. Faucher

ALSO PRESENT: M. A. Chinatti, Director of Planning & Development  
S. Donohoe, Property Owner's Committee Liaison

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Blanchette called the meeting to order at 9:00AM.

#### 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. April 7, 2017 Special Meeting

**(M/S/C O'Leary/Faucher)** to approve the minutes as presented. Carried unanimously.

#### 3. CORRESPONDENCE

M. A. Chinatti distributed the following, to be discussed under the appropriate agenda item:

- 5-10-17 letter from M. A. Chinatti to T. Sullivan, Deputy Director, CT DECD re 630 Riverside Drive Final Narrative
- 5-11-17 email from J. Blanchette to W. Bugden, M. A. Chinatti re Belding site survey
- 5-11-17 email from T. Levine, CT SHPO to numerous recipients re 929 Riverside Drive

#### 4. CITIZEN COMMENTS - NONE

## 5. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

### a. 630 Riverside Drive – Project Update

M. A. Chinatti discussed the UCONN Senior Engineering Students presentation and stated it was very thorough and the Town would be receiving a digital copy in the near future, which would be sent to members when received.

Chairman Blanchette reviewed the items called out in her 5-11-17 email, previously provided to members, that were missing from the final survey and she stressed the importance of having those items put back on the survey to provide potential developers with important information.

**(M/S/C Lewis/Davis)** to have M. A. Chinatti email W. Bugden and have the three items called out in Chairman Blanchette's email put back on the survey and then provide the Town/this Committee with a corrected Final Survey. Carried unanimously.

The Committee then discussed ways to improve site appearance, beautification, mowing, etc.

Chairman Blanchette stated she would like to see this Committee support any proposed redevelopment options.

B. Davis asked what the Committee's role would be re marketing – whether the Committee would now sit back, or be pro-active.

S. Donohoe stated that the fence around the site must remain; however, the barbed wire can be removed. He asked if the Town talked to the State to see if we could get two (2) arrows on the road and that he and N. O'Leary have walked the site re trash, and will walk it again. He stated he has not had the opportunity to review the Final Narrative/documentation as he just received it at this meeting. He stated he will talk with the property owner about it, as well as the final survey when corrected, and hopefully at the next meeting will have an update on where to go from here.

The Committee discussed ways to publicize the site/final environmental determinations, and Chairman Blanchette noted she prepared a lengthy article to be included in the last Selectman's Update, which had to get edited/cut down substantially due to space issues. She stated that article could, with this Committee's input, be reworked into a news article or a press release. She also stated she would forward it to W. Bugden for input as well.

The Committee again discussed beautification efforts, and it was determined that the overgrowth behind the fence should stay, as it shields the remaining rubble, but that outside the fence should be kept mowed.

b. 929 Riverside Dr. - Project Status

M. A. Chinatti gave an update and filled the Committee in on the meeting coordinated by T. Levine, CT SHPO, that was held the previous Tuesday. She also advised the Commission that the CT Trust for Historic Preservation (CTHP) submitted a CEPA intervention request to SHPO, and that a public hearing will be held by the Historic Preservation Council on June 7 at 9:30AM in Hartford. She explained that SHPO arranged the site walk because they needed to perform their due diligence prior to that public hearing. She stated she'd spoken with the First Selectman before this meeting and it was his opinion that another public informational meeting should be held based on all the information received since the last meeting held in January, and a tentative meeting date is May 31. She stated it would be a special meeting of this Committee.

Re the public informational meeting, R. Faucher asked that, obviously this is an attempt to prevent demolition and we can't really stop it at this point, can we? He asked S. Donohoe what's happening on that end of it.

S. Donohoe stated the meeting was ridiculous and that when he and the property owner met with T. Levine/SHPO T. Levine stated he was going to arrange a site meeting with a couple of his colleagues in attendance also, "top to bottom, soup to nuts" for a 3<sup>rd</sup> party evaluation to give their recommendation, noting they don't have any power but they present in a neutral, "pros and cons" of the building. He stated he had no notification of the date/time, and 22 people showed up. He stated he was at a different project when he was notified that everyone was at the site, and he talked with the property owner asking what he should do. He (Donohoe) stated he would've cancelled it; however, the property owner said that it could go forward. He (Donohoe) stated he showed up and there's 22 people, the State, developers, the Town, etc., and everyone was all going about 100' apart. He stated he didn't do the attic or boiler room, though developers asked, but that SHPO, who he thought would've wanted to see those things, said no. He stated that those in attendance got the short version of the mill because he couldn't control those in attendance. He stated he lost one group about 20 minutes into it. He stated he got no introductions, and he didn't know anyone but M. A. Chinatti and J. Blanchette and T. Levine. He stated the Town wants to save it, wants to redevelop it, whatever, but, I know everyone says it's great, great building, great towers, the developers didn't see the building. SHPO brush-stroked the building which was not the intent, the intent was they were supposed to bring a couple of architects and engineers and

Todd and go top-to-bottom and see "the good, the bad and the ugly." He stated he was beyond frustrated at how the meeting went. He stated there was good feedback, good building, great shape, but he stated he's heard that before. There was no-one running the meeting. He stated he held back his comments because he didn't know who was in charge. He stated T. Levin should have been, but he (Levine) was off taking pictures, etc. He (Donohoe) stated he is not included in the distribution list on the email M. A. Chinatti distributed at this meeting.

The Committee discussed why S. Donohoe was left off of the email list re the site meeting, and the organizational structure of that meeting. The Committee then discussed S. Donohoe not being included in the meeting scheduling communications, etc., and some members said they'd have cancelled, and the way it was handled was rude.

Chairman Blanchette stated SHPO told her that, based on its meeting with S. Donohoe, there was no problem with them touring the building, but she did not understand how SHPO didn't coordinate the date/time with S. Donohoe. She stated she was grateful to S. Donohoe for opening up the building because developers had come from across the country. She stated she agrees the meeting was poorly coordinated but from the perspective of showing it to professional mill developers it was successful.

S. Donohoe stated, professional and presentation-wise, attendees had to go in and out; he stated if he'd been notified all doors would've been opened and everything unlocked so everyone could've gone through from the inside. He stated he was told by the owner to "give the good, the bad and the ugly, whatever they want, coordinate with them." He stated, had he advance notice, he would've had everything ready to the best of his ability.

R. Faucher stated that what he was trying to get at as far as a project update was that obviously the wheels are in motion for demolition of some sort, and obviously the owner is not waiting for "this whole thing to happen" but will be going ahead with his plans.

S. Donohoe stated the answer is two-fold, that SHPO will put together a neutral report to the Preservation Council. He stated that they then could ask the Attorney General to step in and stop any demolition for the good, or the benefit, of the State or whatever.

M. A. Chinatti then explained the CEPA intervention request, and its process.

B. Davis asked S. Donohoe if, barring action by the State, the mill would be coming down, to which S. Donohoe responded that, as that action has

already been initiated, based on the outcome of that action the matter would go to court. He stated that if it does end up in court in an attempt to stop demolition, the property owner is examining other avenues.

Chairman Blanchette stated that, per T. Levine re the CEPA process, it must be shown that the mill has feasible and prudent alternatives to demolition, and then if it goes before the judge there are different things that can be issued to prohibit the demolition. She continued, stating a temporary injunction could be put in place, and that, for any historic building anyone wants to take down, the State could take the role of intervener. She stated Todd Levine should definitely be at the public informational meeting so he could explain that process, which is being undertaken now. She also noted for the record that, though it was before S. Donohoe arrived, M. A. Chinatti did introduce people at the site meeting, but that there was no leadership of the meeting. She noted that, at the site meeting, M. Lewis, CT DEEP, did make a 10-15 minute presentation to everyone of what brownfield relief programs are available to developers and the CTHP talked about tax credits. She noted it was stated that, should multiple projects be proposed for the various buildings, each could potentially qualify for programs. She stated there was some good information provided to potential developers, and S. Donohoe interjected that the owner wasn't there. Chairman Blanchette noted that A. Scott has been invited to numerous meetings and chooses not to attend, though S. Donohoe attends. S. Donohoe stated he would at least have represented the property owner.

M. A. Chinatti explained that, when T. Levine told her about the site visit, he told her to invite any interested developers to attend as well. She stated she then sent out an email to interested developers the Town had been in communication with since the potential demolition was made known last fall, and she stated the date/time was selected because she had an inquiry from one of the interested developers, saying that was the only date they could attend, and T. Levine agreed to have that date (5/9)/time (1:00PM) as the set meeting time. She continued, stating she'd presumed, since it was SHPO's meeting, SHPO was responsible for notifications, which is why she did not include S. Donohoe in the email strings.

Discussion ensued re deconstruction v redevelopment of the mill. M. A. Chinatti briefed the Committee on a recent meeting she and the First Selectman had with M. Harmon, Principal, Southend Reclaimed, and his attorney. She stated J. Gumpert, Camden Properties, provided M. Harmon with a proposal/proposals for redevelopment and, when asked about the status of those proposals, he stated they were not satisfactory to him because they would have taken too much time and there was no guarantee of commitment.

S. Donohoe stated that, when he and the property owner met with SHPO, SHPO was going from that meeting to a ribbon cutting for a mill redevelopment that took 12 years to complete/get everything together. He stated that A. Scott would've much rather have had the WINN development done in 2010, but that did not come to fruition. Southend Reclaimed's intent is "in the hand today and they know what the timing/scheduling requirements are" but that redevelopment is a question. He noted that anyone wishing to redevelop would need to sign contracts with the owner.

M. A. Chinatti asked S. Donohoe, as she stated T. Levine following the site meeting indicated he would arrange a meeting with the property owner, S. Donohoe stated that A. Scott has absolutely not been contacted because S. Donohoe would've gotten a call.

R. Faucher stated his opinion that the State's motives are not known but that it seems it is going to use the environmental "to kill the project" (demo) so the historians can justify their positions, which is "a little unsettling" to him.

S. Donohoe stated that the developers who attended the site meeting, if they got the whole tour, and then looked at potential costs for environmental, financing programs available/not available, they could walk away. They could also find another project elsewhere that could be done quicker. They're not just looking at Thompson but, I would assume, New England, and whichever comes first they're going to grab it.

M.A. Chinatti stated she would post/forward agendas for the next public informational meeting when the date is firmed up. She stated that CTHP would have approximately 20 minutes to present their case, and then, she presumed, the property owner would have 20 minutes to present their case, and then the floor would be opened and interested parties would be given five (5) minutes to speak.

R. Faucher stated that if the property were a readily-developable property it would have been developed by now, Thompson is demographically challenged, there's a lot of issues, there's not a lot of consumer dollars to be spent here as opposed to the other side of the state, and that the situation is what it is. He stated that S. Donohoe has been "living it" for 25 years and to have the State step in just on the basis of preserving it and use environmental as an excuse and not allow the owner to get out from under, and that the whole thing leaves a bad taste in his mouth. He then asked S. Donohoe the age/life expectancy of the building, stating his thought that it's 150 years old and estimated another 25-50-years life, which S. Donohoe agreed with. He continued, stating if a developer went

in with a \$20M investment they would be looking at a limited life span of the building, which is something working against it to begin with.

Chairman Blanchette stated that, if not exposed to the elements, those buildings last a lot longer than that; members agreed, with B. Davis noting that the problem would be where the brick meets the wood but that, based on the hardwoods used on that mill, he did not see a real weakness at the mill. S. Donohoe stated there are issues everywhere in that building, citing water, the former hydro power, etc. and noted that "it's a blank check" and he doesn't see how one can expect the State of Connecticut to "foot the bill." He noted potentially millions in environmental and talked about the wells Sanitary Dash was required to install/test, noting they come back clean all the time but the State of Connecticut won't let them get rid of them. He then noted some of the repairs that needed to be done, including roof replacement, to which Chairman Blanchette stated WINN Development thought they could address issues. S. Donohoe stated WINN was only going to take on 100K sq. ft. and asked "what about the rest of it."

#### 6. ADJOURNMENT

**(M/S/C Davis/Lewis)** to adjourn at 10:00AM. Carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,  
M. A. Chinatti, Director of Planning & Development