

BLOOMFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

LAND USE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

There was a regular meeting of the above referenced subcommittee held on Monday, October 19, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in Conference Room #5, Bloomfield Town Hall, 800 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield, CT.

Committee members present were: Deputy Mayor Gamble, Councilors Rivers, Hypolite, Neuwirth, DeLorenzo and Mayor Schulman

Also present were:, Philip K. Schenck, Jr., Town Manager, Sharron Howe, Assistant to the Town Manager, Jose Giner, Director of Planning & Economic Development, David Melesko, Director of Leisure Services and India Rodgers, Clerk of Council

Guests: Goman & York – Economic Development Consultants, Jonathan Shubert, CREC, Don Walsh, CREC, Bob Saunders, CREC, Thom Brodnitski, CREC

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Council Agenda Item FY 15/16 – 12: Discussion and Possible Action regarding 460 Tunxis Avenue (Farmington River Park – CREC Proposal)

Mr. Philip K. Schenck, Jr., Town Manager gave a brief overview of this project. The Farmington River Park is located in northern Bloomfield, north side abuts the Farmington River and the southeast side abuts property that has been purchased by CREC. There have been discussions between town administration and CREC regarding repurposing vacant town owned residence in the Farmington River Park, in connection with their plan to build a science-themed magnet school on the adjacent property at 29 Griffin Road North.

Mr. David Melesko stated that there have been discussions with the Bloomfield Board of Education as well regarding the project and views of plans for the vacant structure. The town is strongly in favor of this project. It is approximately 78 acres that the town obtained in 1995. Currently the trails are underutilized and not up to code at this point.

The town infrastructure on site does need some major renovations. The town's viewpoint on this project is a great opportunity for extensive community involvement from the education perspective as well as to increase the waterfront activities and walking pier.

Mr. Don Walsh (site acquisition), Mr. Bob Saunders (school construction division) and Mr. Jonathan Shubert (Director of Stem Program) Thom Brodnitzki (Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator) presented an updated report for the new build proposal of Two Rivers High School and plans for the new "River Center" located at 29 Griffin Road North.

The school will have approximately 880 students, in addition building a new Farmington River Environmental Center, which would be available to all to Bloomfield students. The CREC team reviewed its Mission statement, Curriculum and programming goals.

The State of Connecticut – Department of Education has been very receptive in having an allotment of slots for a host community.

Mr. Donald Harris, Superintendent and Mr. James Thompson, Superintendent for Bloomfield Public Schools have attended several workgroup sessions and have been favorable in the project. This project in its beginning stages is too preliminary for a formal response by the Board of Education.

Councilor Hypolite stated that this project could be a positive outlook on Bloomfield from an educational standpoint, however he expressed concerns about the access to the community, availability of slots to Bloomfield students and overall benefits.

Deputy Mayor Gamble commented about the use of this new facility for the public events and the 20 year lease agreement. The public will have access to fishing, walking trails, meeting rooms, kitchen facilities and outdoor pavilion. This facility would cost approximately \$1,500,000 to renovate, however if the town does not approve this project, CREC will renovate this structure on their own. CREC also will maintain the responsibility of the maintenance of the facility.

Councilor Neuwirth commented on the financing of \$1,500,000 in working with the Bloomfield delegation as a joint effort with town and Board of Education to obtain State of Connecticut support to fund this project.

Mr. Schenck, Jr., gave a brief background regarding 460 Tunxis Avenue interest in the Farmington River Park. Approximately two years ago, the town appropriated funds to tear down the building. The town did demolition several outbuildings with significant issues on the property. CREC decided to purchase prime industrial land of approximately 40 acres from Griffin Land to build their new school. The only town revenue would be from building permit fees. The town decided to consider plans to partner with CREC to rehab the adjacent lot and structure as a part of their science-themed based high school. Hence, the creation and development of the Farmington River Environmental Center proposal.

Councilor Rivers expressed that he would like to be assured that Bloomfield students would be able to utilize the facility for the summer months.

It was moved by Councilor Rivers, seconded by Councilor Neuwirth and voted unanimously to recommend to the full Town Council for approval of the CREC proposal regarding 460 Tunxis Avenue.

Review and Discussion: Tennessee Gas Pipeline

Mr. Schenck, Jr., stated that the town did file a letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which was signed by the Mayor. There were a number of recommendations and questions related to concerns of the Council. The town has not received no formal relay from FERC as of yet.

The town was informed that the Metropolitan District Commission has a meeting scheduled for October 20, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. to review position with various towns their position and detailed items of concerns. The MDC has not taken an official position, however they are willing to negotiate.

In addition, the town does not want to take a firm position of this project either way until concerns have been addressed and resolved. Some of the issues involved the following:

- Nature of the capacity of the pipeline
- Substantive organizations contracted for additional available gas

- Specific Bloomfield concerns, including nine road crossings
- Pipeline crosses town property – Wintonbury Golf Course
- The town has had a significant interest in increasing the retail distribution system of gas services through CNG for residents.
- Any contractual negotiations between CNG and Kinder Morgan/Tennessee Gas Pipeline?
- Capacity issues with CNG in expanding and the economic need across town

The town was successful in getting gas services installed on Crestview Drive, however not successful on Rockwell Avenue.

Councilor Rivers inquired about how does this project it directly affect Bloomfield, benefits to the town versus pass through.

Mr. Schenck, Jr., stated that there will be additional gas suppliers available for purchase by residents. It was noted on how CNG would charge fees for the expansion of gas service lines. The municipalities have the right to extend utilities, authorize upfront costs for construction and place liens on an individual property owners if regulations are not approved by the Public Utility Regulatory Authority (PURA).

Members of the public commented on the Kinder Morgan/Tennessee Pipeline accident record, water safety, overall safety gas pipeline and inquiries about route locations.

Councilor Hypolite commented on environmental concerns to possibly leverage the town's minimal control to expand the capacity to provide gas services across town.

Deputy Mayor Gamble mentioned the lack of detailed information regarding the route location of the gas pipeline within the MDC property and golf course.

It was noted that the primary location of the new pipeline is parallel to the existing pipeline, which was installed in 1952. It was not a completely different area for installation.

Councilor Rivers stated that there is no consensus from the Council due to new discovered facts with many unknowns to make a factual decision for approval.

It was moved by Councilor Neuwirth, seconded by Councilor Rivers and voted unanimously to request an extension of six months for fact finding before the town reject or accept this proposal.

Discussion regarding Economic Development efforts: Niagara Bottling Abatement, Annual Report from Goman and York, Status Report on other projects

- **Niagara Bottling** – Mr. Giner stated that a recommendation is needed from this committee in conjunction with the Finance Subcommittee to offer an abatement package to Niagara. The town would receive approximately \$476,000 in building fees for the first year with 100% full abatement.

Niagara is working on a letter of interest with Mr. Sponzo regarding the purchase of property on Woodland Avenue. They are also scheduled to meet with all local regulatory bodies including Inland & Wetlands, Town Plan and Zoning Commissions as well as utility companies, Eversource, CNG and the MDC.

It was moved by Councilor Neuwirth, seconded by Councilor Rivers and voted unanimously to refer this item to the Finance Subcommittee to discuss a tax abatement package.

- **Goman & York – Annual Report**

Goman & York briefly summarized the Annual Report for the Town of Bloomfield.

Councilor Neuwirth inquired about the utilizing marketing materials. Councilor Neuwirth suggested that the Chamber of Commerce should receive copies. He also inquired about local feedback and follow up with ongoing efforts during the Business Visitation program.

Councilor Hypolite commented on the new Bloomfield apartments, renovation of Filley Park and the sale of the Wintonbury Mall. He also inquired about the changes and view of the center of town and the branding concept and how involved in communicating with various entities for the town center.

The three major identifiers to attract new businesses would be location, availability of property near the commercial corridor and the climate of the town.

Councilor Hypolite also inquired about acreage availability that would be able for real estate development.

- **Status Report on other projects**

The town has reached \$800,000 projection through building permits for new construction projects.

Deputy Mayor Gamble expressed concern about the safety of employees at Home Goods and Pepperidge Farm wait for public transportation. There is no concrete pad or shelter for them to wait. The key is developing relationships with plant managers with various companies.

Mr. Giner stated the department hired a Full Time Assistant that began September 1, 2015. There is a request for another Full time person due to the amount of new construction projects. This position will be discussed during the budget process.

Adjournment

It was moved by Councilor Rivers, seconded by Councilor Neuwirth and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m.