

Minutes
Redevelopment Agency
Wednesday, August 1, 2007
5:00 pm - Town Hall
Town Manager's Conference Room

1. **Call to Order** - Chairman Lee Kuckro called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.
2. **Roll Call/Attendance** - Members in attendance: Lee Kuckro - Chair, Paul Thompson and Michael Zaleski. Also in attendance: Town Council Liaison, Martin Walsh; Town Manager, Bonnie Therrien; and Town Planner/Economic Development Manager, Peter Gillespie.

Members absent: Daniel Camilliere and Joseph Soja.

3. **Public Comments** - No one from the public was present.
4. **Approval of Minutes - [July 25, 2007](#)** - Mr. Kuckro asked if there were corrections needed for the draft minutes. Mr. Walsh noted 2 changes needed in the second paragraph of Section 7, Public Information Strategies: correction of Mr. Walsh's name, and deleting the last sentence of the paragraph to clarify the strategies discussion. Mr. Zaleski motioned to approve the minutes, Mr. Thompson seconded the motion and the vote showed all members in favor.
5. **Referendum Status** - Mr. Gillespie distributed copies of a draft press release about the referendum. The draft had previously been reviewed by Mr. Kuckro and Ms. Therrien. The ordinance will come before the Town Council at its August 6, 2007 meeting, then have the town's public information consultant, Keiler Associates, will send the press release to typical media outlets.

Mr. Kuckro asked for advice on what the Agency should prepare for the presentation at the August 6th public hearing on the referendum. The consensus was that the Agency should make a presentation, delivered by the Agency Chair, and have all of the Agency members present, if available, for questions if needed. The presentation would be brief, but fully informative, and include important slides and "talking points" from the April 10th Powerpoint presentation to the Town Council, but not those showing the specific sites being reviewed.

Mr. Walsh recommended that the Agency be prepared to answer the question of how the \$10 million bond amount was chosen. Mr. Kuckro said the summary answer should include that it is based on the Agency's review of potential redevelopment sites and their fair market value. Mr. Walsh added that more than one site may become available at the same time.

Ms. Therrien said that the Town Council has been provided a debt analysis for the proposal that is based on the assumption of spending over a 3 year period. Ms. Therrien said she may ask the Town's advisors to be present for questions on the debt analysis: Chris Martin, Financial Advisor, Webster Bank, and Doug Gillette, Bond Counsel. Mr. Zaleski said that the redevelopment referendum should be compared to the open space referendum in that the Town does not begin incurring debt immediately after the referendum. That is, there is no debt until money is spent on worthy project(s) that have been approved through the public process.

Mr. Thompson suggested that the presentation stress that the process after the referendum is very transparent and includes plenty of time and opportunity for public information and citizen participation. Mr. Thompson also said it would be important to make clear that the money did not have to be used all at once for one project. The money would be used in the smallest amounts possible, to spur as many projects as possible, over long periods of time. He suggested that examples of common project costs be provided, such as curb cuts, lighting and other infrastructure improvements.

Mr. Kuckro asked Ms. Therrien to ensure that audio-visual equipment is working properly at the public

hearing given that it will be located at the Pitkin Community Center, and not the usual Town Council Chambers. Ms. Therrien said she would suggest to the Town Council that the August 6th Agenda be changed so that any discussion of the referendum can occur immediately after the Agency's presentation. That way, the Town's advisors can be present to answer questions, but leave as early as possible to save on consulting time billed to the Town.

6. **Public Information Strategies** - Mr. Gillespie said that he has begun to assemble a list of groups to consider contacting, as a follow-up to the Agency's discussion at its July 25, 2007 meeting. Mr. Kuckro said that he is very willing to make presentations to such groups, but that Agency members are also welcome to do so. He suggested that Agency members start with groups to which they already belong, for example, Mr. Camilliere would be a natural choice to contact UNICO.

Mr. Walsh asked what is the difference between Wilbur Cross Parkway and the Berlin Turnpike. Mr. Kuckro said that, traveling north on the Berlin Turnpike, the Wilbur Cross begins where the road splits off to the right at Nott Street. The Berlin Turnpike continues straight at that split in the road.

Mr. Gillespie distributed copies of the latest public information summary referred to in Agency discussions as an "elevator statement". That is, information made brief and understandable enough to be heard on a short elevator ride. Mr. Walsh suggested that terming real estate as a "renewable resource" could be confusing, since people are used to hearing that phrase in the context of energy issues. Mr. Kuckro said the statement should convey that the town has limited commercial space and needs to maximize its usage. Mr. Thompson said that an extension of that thought is that reuse of commercial property avoids the development of farmland, floodplain, open space, etc. Ms. Therrien recommended including tax base statistics to show the town's high dependency on residential taxes revenue. That is, Wethersfield gets only 12% of its revenue from commercial property taxes. By comparison, Rocky Hill gets 30% of its revenue from commercial property taxes, and a standard mix of residential and commercial property is 65% and 35%, respectively.

Mr. Thompson said that the current tightening of real estate credit may work to the Town's advantage if it has money available to offset redevelopment costs in other ways. Mr. Kuckro said that the cost of labor and materials may also come down if the pace of construction continues to slow.

7. **Next Meeting Date** - Tuesday, August 14, 2007 at 5:00 pm. (one day earlier than the regularly scheduled meeting).
8. **Correspondence** - none.
9. **Call to Adjourn** - Mr. Thompson motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:46 p.m., Mr. Zaleski seconded the motion, and the vote showed all members in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kevin T. Sullivan
Agency Recording Secretary