

Minutes
Redevelopment Agency
Wednesday, November 7, 2007
5:00 pm - Town Hall
Basement Conference Room #1

1. **Call to Order** - Chairman Lee Kuckro called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm.
2. **Roll Call/Attendance** - Members in attendance: Lee Kuckro - Chair, Daniel Camilliere - Vice Chair, Joseph Soja, Paul Thompson and Michael Zaleski. Also in attendance: Mayor Andy Adil; Town Council Liaison, Martin Walsh; Town Council Member, Paul Montinieri; Town Manager, Bonnie Therrien and Town Planner/Economic Development Manager, Peter Gillespie.

Members absent: none.

3. **Public Comments** - Several members of the public attended. The following are the comments made by those choosing to do so:

Tony Homicki, 201 Cumberland Avenue - Mr. Homicki congratulated the Agency on its efforts for the redevelopment referendum. He has been distressed over the last two years since he learned that Northeast Utilities was vacating the building on Wolcott Hill Road near his house. He thinks the debate over the referendum brought attention to what he estimates is 400,000 square feet of space on 20 - 30 under-utilized sites in Town. He said that the effect of the upcoming property revaluation did not get enough attention leading up to the referendum. He believes that residential property values have risen more than commercial property. Consequently, the Town's tax base will become even more heavily dependent on residential property taxes in the future.

George A. Ruhe, 926 Cloverdale Circle - Mr. Ruhe said that he takes his civic rights very seriously, so he was glad to see that the public participated in the discussion leading up to the referendum, and went out to vote on it.

Barbara Ruhe, 79 Main Street - Ms. Ruhe said that she is active in the community, and has a business in the community, and thinks that the community is interested in redevelopment. She thought it was a positive thing to see people take interest in the referendum and believes there will be more involvement in the future. She said that the Town could raise more interest by touting things like its central location in the state and its easy access to highways.

Ken Sokolowski, 79 Main Street - Mr. Sokolowski said that Mayor Adil has asked "What does the public want?", so WIN-PAC will offer to meet with the Town Council. When a meeting is set-up, they will let the Agency know.

4. **Approval of Minutes** - [regular meeting October 17, 2007](#) and [special meeting October 30, 2007](#) - Mr. Kuckro asked if there were corrections needed for the draft minutes.

For the October 17th minutes, no corrections were requested. Mr. Soja motioned to approve the minutes, Mr. Zaleski seconded the motion and the vote showed all members in favor.

For the October 30th minutes, a number of corrections and clarifications were requested to fill-in gaps in the draft, clarify what was said, etc. Mr. Camilliere motioned to approve the minutes as corrected, Mr. Zaleski seconded, and the vote show all members in favor.

5. **Bond Referendum** - Mr. Kuckro asked the members for their thoughts following the defeat of the referendum the day before. Mr. Thompson said that he believes that more people would have voted in favor had they

better understood issues like the Town's unusually high dependence on residential property taxes, and that the Town has less developable land than other towns like Rocky Hill and Newington. Mr. Soja said that he thinks people didn't understand the explanatory text, and suggested that it be sent out sooner in the process and that there be more informational meetings in advance. Mr. Zaleski suggested that the Agency identify 2 or 3 specific sites for discussion to give the public a more concrete understanding of what was intended. He feels that redevelopment is a complex issue and difficult for most people to fully understand since they don't have the time to follow the issue closely enough.

Mr. Kuckro said that he regretted not somehow better explaining the issues to the community. Defeat of the referendum will make it harder to get developers to invest in Wethersfield. He also said that the Agency underestimated the degree to which misleading information like eminent domain would be used to stir opposition to the referendum. Mr. Camilliere said he is proud that the Agency tried to do something good for the Town. He suggested that a referendum like this may go better if it is held separately from a general election, so the issues would stand on their own and not be politicized.

6. **Next Steps** - Mr. Kuckro asked Mr. Gillespie to discuss with Town's experts how to improve the Agency's process so it is transparent to the public, not confrontational to landowners, and preserves the Town's best interest during real estate negotiations. Mr. Soja suggested that the Agency seek direction from the Town Attorney.

Mayor Adil said that he would ask Town Manager Therrien to increase her efforts to arrange meetings with the owners of the larger, under-utilized properties in Town. Among the issues to discuss would be under what circumstances would landowners be willing to have their property be the subject of a referendum.

Ms. Therrien suggested that the Town do more to find out what were the reasons that citizens voted against the referendum. That is, do people just not want more development in Town, was the referendum question too vague, etc. She will look into resources for facilitating public discussion meetings and report back at the next Agency meeting. Mr. Soja asked if a taxpayer survey would be a useful approach. Ms. Therrien said that surveys are expensive and often don't get much response or a representative answer.

7. **Executive Session To Discuss Real Estate Matters** - Mr. Camilliere motioned at 6:00 p.m. to go into executive session with the Town Council members present to discuss real estate matters. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion and the vote showed all members in favor. During the executive session, the Agency members discussed real estate matters, and no votes were taken. Mr. Camilliere motioned to come out of the executive session at 6:22 p.m. and return to the regular agenda, Mr. Soja seconded the motion and the vote showed all members in favor.
8. **Additional Information Requests and Topics for Future Meetings** - Mayor Adil said that the Town Council still fully supports the Agency, and remains committed to redevelopment, so he would like to see an education campaign begin soon. He also said that new opportunities for redevelopment should be sought and pursued, such as smart growth initiatives, green energy districts, etc.
9. **Next Meeting Date** - November 21, 2007 at 5:00 pm. (regularly scheduled meeting).
10. **Correspondence** - none.
11. **Call to Adjourn** - Mr. Soja motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:25 p.m., Mr. Zaleski seconded the motion, and the vote showed all members in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kevin T. Sullivan
Agency Recording Secretary