

**DOWNTOWN RIVER-HIGH STREET DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING  
JULY 8, 2016**

**I. Call to Order**

The Downtown River-High Street Development Commission held its Regular Meeting on Friday, July 8, 2016 at the Parsons Government Center, 70 West River Street, Conference Room B, Milford, CT. Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m.

Committee Members Present

Peter Smith, Chairman  
Joseph M. Agro, Jr.  
Bryan Anderson  
Richard F. Jagoe, Jr.  
Amanda L. Root  
Raymond Vitali

Also Present

Julie Nash, Director Community Development  
Toni Weeks, Law Department Paralegal  
David Sulkis, City Planner

Absent

John Knuff, Vice Chairman

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Joseph Agro and Richard Jagoe made a seconded a motion to approve the minutes of February 12, 2016, March 11, 2016, May 6, 2016 and May 13, 2016 meetings.

Motion carried unanimously.

**III. Chairman's Report/Introductory Comments**

Chairman Smith explained the processes taken by the committee in selecting a consultant firm for the TOD Planning Grant. He explained that today's meeting was to have an open dialogue with the neighbors in the hopes of keeping the project as collaborative as possible.

**IV. Public Comment**

NONE

**V. Darina Place Neiborhood Discussion**

Chairman Smith opened the floor to discussion with the neighbors. He reminded everyone to state their name and address for the record.

Meg Green, 38 Darina Place. Ms. Green asked if there was an outline for the scope of today's discussion. Julie Nash responded the City has received a grant for a market analysis and conceptual plan.

Sandy Mossman, 51 Darina Place. Ms. Mossman asked if the plan will be at High Street. Julie Nash responded the market analysis and conceptual plan will include all four properties.

Deana Jacobs 14 Darina Place. Ms. Jacobs asked the committee to define the four properties. Joseph Agro responded that the described the four properties that make up the downtown parking areas.

Julie Nash explained that this project is like looking at blank slate. It has not yet been determined what will be built on the properties. The market analysis will be first and will help in the decision as to the next steps to be taken. Joseph Agro explained that there was no predisposition as to what the final project would look like.

Dan Nytko, 5-7 Darina Place. Mr. Nytko explained his wife is an appraiser and she has estimated that this will have a negative impact on the properties especially those where it will be developed. Security is a problem. They need assurances that there will be fencing, lighting, security, cameras. People do not care who lives, vandalism will happen. Mr. Nytko asked if a garage is to be constructed would there be photos that would be shared showing what it will look like.

Sandy Mossman, 51 Darina Place. Ms. Mossman explained the City bought the house next door to her on High Street. She is fearful of security. She asked how many people from Milford take the train. Julie Nash state she has a study that shows this information and invited Ms. Mossman back to her office to review. Ms. Mossman declined.

Chairman Smith explained that the railroad is owned by the State. The State does not care who lives in Milford. The City by purchasing and developing this parcels has control, the neighbors will not be shut out as they might in a State project.

Sandy Mossman, 51 Darina Place. Ms. Mossman commented that since the building on High Street has been demolished the noise from the trains has increased. Bryan Anderson explained that the Mayor and Chris Saley are discussing planting arborvitaes which might help with the sound.

Chairman Smith explained that the committee will work with the input from the neighbors. There is a lot of information being offered that the committee hadn't thought of. The purpose of this and future meetings is to hear everyone's concerns. Security is important. The goal is for this project to be a jewel for the City, gateway to downtown.

Diana Nytko, 5-7 Darina Place. Ms. Nytko commented that for years the City had been talking about a parking garage behind the courthouse. She commented that that property is City owned, why can't a garage be built there. Joseph Agro explained that the property behind the courthouse is State owned. Mr. Agro stated that for years he had fought off the State as the former owner of the River Street parcels. He saw the writing on the wall, if he didn't sell to the City the State would take the property and then there would be no controls over what was to be constructed there.

Meg Green, 38 Darina Place. Ms. Green commented that she has lived here for 32 years. She commented on how horrible the downtown area was including River Street and the harbor area. Since that time values have gone up. The overall improvement in the downtown area has been positive. Downtown is a walkable area. Amanda Root commented that most of the consultants interviewed thought real estate in the downtown area would be attractive to those purchasing in the years to come, property values would increase.

Carl Hoffman, 15 Darina Place. Mr. Hoffman stated his side of the street is impacted the most. He has concerns about security, lighting, property values going up and down. Everyone sees Milford as a quaint town. He feels like he is in a prison because his view is gone. He commented that success will be judged in the years to come. He discussed visitors to the downtown area are finding places to park so he does not see parking as an issue. He commented on how fast the parking area was constructed. The neighbors on Darina want to have their voices heard. They will not back down and will be there every step of the way. He questioned why the City bought the parcels. Chairman Smith commented that the committee was formed after the purchase of the properties. He further commented that this is valuable TOD property and it was a good thing the City stepped in and purchased the property. The neighbors are being brought in at the beginning of the project rather than at the end.

Kristin Losi, 23 Darina Place. Ms. Losi she is one of the young professionals the committee is talking about. She bought the property in November and now has a parking lot behind her house. She does not feel safe. A light pole has been placed in the middle of her backyard. She was told she could move the light pole and her expense. She does not feel this is the way to do this. Chairman Smith suggested Mr. Losi engage her aldermen that are part of this committee, Mr. Vitali and Mr. Anderson. Bryan Anderson commented he was glad she was here. He heard what she had to say and would follow up with Chris Saley. Raymond Vitali commented he would like everyone to be assured they are hearing what is being said and he and Mr. Anderson are their voice. Joseph Agro commented that when the committee started to look at his project they tried to identify stakeholders, i.e. neighbors, chamber, merchants, commuters. The neighbors were the only ones invited to this meeting knowing it's a sensitive issue. He commented that this will be the gateway to downtown and it's important that the committee get it right. There are many concepts and factors to be considered.

Sandy Mossman, 51 Darina Place. Ms. Mossman commented that they have been promised sidewalks for the past 5 years. Chairman Smith reminded everyone that the committee is for the downtown parking parcels. The committee does not have any impact on the sidewalks on Darina Place. Ray Vitali asked Ms. Mossman to speak with him as Aldermen after the meeting.

Deanna Jacobs, 14 Darina Place. Ms. Jacobs thanked the Mayor for purchasing the properties. She commented this is step one in a bigger picture. By purchasing the property the City saved it from eminent domain by the State.

Diana Nytko, 5-7 Darina Place. Ms. Nytko commented she has owned the property for 19 years with her office there for the last 6 years. She has seen the number of people taking the train decreasing. She commented that the additional paved parking is great and does not believe a garage is necessary. With the opening of the West Haven train station and garage, parking is enough and if an Orange train station is constructed it will take away from Milford. Chairman Smith commented that is the purpose of the consultants to study such trends. Ms. Nytko commented she believes there was enough downtown parking. Chairman Smith commented he has seen the parking ebb and flow. This needs to be a well planned project and that is the purpose of the consultants.

Kristin Losi, 23 Darina Place. Ms. Losin asked if a garage would be placed behind the houses. Raymond Vitali commented that the committee doesn't know if a garage will be recommended or constructed at this point. Several years ago a committee was formed to discuss a garage behind the courthouse. That committee dissolved because a garage was not needed. He will make certain the neighbors are informed every step of the project.

Carl Hoffman, 15 Darina Place. Mr. Hoffman stated the residents are pushing for renovations to the sidewalks and making Darina a one way street. This needs to be built into the plans for parking. It will affect the flow of traffic. People will use Darina to avoid the corner. Joseph Agro inquired if sidewalks were needed on both side. Mr. Hoffman commented that both sides need sidewalk to avoid walking in the street. Also snow is a problem. There is no place to put the snow. Bryan Anderson commented that a consultant has been hired and there will be several meetings with them with the market analysis due in 90 days from contract signing.

Meg Green, 38 Darina Place. Ms. Green noted the traffic study is being done in the summer when traffic is lighter.

Dan Nytko, 5-7 Darina Place. Mr. Nytko commented on the decline of the people using the Milford trains station over the past few years. The consultants need to consider all options and periods of time. Chairman Smith commented that the quality of the consultant selected. He further commented on different aspects the consultant will be considering.

Chairman Smith asked if there were any final comments before wrapping up the discussion. He asked that everyone provide their email addresses for future information to be shared.

Carl Hoffman, 15 Darina Place. Ms. Hoffman asked how many additional cars the committee was looking to handle. He commented that Milford cannot handle downtown traffic now.

Kristin Losi, 23 Darina Place. Ms. Losi commented that when shopping for homes she fell in love with Milford. She can walk to beaches and harbor. She hopes not to lose what brought her to Milford. Chairman Smith commented that if the City had not purchased the properties they State would have. The will connect the downtown. Ms. Losi commented that the Milford train station is beautiful and aesthetics are important. Joseph Agro commented that this needs to be a landmark building.

Diana Nytko, 5-7 Darina Place. Ms. Nytko commented on the Bank of America building and how it did not fit with downtown. When she sold real estate she sold the beauty of Milford, she does not believe that is so anymore. Joseph Agro reiterated this needs to be a landmark building connecting downtown.

Sandy Mossman, 51 Darina Place. Ms. Mossman asked if any buildings constructed will be on River Street where the building is currently. Joseph Agro commented that many things will be considered including commerce, residential and screened parking.

Diana Nytko, 5-7 Darina Place. Ms. Nytko stated she wants a barrier between the houses and parking. Joseph Agro stated he believes security will be enhanced. David Sulkis commented that the parking lots are temporary.

Carl Hoffman, 15 Darina Place. Ms. Hoffman commented that additional lighting is not necessary.

Bryan Anderson provided statics about commuter patterns from the study previously discussed by Julie Nash.

Diana Nytko, 5-7 Darina Place. Ms. Nytko stated she did not care about commuters from out of town. Chairman Smith stated he disagreed. They bring in revenue by visiting downtown restaurants and merchants. He understand safety concerns, but parking cannot be limited to Milford only.

Sandy Mossman, 51 Darina Place. Ms. Mossman commented she is happy the City purchased the properties opposed to the State. She does not feel Milford needs the additional parking. Joseph Agro commented the State provided the money to purchase the properties with the emphasis on transit oriented districts.

Diana Nytko, 5-7 Darina Place. Ms. Nytko commented she is opposed to a garage. Raymond Vitali commented that the committee consists of Milford people who will do their best to protect Milford. He stated the consultant has just been hired. Nothing else has been done.

**VI. Project Discussion**

NONE.

**VII. TOD Planning Grant**

NONE.

Being no further business, Joseph Agro and Richard Jagoe made and seconded a motion to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:38 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Toni Jo Weeks", with a horizontal line above it.

Toni Jo Weeks  
Recording Secretary