

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 16, 2016**

ATTENDANCE: M. Evette Brantley, Co-Chair; Jeanette Herron, Tom McCarthy, City Council President, Michelle Lyons, Mary McBride-Lee
*Milta Feliciano, Co-Chair, joined the meeting at 6:15.
Aidee Nieves joined the meeting at 6:30.*

STAFF: Max Perez, OPED; Angel dePara, CAO's Office

OTHERS: Kathleen Maher, Executive Director, Barnum Museum
Karen Biebel-Sutera, Marie DeGruffenreidt, and other Board Members from Barnum Museum.

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Brantley called the meeting to order at 6:05PM. A quorum was present. She reviewed the procedures of the meeting to all present.

ITEM 173-15
GRANT SUBMISSION RE: STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF
ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (“DECD”) FOR THE
PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF THE HISTORIC BARNUM MUSEUM
LOCATED AT 820 MAIN STREET

Ms. Maher came forward to address this grant submission, saying that the museum board members are working diligently to make the museum fully operable. She said the \$500,000 is going toward the design for the renovations which includes many constructional aspects that have to be done, and the museum board is leveraging with other investments and sponsors to double the \$500,000. Ms. Maher explained the resolution before the Committee, saying that, because the Barnum Museum is on the national register of historic places as a nationally significant site, there are guidelines which have to be followed as set by the Dept. of the Interior and the National Park Services. In order to activate the State bonding money, a ten-year restriction on the building is requested which states that the building will not be sold, its ownership will not be transferred, and that the building will maintain its function as a museum. Ms. Maher said that is the first resolution, and that this preservation restriction is already into the easement phase. President McCarthy, who noted that he sits on the board of the museum, added that this ten-year restriction guards against investors turning the site around for a profit.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked how much the total cost will be to which Ms. Maher could only answer that it will not be thousands, it will be millions. Co-Chair Brantley asked if there is a match from the City to which Ms. Maher answered that there is not a match. Co-Chair Brantley asked Ms. Maher if she would provide them with a final copy of the draft to which Ms. Maher answered that she would.

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO APPROVE ITEM 173-15, GRANT SUBMISSION RE: STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (“DECD”) FOR THE PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF THE HISTORIC BARNUM MUSEUM LOCATED AT 820 MAIN STREET**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ITEM 174-15
GRANT SUBMISSION RE: STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (“DECD”), STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE (“SHPO”) GRANT FOR THE PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF THE HISTORIC BARNUM MUSEUM LOCATED AT 820 MAIN STREET

Ms. Maher spoke about the State grant which is the next project for preserving the museum and referred to a report which was done to assess damage incurred by the museum from storms, e.g. Irene and Sandy. She said the museum is in unsafe condition and the dome, especially, needs help as it is sagging and is presently being propped up. President McCarthy, again noting that he sits on the museum board, added that the condition of the dome is dangerous for people and that its restoration would be a step toward bringing people in. Co-Chair Brantley wanted to know how the museum raises funds. Ms. Maher said that she, herself, is a grant writer, so she writes some grants, and the launching of a capital campaign will also bring financial support.

Co-Chair Feliciano joined the meeting at 6:15.

Co-Chair Brantley asked when the museum might open again to which Ms. Maher said she did not know. Council Member Lyons complimented Ms. Maher and the other board members on their hard work, saying that she knows their heart is in it, adding that the museum is a Bridgeport icon and an important part of downtown.

Co-Chair Feliciano asked who from the City is assisting with the grants to which Ms. Maher answered that Mr. Pacacha from the City Attorney's Office had been helpful. Co-Chair Feliciano asked again about whether anyone from the City Grants Office had assisted to which Ms. Maher answered in the negative. Co-Chair Feliciano said she feels the grants department needs to be made more accountable and that is why she asked. Co-Chair Feliciano then asked what the Committee would be voting on for this item. Ms. Maher reiterated the guidelines set by the Dept. of the Interior which works together with the State Historic Preservation Office require the museum to enter into a covenant to maintain the building as a museum for ten years, and this covenant will enable the “SHPO” grant. The Committee needed to approve this.

President McCarthy noted that it has been a while since the City Council went to see the museum and said that he would organize a Council tour. Council Member Lyons asked if an email could be sent to all Council members regarding this tour. Council Member McBride-Lee commented about boards she has noticed which are being taken off some windows in the downtown area, saying it is looking good, and she also complimented the group from the museum on their tireless efforts to restore this Bridgeport icon.

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO APPROVE ITEM 174-15, GRANT SUBMISSION RE: STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (“DECD”), STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE (“SHPO”) GRANT FOR THE PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF THE HISTORIC BARNUM MUSEUM LOCATED AT 820 MAIN STREET
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED.
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

ITEM 64-15
PROPOSED RESOLUTION CONCERNING DISPOSITION OF CITY OWNED
PROPERTY LOCATED 48 TROWEL STREET

Mr. Perez came forward to speak about this item, saying that he has gone back to the City regarding this and just needs to go to the full Council for approval. Co-Chair Feliciano wanted to comment about this property going back and forth from the City to City Hall, also saying that she had read up on the ordinance which relates to this issue. She asked Mr. Perez whether the City tells potential buyers that the property has been appraised at a lower value than the first appraisal, and wanted to know why it is taking so long to get the property put back on the tax roll. Co-Chair Brantley asked why Mr. Perez has to go to the City Council to which Mr. Perez answered that it is because they do not want to wait.

Aidee Nieves joined the meeting at 6:30.

President McCarthy provided information about the City Hall Commission which is made up the City Clerk, the City Finance Director and the Council President, saying that this piece of land cannot be sold without the approval of this Commission. He also wanted to address Co-Chair Feliciano's comment and question. He talked about buildable properties which are first offered to the abutters, and unbuildable properties which are auctioned, and explained, in detail, the sale procedure for City-owned properties, noting that there is a fine rationale throughout this process as to why things went this way. Council Member McBride-Lee thanked President McCarthy for his explanation. Co-Chair Feliciano said that the only reason she knew about the City Hall Commission was because she had researched and read the related ordinances and, therefore, understood something about the sale process, but her concern is that it is taking so long to sell this property while taxes are going up.

Co-Chair Feliciano returned to the question about the two appraisal values for this property and asked about the actual numbers, asking again whether potential buyers are made aware of the different appraisal values. Mr. Perez said that the first appraisal was for \$65,000 and the second for \$57,000. He provided some information about the auction process where sellers have to submit a Request for Property (RFP) to first be considered. Co-Chair asked if the two different prices are being given to the public, i.e. whether the buyers know about the two appraisals. Mr. Perez explained that, when the sellers compete, they have to put their best foot forward because, with a RFP, they only have one chance and if a buyer makes a low offer and another buyer comes in higher, then the lower offer might not be accepted. President McCarthy added that, the decision to accept a proposal is not always based on the higher offer, but can also be based on how likeable the City deems the proposed use of the property to be. Co-Chair Feliciano asked

where Trowel Street is to which the answer was the East End. Mr. Perez continued that, after the RFPs are submitted, a commission of five is selected, and Co-Chair Feliciano asked who picks the commission. Mr. Perez said that the RFP Commission is always different and the director picks the members. Co-Chair Brantley asked how long the property has been vacant to which Mr. Perez answered that it has been vacant since 2007.

- ** CO-CHAIR FELICIANO MOVED TO APPROVE ITEM 64-15, PROPOSED RESOLUTION CONCERNING DISPOSITION OF CITY OWNED PROPERTY LOCATED 48 TROWEL STREET.**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ITEM 148-15
PROPOSED RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE DISPOSITION OF CERTAIN CITY OWNED PROPERTIES (8) BY AUCTION, SALE TO ABUTTER OR BY SALE TO COMMUNITY BASED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS AND ORDERING A PUBLIC HEARING RELATIVE TO THE SAME

Mr. Perez began by handing out several information packets to Committee members.

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS MOVED TO ADD, AS EXHIBIT 148-15-A, THE INFORMATION PACKETS AS ONE DOCUMENT TO ITEM 148-15, PROPOSED RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE DISPOSITION OF CERTAIN CITY OWNED PROPERTIES (8) BY AUCTION, SALE TO ABUTTER OR BY SALE TO COMMUNITY BASED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS AND ORDERING A PUBLIC HEARING RELATIVE TO THE SAME.**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Perez provided some general information about each of the properties listed in this agenda item.

- Waltersville School on Steuben Street: building is in very bad shape, appraised at \$192,000;
Co-Chair Brantley asked if someone had been to the Committee previously about this property to which Mr. Perez answered that Senior Housing had wanted to do something with it but had never gotten going. Co-Chair Brantley asked if it will be auctioned to which Mr. Perez answered that it will be done through a RFP and that they should be able to get some good proposals. Co-Chair Feliciano said that she is going to send Mr. Gill an email because she wants to sit on the committee when the proposals go to the selected committee.
- 156 Clarence Street: half of a row house, is in very bad shape, appraised at \$25,000;
- 321 Remington Street: a row house, appraisal is \$31,000;
- Waterview Avenue: three small, adjacent pieces of property with combined appraisal of \$21,000 will be offered first to the abutters which are a church and a boat company.

- 39 Carrol Street: single family house, in good shape, appraised at \$40,000;
- Buena Way: this is a .12-acre lot between two houses, appraised at 5,000.

Mr. Perez said he is asking for a public hearing on the sale of these properties.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO APPROVE A PUBLIC HEARING FOR ITEM 148-15, PROPOSED RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE DISPOSITION OF CERTAIN CITY OWNED PROPERTIES (8) BY AUCTION, SALE TO ABUTTER OR BY SALE TO COMMUNITY BASED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS AND ORDERING A PUBLIC HEARING RELATIVE TO THE SAME.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS MOVED TO APPROVE ITEM 148-15, PROPOSED RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE DISPOSITION OF CERTAIN CITY OWNED PROPERTIES (8) BY AUCTION, SALE TO ABUTTER OR BY SALE TO COMMUNITY BASED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS AND ORDERING A PUBLIC HEARING RELATIVE TO THE SAME.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADDENDUM

INFORMATION SESSION WITH MR. MICHAEL MOORE, PRESIDENT/CEO OF THE BRIDGEPORT DOWNTOWN SPECIAL DISTRICT (DSSD) TO DISCUSS DOWNTOWN AND THE DSSD'S SCOPE OF WORK

Mr. Moore came forward to talk about the DSSD, saying that he had spoken to the full Council in the past, but wanted to talk to this Committee to have more time and to provide more detailed information. He said the DSSD was founded in 1987 and its purpose is to improve the business district and make downtown a welcoming and inviting setting. He added that downtown businesses pay 3 mils more in taxes than other Bridgeport businesses and, in return, their downtown area receives extra care. He noted the two methods the DSSD uses to implement its goals.

1. Daily environmental maintenance which includes:
 - clean-up, emptying trash cans, etc. by a team called The Ambassadors who wear recognizable shirts to signify their DSSD involvement;
 - beautification through opening up green spaces, spring and fall plantings, hanging baskets, etc.;
 - creative place-making which creates active spaces for economic and cultural activities, e.g. farmers' market, music, artistic presentations;
2. Public Safety which includes:
 - supplementing the Police Dept. by trying to be the eyes and ears of downtown;
 - trying to inventory all video cameras and review where the gaps are;

- no pan-handling, discouraging businesses from giving money to pan-handlers;
- trying to connect those in need with appropriate services.

Mr. Moore also talked about the DSSD's marketing campaign which helps to portray a positive image for downtown. He talked about the Historic Arcade stores and how five artists were connected with these stores, saying that the “cool, creative types” are attracted to the potential of downtown and the DSSD recognizes their importance. He also talked about the historic building on Main Street, north of Fairfield Avenue, which is going to be renovated for housing. Council Member Herron asked what is being done to bring businesses into the mall area to which Mr. Moore answered that he was not sure, but that Ginsberg Development Corp. owns the arcade.

Aidee Nieves left the meeting at 7:40.

Co-Chair Feliciano asked whether the DSSD was responsible for putting on the arts fest to which Mr. Moore answered that it partnered with the City on that. Co-Chair asked for an explanation of the partnership and what the businesses get in return for the extra 3 mils of taxes. She wanted to know what that money is used for. Mr. Moore explained that the money pays for the daily workers. Co-Chair asked what other services are provided with this money to which Mr. Moore answered the DSSD provides a warm, attractive, clean and safe environment for the businesses. Co-Chair Feliciano asked what the Public Works guys do to which Mr. Moore said they still clean the streets, and that the DSSD workers join forces with the Public Works guys to remove graffiti. Co-Chair Feliciano said she still did not know what the direct benefit to the businesses is to which Mr. Moore answered that the benefit is an additional level of care and a competitive environment. Co-Chair Feliciano commented that it is the building, not the business which receives the benefits. Council Member Lyons commented that the DSSD is the window-dressing for downtown and said it was good to hear about what is happening.

Council Member McBride-Lee left the meeting at 7:55.

APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES OF JULY 19, 2016

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO APPROVE THE COMMITTEE MINUTES OF JULY 19, 2016.**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**
- ** CO-CHAIR FELICIANO SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Co-Chair Brantley adjourned the meeting at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nerina Kagan
Telesco Secretarial Services

City of Bridgeport
ECD&E Committee
Regular Meeting
August 16, 2016