

**DRAFT MINUTES**  
**New Haven Development Commission**  
**Location: City Hall/165 Church Street/New Haven, CT 06510**  
**March 10, 2009**

**Attendance:**

The following Commissioners were in attendance: Jonathan Koppel; Marcus Paca; Kevin Ewing; Laura Huizar; Chris LaConte; Lawrence Morico; Shirley Ellis-West; Kathleen Krolak; Alderwoman Bitsie Clark. City staff also in attendance including: Tony Bialecki; John Ward; Michael Pinto. Also attending: Leonard Honeyman, Reporter for the New Haven Independent; Mary O'Leary, Reporter for the New Haven Register; Doreen Abubakar.

**Call to Order:**

Chairman Koppell called the meeting to order at 8:00am.

**Approval of Last Meeting's Minutes:**

The members of the Commission approved the minutes of the February 10, 2009 meeting. A motion was made and seconded (LaConte—Clark). The vote was taken and the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Downtown Gateway Development Project—Process Update:**

Tony Bialecki, Deputy Director of Economic Development, provided an overview on the status of the project:

- He stated the design stage of the process has been finished and will likely only have a few minor changes from this point forward.
- The college is prepared to make an announcement of the construction manager to be appointed to the project; a choice was made from four (4) prospective firms.
- Tentatively, the college is looking toward the end of summer for a groundbreaking.
- Attorney Amento with the Office of Corporation Counsel is anticipated to meet with the State of Connecticut to finalize and close on the Land Transfer Agreement within the week.
- The City of New Haven's Engineering Department is working off of a \$10Million grant received specifically for the Gateway Project. Approximately \$7Million was used for the demolition. The remaining balance will be used for tunnel improvements.
- Mr. Bialecki informed the Commission the tunnel is approximately 40 years old and while still in use, it requires much repair to stay functional. The tunnel once serviced Macy's and the area where 900 Chapel sits. Currently, it is used as service access for the Omni Hotel and 900 Chapel. Much of the tunnel improvements will be provided for by the college, including the flooring, roof and lighting. The portion that lies beneath Church Street and 900 Chapel will be funded by the remaining grant funds.
- Alderwoman Clark requested clarification that the tunnel is currently in use and accessible. Mr. Bialecki restated tunnel access is required to be utilized by the Omni and it is currently the only access available. Public Works has a specific responsibility to maintain tunnel access to the best of their ability, however, the tunnel's age makes improvements a necessity.
- Mr. Bialecki noted at one time it had been discussed to move the tunnel but it was determined not to be cost feasible.
- Chairman Koppell requested status on the Northland and LongWharf project. Mr. Bialecki noted the City has a working Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") with LongWharf

and is moving closer to finalizing a MOU with Northland. Tentatively, the project appears to be one (1) year from having a design package. Currently, the basic concept is that of a multi-use project that includes rental units, addressing the need for affordable housing, retail space, and an office component. There have been many companies identified as possibly needing expansion or relocation options within the city and utilizing the location and access to the train stations and highway are attractive benefits to the site.

**Orange Street MDP—Update:**

Mr. Bialecki updated the Commission on the Orange Street MDP. He offered some history on the MDP as it is one of the first to be organized by the City and initially the responsibility of the New Haven Redevelopment Agency (“NHRA”). Once the site of the New Haven Register’s office and plant, the MDP was originally proposed to allow for the Register’s expansion. SNET later took over the lot and under the MDP was able to expand the surface parking. While AT&T currently needs the surface parking, there has been discussion as to expanding the slivers of land between the train tracks and State Street to be utilized as surface parking. These slivers are currently too narrow and unusable. Using feasibility study funds, an engineering firm, VHB has been hired to determine possibility of narrowing State Street and widening these slivers to provide for more eventual development. There are currently six schemes that have been prepared and the firm is processing costs associated with each. Additionally, VHB has determined Lots N & O on Upper State Street and near the Knights of Columbus will be able to be manipulated to create larger surface area. Mr. Bialecki noted that the majority of the land is already owned by the City of New Haven, the MDP can be helpful in gaining easements for access as necessary on those few parcels that are not owned by the City.

The Orange Street MDP was set to expire in late February of 2009 and was brought back to the NHRA to seek an extension from the Board of Aldermen where it was brought before committee and approved for a five (5) year extension.

**Route 34 MDP—Update:**

Mr. Bialecki reported there was a presentation of the project in a public meeting on March 4<sup>th</sup> by the consultants and City Plan’s Karyn Gilvarg and Susmitha Attota and by Clayton Williams for the business aspect of the project. It had been intended for the consultant to present the culmination of the workshop meetings to the public, however, many felt there was information and decision that came from the workshop meeting and did not appear to have been addressed in the project that had been presented at the public hearing. It was determined the project would not proceed without additional workshop meetings.

- Chairman Koppel requested the consultants attend the next Development Commission meeting to present the project.
- Commissioner Ewing stated the issues the neighborhoods had with the project as presented had to do with the one-way roads, density of residential site, and location of some portions of the project.
- Commissioner Krolak suggested the issue with the roads had to do with the cost attached to restructuring the traffic pattern. Commissioner Ewing stated while he had heard this was the case, he had yet to have been presented with evidence this was fact, not an assumption.
- Alderwoman Clark stated she felt this project is one where the planners should be paying close attention to what the neighborhoods are requesting unreasonable those demands

might seem. She stated it appears the current configuration will create three separate neighborhoods. The Alderwoman addressed the concern that it may be costly and time consuming; it would be beneficial to the neighborhoods in the long run.

- Commissioner Morico stated whatever final decisions are made, it is best issues be aired out now rather than further down the line.
- Commissioner Ewing noted an additional public hearing was set for April 2<sup>nd</sup> in addition to a few smaller meetings between planners and neighborhood representatives.
- Mr. Bialecki requested the committee be informed of the hearing/meeting dates.

#### **Commission Member MDP Assignments:**

Chairman Koppell suggested having Commissioners take responsibility as liaison for individual MDPs reporting back to the commission. He passed a list of the current MDPs for the commissioners to request placement in an area they are interested in.

- Mr. Bialecki suggested more than one commissioner liaise for each MDP, particularly those areas which are more active, including River Street, Downtown, Rt 34, Science Park and Mill River.
- Mr. Bialecki reported the River Street MDP will become more active in the near future as two grants—a \$1.5 Million Federal EDA Grant and a \$2.5 Million State EDA Grant are being utilized for shoreline stabilization, and additional side street improvements. There are also environmental cleanups being undertaken at multiple parcels including 198 and 142 River Street. Mr. Bialecki anticipates two to three years of work ahead at minimum.
- Mr. Bialecki suggested Commission liaisons attend neighborhood meetings to identify issues and concerns from the citizens and aldermen. He also suggested Commission liaisons work with city staff to remain informed on a weekly basis on the multitude of decision that are made each day.
- Chairman Koppell stated he felt it was important for the Commission to be able to see both perspectives of any given project, especially to be able to work adequately as an advocate for a project. He stated that often reasons and ideas seem irrational or unreasonable to the public and may not be heard when brought to the public directly from the City departments. He felt the Commission Liaisons could work as a better conduit for information.
- Chairman Koppell suggested Commissioners attend the management team meetings in those neighborhoods.
- Alderwoman Clark stated the management team meetings took place at the police stations and many of the management teams are becoming more active in their areas.
- Commissioner Paca stated the management team for Whalley and Beaver Hill neighborhood have been meeting every month and he feels it is important for all involved to be updated at each meeting.
- Alderwoman Clark said she would be interested, once the liaisons have become active, to see individual sections in the minutes pertaining to each MDP update.
- Chairman Koppell suggested each liaison prepare a written update for the Commission.
- Commissioner Ewing suggested he would like for another to sign up for the Rt 34 MDP. He felt he was too close to the project in a personal manner and it was, at times, difficult to be fully objective.
- Chairman Koppell stated he believed it would be most beneficial to have more than one Commissioner assigned to each MDP.

#### **Adjournment:**

A motion was made and seconded (Paca—Ewing) to adjourn the meeting. A vote was taken and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:02am.