

**Norwich Site Development Committee
For The
Former State Hospital**

Minutes of the October 26, 2009 Meeting

5:30 pm

**Norwich City Hall
Room 319**

Members Present: Alan Bergren - City Manager; Peter Desaulniers - Alderman; Robert Mills - Executive Director - NCDC; Tucker Braddock - Citizen Representative; Michael O'Neil - Citizen Representative; John Bilda - General Manager of NPU; Kathleen Murphy - Citizen Representative; Peter Davis - Director of Planning & Development; William Nash - Alderman

Members Absent: John Paul Mereen - Citizen Representative; Benjamin Lathrop - Mayor

Others Present: Ron Ward – Citizen; Michael Driscoll – Norwich Corporate Counsel; Joseph Ruffo – Comptroller, City of Norwich; Claire Bessette - The Day; Michael Gannon - Norwich Bulletin; William Kenny – Citizen; Shelley Chenonceau -- Administrative Assistant, NCDC

Meeting was called to order by Moderator Robert Mills @ 5:33 p.m.

Roll call was taken and a determination was made that a quorum was achieved.

Amended minutes of the September 29, 2009 meeting were reviewed. Motion was made to accept the minutes as amended by Mr. Alan Bergren, seconded by Mr. Tucker Braddock, motion voted unanimously.

Minutes of the October 13, 2009 meeting were reviewed. Discussion was held and Mr. Desaulniers requested an amendment to the minutes. Motion was made to accept the minutes, as amended, by Mr. John Bilda, seconded by Mr. Braddock, 7 votes to accept, 2 abstentions, motion carried.

Subcommittee Reports

Environmental: No new report

City Services: Mr. Desaulniers reported that Ms. Beverly Goulet, Director of Human Services in Norwich, was consulted as to any socioeconomic costs that might be incurred if the site was purchased. Ms. Goulet felt she could not put an exact dollar figure on these types of possible costs—even if she used the Norwich

Public Utilities model given at the last committee meeting. However, she speculated there may be a potential cost to Norwich even if the City does not buy the property—for instance, if another buyer decides to build residential homes on that site. Ms. Goulet offered to attend any future committee meetings and elaborate if need be.

Mr. Bilda commented that the same thing could happen on any other property of the same size in Norwich. Discussion ensued on the pros and cons of ownership, and the various scenarios that could happen if Norwich did not own the property.

Mr. Mills asked what would happen with regard to zoning if Norwich did not own the property. Mr. Davis replied that during the time the state owns it, Norwich does not have zoning authority; however, if the state sells it to a private sector, then Norwich would have jurisdiction.

Mr. O’Neil commented that it might behoove the City to own the property, because if the state does sell to another entity, Norwich may no longer be “in the know” with regard to what is going on with it.

Mr. Braddock asked if the state would remediate the property at all. Mr. Mills replied that the state cannot get the federal remediation funding, as they are the polluter. Municipalities are in the best position get the necessary remediation funding.

In order to build on the discussion of cost to the City, Mr. Mills then opened up the meeting to agenda Item 6, Public Comments.

Public Comments:

Mr. Mills then asked Mr. Joseph Ruffo to assist the committee in quantifying an estimated cost to the City.

Mr. Ruffo replied that one way would be to take the population and housing, divided by the city budget for related services, such as police, etc. Then that figure could be compared to mixtures, as well as infrastructure and development costs. If the committee is only looking at residential development, then because education is 65% of the city budget, a ballpark figure could be arrived at by dividing it by the number of houses.

Discussion ensued on the various mixtures that could be possible at the site (commercial, technical manufacturing, and residential) and other cost models that could possibly be utilized.

Mr. Desaulniers emphasized that even if a number for an estimated cost was arrived at, it would not be static, because if the development end-use ever changes then that estimated number would then change.

Ms. Murphy then asked for clarification on this Committee's mission regarding its recommendation to the Council. Mr. Mills responded that the Committee will be highlighting several things for the Council. Mr. Bilda suggested presenting them with various types of development along with respective results, as the Council is the decision maker.

Discussion was held that coming up with a "plan" is not the committee's charge, and that just facts should be presented to the Council. It was suggested the committee state how it came up with any numbers to be presented and what cost model was used, so the Council can easily see that.

Discussion was also held regarding utilities and other aspects, and the fact that the resulting numbers will still be only best guess estimates. The committee was reminded that determining the final market for the property is not in the current work plan, and also the committee was not tasked with this activity.

Mr. Mills recommended basic fundamental direction given to Mr. Ruffo so that cost to the city could be addressed. Mr. Bilda, Mr. Braddock and Mr. Mills volunteered to work with Mr. Ruffo on some numbers Thursday at 10:30 am.

Subcommittee Reports (continued)

Taxes & Land Sales: Mr. Mills presented a draft worksheet (attached) showing averaged developmental usage and possible related values at the site. It was discussed whether to highlight values as net present, or 10-yr net present, etc. It was agreed that the spreadsheet is a start, but needs refining.

Mr. Mills asked for feedback from committee members so Mr. Ruffo would know what was needed in that regard. It was suggested that the resulting information be given to the City Council, as well as an outline or table of contents they could use for reference in the future, if a decision is made.

Discussion related to the Next meeting

The next meeting is Monday November 9th, City Hall, Room 319.

Discussion related to the Hospital Site

Mr. Mills asked whether other committee members could contribute to the draft report to the Council that he had developed in PowerPoint.

Ms. Murphy asked about the pros and cons related to purchasing the site. Mr. O'Neil presented a sheet of pros and cons (attached), from the perspective of a developer. Mr. Mills asked if the members could read and add to his pros & cons, so they could be highlighted in the final report.

Mr. Nash asked what would happen if no decision is made on the property, as the question may come up. Atty Michael Driscoll responded that if the City does not give notice to the state by January 24th, it terminates. After that date the state would still own it, but they must give notice to the City of Norwich for right of first refusal--the sales agreement states it would be at a last best offer. Mr. Mills then reminded the committee that it would not likely be \$1 to purchase the site.

It was discussed that the State could own the property forever; however, if they decide to sell it to another entity, there is still Norwich's first right of refusal. It was mentioned that laws do change. Also, if the market gets better, the State might make a good profit.

Mr. Davis stated that no private development can take place without first applying to Norwich Planning. In that scenario, Norwich would have a heads up if there were development proposed.

Brief discussion ensued regarding zoning regulations, remediation funding, etc. would affect Norwich. Mr. Mills commented that the best scenario would be to get the property into private hands.

Mr. Mills then again opened up discussion to the public.

Mr. William Kenny stated he saw that the committee has put a lot of work into this endeavor. However, he cautioned that it has been his observation that the public tends to remember numbers first mentioned, and may not recall the long-term nature of the work.

Mr. Braddock related a story of a city that finally succeeded in being built--it took many small steps; therefore, the public needs to be aware that it takes time.

Mr. Ron Ward asked a question regarding the previously mentioned models, 5-yr and 10-yr.

Motion made to adjourn by Mr. Nash, seconded by Mr. Braddock, voted unanimously @ 6:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley Chenonceau