

CITY OF NORWALK  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
APRIL 28, 2010

ATTENDANCE: David Park, Chair; Peter Bondi; Erik Chandler; Joseph Dilorio; Thom Dunlap; John Kurtzman; Clyde Mount; David Westmoreland; Kathryn Martino (7:03 p.m.)

STAFF: Susan Gunn-Bromley, Curator

GUESTS: Chris Cooke; Lockwood Mathews Mansion Museum; Robert Koch, The Hour; Terry Necciai, John Milner Associates; Ernest Conrad, Landmark Facilities Group; Jim Whitney, Irene Dixon Western Connecticut Convention and Visitors Bureau; Allen Despres

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Park called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES – March 24, 2010

Page 3: Correct the spelling of Mr. Westmoreland's name.

\*\* MR. BONDI MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED  
\*\* MR. WESTMORELAND SECONDED  
\*\* MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MR. CHANDLER)

Ms. Martino joined the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

- A. Review and approve David Scott Parker Architects for project #2849, architectural/engineering services for building infrastructure improvements to the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion museum for a sum of \$299,875.00

Mr. Park said that on April 19<sup>th</sup> he sent everyone a document which outlined the process they went through so far. He said that a selection committee was formed and the document outlines the members. Mr.

Park said that in the document he also outlined his five points of concern regarding the integrity of the selection process.

Mr. Park read the following paragraph from the document:

The Norwalk Historical Commission, by city code and Common Council authorization, has direct authority over the LMMM building. The LMMM is also a National Register Landmark which includes a preservation restriction requiring approval from the State Preservation Office/Commission on Culture and Tourism for any changes to the building. The Norwalk Historical Commission has been charged with these responsibilities and ultimately is accountable to the Common Council, the State of Connecticut and the public.

Mr. Park said that after some discussion with other Commissioners he would recommend tabling this agenda item to a later date.

- \*\* MR. BONDI MOVED TO TABLE TO A LATER DATE, THE APPROVAL OF DAVID SCOTT PARKER ARCHITECTS FOR PROJECT #2849, ARCHITECTURAL/ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE LOCKWOOD-MATHEWS MANSION MUSEUM FOR S SUM OF \$299,875.00
- \*\* MR. CHANDLER SECONDED
- \*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

- A. Review and approve Western Connecticut Convention and Visitors Bureau proposal to lease the Gate House at 297 West Avenue Mathews Park

Mr. Park provided a brief overview of the history of the item. He said that the Historic Commission had been leasing the Gate House to the former District for \$1.00 per year. They abandoned that operation on December 31, 2009 when their lease ended; they had the option to renew the lease, but chose not to.

Mr. Park said that discussions were held with corporation counsel and Bill #7007 says that the Western Connecticut Convention & Visitors Bureau (WCCVB) will retain the assets of the old District, which includes the Gate

House. After the lease expired, they were on a month to month basis. The new District will have first rights for the lease.

Mr. Whitney distributed a two page proposal outlining what they have accomplished to date and what they hope to accomplish. He said that currently they have a number of small offices located throughout the region. Mr. Whitney said that last year, the Coastal Fairfield County group and the North Western Group received a combined amount of \$900,000. He said that the challenge is how to represent such a huge area. He said that their job is to make sure they can represent the entire region with limited resources.

Mr. Whitney said that they currently have two full time and two part time employees; they are going to be adding one part time employee who will focus on this area. He said that part of their responsibility will be to help organize a volunteer group to staff the Gate House on a regular basis.

Mr. Whitney said that they met with Parks and Recreation today and their next goal is to clean and paint the interior of the building. Their goal is to have the operation staffed and running within the next few weeks.

Ms. Irene Dixon introduced herself and explained her Norwalk affiliations. She said that she was working on making connections with volunteer groups. She said that this location is right in the middle of a number of local attractions. Ms. Dixon said that Mr. Whitney said that his staff is working hard to make this work.

Mr. Park said that a lot of people here work hard to maintain and preserve the historical attractions. He said that he feels they should open the office, but said that he and others are concerned about the new staff's familiarity with Norwalk's assets. Mr. Westmoreland said that he believed that this is the best use for the facility. Mr. Westmoreland asked when the decision was made to create this District. He was told that the decision was made in January 2010.

Mr. Whitney said that on July 1, 2010, they expect that they will be looking at between \$500,000 - \$570,000 in funding. Prior to January 1, 2010 there were five districts; after that only three districts existed. Mr. Whitney said that he spend the last few months meeting with people.

Ms. Dixon said that she is very vested in Norwalk and looks out for the interest of Norwalk. She said that she has seen the marketing plan. She said that they can move forward with the virtual tools. Ms. Dixon said that there was a lot of misinformation provided. She said that she was part of the former Coastal Tourism District. She said that last year, because of budget cuts, the Districts had to merge and people were upset and did things that she did not agree with. She said that these new people are sanctioned by the State of Connecticut. Ms. Dixon reiterated that she saw the marketing plan and that it will work.

Mr. Westmoreland noted that Tourism District jobs were lost in Fairfield County, but retained in Litchfield County. Ms. Dixon said that they are going to hire a volunteer coordinator.

Mr. Whitney said that all of their focus is to integrate the Fairfield County site. He said that he thinks that should be completed in May. He said that this is a huge region; it is almost unmanageable. He said that it goes from the MA border to Greenwich to Bristol.

Mr. Whitney said that two to three weeks ago he came to this region and talked about what they can do. He said that they are spending a lot of time on how to best serve everybody. He said that they will split the time up between Litchfield and Greenwich and everywhere in between. Mr. Whitney said that their goal is to figure out how to make it work.

Ms. Gunn-Bromley asked Mr. Whitney if he would consider hiring someone from this region as the Volunteer Coordinator. Mr. Whitney said that he feels they should hire locally, someone who understands this region and can help cultivate the volunteer base. Ms. Gunn-Bromley said that small non-profits relied on the District staff to guide them.

Mr. Chandler asked Mr. Whitney about their request to provide office space within the Gate House for other organizations. Mr. Whitney said that they would require written authorization from the Historical Commission. He said that a couple of non-profits are looking for space. Mr. Whitney said that the building is set up with seven offices and they do not need that much space. He said that they would entertain offering space to other organizations, if their goals were compatible, to help defray costs. He said that the Norwalk Symphony is looking for space.

Mr. Park said that they are up to date on paying the utilities. He added that he did not want additional signage on the building. Mr. Chandler asked how many days they will be open. Mr. Whitney said that they will be open seven days a week during the summer and fall. They will revisit the number of days during the winter. He said that the building needs to be used. Ms. Gunn-Bromley asked if they will have a presence during the winter. Mr. Whitney said that they would, but the number of days would depend on the traffic.

Ms. Dixon said that the plan is fabulous; it is all about virtual sales and e-commerce. Mr. Bondi asked why Litchfield didn't fight to keep their tourism bureau. Mr. Whitney said that the State makes the determination, not the region.

\*\* MR. WESTMORELAND MOVED TO APPROVE THE WESTERN CONNECTICUT CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU PROPOSAL TO LEASE THE GATE HOUSE AT 297 WEST AVENUE MATHEWS PARK FOR A TERM OF ONE YEAR, WITH AN OPTION TO RENEW AFTER ONE YEAR; IN ADDITION THEY WILL BE REQUIRED TO OBTAIN PRIOR APPROVAL FROM THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION TO LEASE SPACE TO ADDITIONAL TENANTS

\*\* MR. BONDI SECONDED

\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Mr. Park explained that this item will now go before the Land Use and Building Management Committee, the Common Council and then the Law Department. In the meantime, they have a month to month lease.

\*\* MR. CHANDLER MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES TO TAKE THE AGENDA OUT OF ORDER

\*\* MR. WESTMORELAND SECONDED

\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

## REPORTS – SUB COMMITTEES

### A. Buildings

#### 1. Preservation Master Plan Presentation by John Milner Associates

The 154 page document was sent to everyone. Mr. Conrad introduced himself and provided his credentials. Mr. Necciai did the same and

reviewed the background of John Milner Associates. He said that the report is designed to look at each building by itself.

Mr. Necciai provided an overview of the Plan. He said that it is a working document.

Ms. Gunn-Bromley said that according to the RFP, John Milner Associates have to make a presentation to the City and any other interested parties. She said that it has to take place in May because of the Connecticut Trust aspect of the plan.

### REPORTS – BOARDS

#### A. Norwalk Historical Society

Mr. Westmoreland distributed his written report. He said that he had a couple of issues and is looking for input. Mr. Westmoreland reported that they were awarded a grant from the State for interpretive signage at Mill Hill. A local company is providing matching funds. The July 4<sup>th</sup> event at the Mill Hill burying grounds will recognize the completion of the preservation work there.

Mr. Westmoreland said that they would like to reduce the Sunday hours for this season only; he said that they do not get a lot of traffic on Sundays. Mr. Park suggested that he ask corporation counsel for approval. Mr. Westmoreland said that they are planning on a number of temporary exhibits during 2010 and 2010. He said that they would like to paint the walls in the Town House.

#### B. Lockwood Mathews Mansion Museum

Mr. Cooke reported that their season opened on April 7<sup>th</sup> with an event attended by 200 people. He said that they had a presentation by Abraham Lincoln and it was a huge success. The museum store is newly refurbished and being run by volunteers.

Mr. Cooke said that the park looks spectacular and thanked Mr. Mushak, Tulip Tree Design who provided the landscaping free of charge. Mr. Cooke said that the wallpaper cost \$40,000 and was paid for with proceeds from the Ball. The cost of installation is \$22,000 and has been funded. In addition the cost to refurbish the chandelier has been funded.

Mr. Cooke reported that the RFP sessions have been concluded. They had 10 architects submit proposals and interviewed four. He described upcoming events.

Mr. Kurtzman asked Mr. Cooke if he knew how old the white oak tree is and if it warrants a bronze plaque. Mr. Cooke said that it was a couple of hundred years old. Mr. Bondi asked if the City was doing a tree inventory.

Mr. Westmoreland said that before a contract can be awarded, the funding has to be worked out. Mr. Park said that he has been asking Mr. Gerarden for a copy of the grant contract, but has had no response. He said that he has been asking for this for months. Mr. Bondi said that there are procedures that need to be followed.

#### REPORTS – SUB COMMITTEES (continued)

##### A. Buildings

Mr. Bondi reported that there is repair work being done on the Gate Lodge following the March storm. He said that he received a call from Brian Fitzgerald from the Mansion because the Police were training their dogs on the back porch. The Police are being asked to train their dogs elsewhere.

Mr. Westmoreland reported that he and Mr. Mushak made some improvements to the landscaping behind the Carriage House. He added that they removed a tree that had blown over in the March storm.

Ms. Gunn-Bromley reported that Mr. Mauro is doing repairs to the Gate House. He is working on the shutters at the Town House.

##### B. Cemetery

Mr. Park reported that the trees at Mill Hill and Pine Island Cemeteries have been cleared. The grass at Pine Island Cemetery needs to be mowed.

Mr. Bondi said that he was approached by Mr. D'andrea about getting his Boy Scouts involved in doing a clean up at the cemeteries.

Mr. Westmoreland reported that he met with the conservator who is working at Mill Hill. About half of the stones have been installed. He said that he expects them to be on site next week to complete the project. Mr. Westmoreland said that the Eagle Scout had to revise his proposal; he believes it will be ready in June.

C. Finance

Mr. Westmoreland reported that the financials looked fine.

D. Norwalk Museum

Mr. Chandler said to Mr. Park that his last telephone conversation with him ended with Mr. Park screaming at him and he said that he hung up on Mr. Park. Mr. Park said that he did not recall this incident. Mr. Chandler told Mr. Park that that behavior was unacceptable. Mr. Park told Mr. Chandler that he apologized if he was offended.

Mr. Chandler said that with input from the Council representative, he was asked to take up an inquiry at City government and as a result, he received two e-mails from the Mayor that were offensive. He said that he found that unacceptable. Mr. Park said that he had no comment and that he was sorry if Mr. Chandler was offended. Mr. Chandler told Mr. Park that if he could not support the people on the Commission he should not be in that chair.

MUSEUM CURATOR'S AND ASSISTANT TO THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
REPORT

Ms. Gunn-Bromley said that her report was in the packet. She thanked Mr. Kurtzman and said that they are very close to getting signage at the exit ramp on I-95. As stipulated by the State they have to provide two signs. The DPW can't make the signs.

Ms. Gunn-Bromley said that she would like to do an oystering exhibit this summer. She reviewed upcoming exhibits, including one where artwork can be sold by the artists with a percentage of their sales coming back to the Museum.

Ms. Gunn-Bromley said that the Norwalk Museum will be a Blue Star museum. A Blue Star museum allows veterans to have free entry.



Mr. Westmoreland said that he enjoyed the Transformations exhibit.

#### OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

#### NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Despres said that he has lived in Norwalk for 62 years. He said that he is very concerned about Mathews Park and asked if there are plans to stop the above ground parking. Mr. Park explained that the Historical Commission has authority over the buildings; the grounds are under the jurisdiction of Recreation and Parks and the Land Use and Building Management Committees.

Mr. Despres asked about the park land master plan. Mr. Westmoreland said that it was a Recreation and Parks project. Ms. Gunn-Bromley added that the tenants had input. Mr. Despres said that it would be a shame to turn Mathews Park into a parking lot. Mr. Westmoreland told Mr. Despres that this Commission does not have authority over the grounds. Mr. Despres said that he first saw Mathews Mansion in 1952. Mr. Westmoreland said that the City is spending \$1.2 million to demolish the former Police station and keeping that area as park land. Mr. Despres said that an article in The Hour got him aggravated.

- \*\* MR. BONDI MOVED TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS
- \*\* MR. CHANDLER SECONDED
- \*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

The Commissioners went into Executive Session at 9:11 p.m. and the public and staff were excused.

- \*\* MR. CHANDLER MOVED TO COME OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION AND ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9:44 P.M.
- \*\* MR. BONDI SECONDED
- \*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

There were no votes taken during Executive Session.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi  
Telesco Secretarial Services

