

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
ECONOMIC COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2014  
6:00 PM**

ATTENDANCE: Co-chair Martinez; Co-chair Banta  
Council members: Lyons, Martinez-Walker

NON-COMMITTEE: Council members: Torres, Brannelly

CITY STAFF: B. Coleman, Director, Neighborhood Development, OPED  
P. Carleton, Grants Writer, Central Grants Office

REPRESENTATIVES: Achievement First Team; Fletcher Thompson Consultant

Co-chair Martinez called the meeting to order at 6:15 pm.

- 27-13** Proposed Resolution concerning Disposition of and Redevelopment of city-owned property to Achievement First Bridgeport Academy Elementary School and ordering a public hearing relative to the same.

Bill Coleman, OPED asked the representatives from Achievement First Bridgeport Academy Elementary School to come to the committee table. He explained that they were there to consider the resolution as outlined on the agenda. He pointed out that the site is located adjacent to the old Garfield School where there are seven small sliver building lots. Each lot was appraised at \$25,000 – *he referred to the packet of information to point out the parcels.*

Co-chair Martinez explained that the property isn't used for recreation; it's only used for activities for the kids in the neighborhood and not for sports events and the site is clean. Bill Coleman clarified that the site isn't clean and it will require environmental underground remediation.

Co-chair Martinez continued that he thought it was a good project, noting that Barnum School was constructed by the same developer Fletcher Thompson.

Council member Lyons asked Mr. Coleman to review each resolution as it was outlined.

Mr. Coleman highlighted that they were looking to sell the lots to Achievement First.

The representative from Achievement First commented that they need a larger space to accommodate a full academic program.

Co-chair Banta asked about the environmental concerns and if any testing had been done yet. Mr. Coleman said the resolution covered that matter. He stated that there are environmental issues with the site and the expert was present to address them. He further mentioned that the environmental clean up issue was a key component of the deal, in that Achievement First will take on the liability for the clean up. He stated that they have requested to pay \$50k for the lots, because as a trade off for the \$700k that it will cost for the environmental clean up. He relayed that the lots were appraised at \$160k and \$50k is the offer on the table.

Council member Lyons questioned who will represent the city on the side of the environmental issues. Mr. Coleman said the city hasn't hired an expert, because they aren't willing to take on the magnitude of the clean up. He explained that the properties are underwater and the city has no reason to clean it up independently and they aren't developing this piece of property.

David Pizarro, the environmental expert stated that testing of soil samples were tested. They found that there are materials in the ground that consist of hydrocarbons, petroleum, PCB's and lead; noting that the concentrations are above the state level.

Co-chair Martinez questioned the situation in terms of what the students will face when remediation begins. Mr. Pizarro replied that they plan to put in clean soil to avoid any risk with contact.

The construction manager for the project stated that they have to follow the regulations to ensure that when they disturb the soil, it doesn't affect the surrounding area. Co-chair Martinez asked if OPED will oversee remediation. Mr. Coleman said no, noting that Achievement First will have to notify the state and DEP to let them know about the plan and the remediation before it begins.

The Achievement First representative said they will take the environmental process seriously, noting that all regulations will be followed and there won't be any danger to the community. He emphasized that they aren't looking to negatively affect the community.

Council member Brannelly commented about the cost of \$700k for the environmental clean up. She questioned if the clean up becomes cost prohibitive and the job is bigger than they anticipated what will happen. The representative from Achievement First responded that the extra cost will be their financial responsibility to finish the project. He made it clear that they will not come back to the city to request more.

Council member Brannelly asked if it was true that 99% of the time of what is assessed is found on the site as far as contaminants. The representative said that they generally do find that. He added that they also allow for a 5% to 10% contingency.

Council member Brannelly asked what the total cost of the project. The representative said the total project cost would be \$5 million.

Council member Lyons asked how big each lot was. Mr. Coleman pointed out the lots on a map he had. He commented that the lots are considered inner-city in-fill lots.

Mr. Coleman continued to review the resolutions outlined and highlighted the following information:

- The total appraised value of the lots is \$160k
- Environmental studies were conducted for phase-I and phase-II
- Certain types of contaminants were found
- The cost estimate of \$687k was derived by the private party for the environmental clean up
- The cost of \$50k was offered by Achievement First

Co-chair Banta questioned how they came up with this amount. The representative explained that if they were to pay the appraised value of \$160k and also clean up the site, it would equate to \$800k. He relayed that the initial offer was \$1.00 and the city came back and requested a price of \$50k that they thought was fair in addition to assuming the environmental liability.

Council member Lyons stated that she had an issue with the cost that was offered. She expressed that although she realizes they will clean up the site, she still had a problem with the price. Mr. Coleman said that they should look at it as an asset and a liability. Council member Lyons asked what the taxes would have been on \$160k. Mr. Coleman said the assessed value is generally 70%, so the taxes on \$50k will be roughly \$4,000. He relayed that the property has very little tax value currently, noting that there really aren't many other uses for the site. Overall, he said he didn't feel the city was giving up a high tax value and although it's not an over the top economic deal; he said it's a good project that will benefit the city in terms of the educational aspect.

The Achievement First representative stated that the school will be fully formed to accommodate grades kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade next year, noting that currently they don't have an assembly space in the building they occupy now. This construction will allow the entire school to come together for events, lunch periods and it will reduce

transition time. He further expressed that Achievement First has a proven success rate and they are highly regarded in Connecticut from an educational perspective. Overall, he felt it will be a long term benefit to the City of Bridgeport.

Council member Lyons stated that she was trying to weigh the financial portion as well as accommodating the students.

Co-chair Banta questioned when they would start the construction. The representative stated that they were in the middle of design completion. They went before the Zoning Board of Appeals and they are scheduled to go before the Planning & Zoning Commission next month. He said they hoped to start construction this summer for occupancy during 2015; he repeated that the school will accommodate grades kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

Co-chair Banta asked if there would be a liner installed when remediation begins. The environmental expert replied that they will stock pile and tarp the materials, but they won't cap it; because they will only need to contain exposure.

Council member Torres commented that he thought the item was a no-brainer and he fully supported the project.

The senior project manager from Fletcher Thompson gave some background information about the project. She stated that they were pleased to be involved in a Bridgeport School project, noting that it's the second project they have worked on with Achievement First. She explained that the primary project pertained to the need to expand the space to accommodate grades kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

She went on to review the site design that was displayed and she highlighted the following points:

- a) The bus traffic will be taken off of Stillman Street that will improve bus circulation to eliminate traffic back up.
- b) There will be sufficient parking to accommodate staff
- c) They received ZBA approval and they are applying for P&Z Commission approval
- d) The additions are just over 4,000 sq. feet and no volume or height was added
- e) There will be a small play area
- f) The existing fencing will remain and they will also add fencing to enclose the site for safety purposes

- g) The addition will have a ramp system and an accessible drop off area for students near the cafeteria area and rest room facilities
- h) The building elevations were reviewed
- i) The gymnasium space was reviewed

Mr. Coleman asked about lighting and windows. The project manager pointed out on the rendering where the windows be installed on the side of the building.

Council member Torres mentioned the possibility of constructing an environmentally friendly roof to conduct student projects. The representative agreed it was a good idea, however, that feature would involve an additional cost.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ-WALKER MOVED TO APPROVE**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER BANTA SECONDED**

**\*\* MOTIN PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ-WALKER MOVED TO SCHEDULE A PUBLIC HEARING**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED**

**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**\*Consent calendar**

Approval of Committee Minutes of February 19, 2014.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ-WALKER MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED**

**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**35-13** Grant Submission: re National Fish & Wildlife Foundation for 2013 Hurricane Sandy Coastal Resiliency Competitive Grant Program.

Patrick Carleton, Central Grants Office presented the item. He stated that the grant request was for \$566k with no city match. He noted that there are four (4) components to the program: 1) resiliency design community workshops 2) Pleasure Beach resiliency

design plan and restoration 3) beach and dune habitat restoration and 4) wild life guards program (they will recruit Bridgeport high school students).

Council member Lyons asked if the grant would cover a certain area, per the wildlife concern. It was stated that **phase-I** will consist of the path that connects to the beach pavilion and **phase-II** will address the landscaping that will be a more comprehensive process and specific to a location. **Johnson's Creek phase** will have a series of workshops at the end of Central Avenue where they will wait for water taxis.

Council member Lyons asked if the grant would cover all three phases. Mr. Carleton said yes.

Mr. Carleton relayed that they will also partner with other wildlife organizations, such as the Audubon Society to educate students.

Council member Martinez-Walker asked how they planned to reach out to the students. Mr. Carleton said it will be done through the Conservation Corp and through the process that the Audubon Society will use. He noted that the training will be paid for out of the grant.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS MOVED TO APPROVE**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ-WALKER SECONDED**

**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSL**

**\*Consent calendar**

**36-13** Grant Submission: re State Department of Economic & Community Development Special Act Grant for the Black Rock Business District Improvement Project.

Mr. Carleton presented the item. He stated that the grant was for \$500k and there is no city match. He reviewed details of the project as follow:

- Architectural engineering
- Streetscape
- Façade improvements

He stated that the purpose was to create a Black Rock Business District and the grant will be used primarily for aesthetics.

*Council member Lyons opened a discussion to question why grant money hasn't been earmarked for projects in the north end of Bridgeport. She emphasized that she would*

*like to discuss the issue at a future date about how grant money can be used for the north end.*

Council member Brannelly commented that the Black Rock project initiative has been talked about for years, noting that Auden Groggins was responsible for eliciting the grant funding for the project.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ-WALKER MOVED TO APPROVE**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED**

**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**\*Consent calendar**

**47-13** A Resolution regarding the Coal Burning PSEG Plant in Bridgeport Harbor.

Council member Torres presented the item. He stated that the matter came forward as a dare from the Sierra Club. He mentioned that he has been against the coal plant for a long time. He mentioned the coal dust that comes from cleaning the boats, noting that the coal dust is the primary concern; because of the health aspect and the people on the east end that are most affected. He pointed out that they can't use American coal because it has to come from a low-sulfur source from Indonesia that needs to be boated over. He explained the process of the crane lifting the piles of coal and dumped on a barge that ultimately ends up in Long Island Sound and pollutes it. Overall, he said it's a dirty plan and he thought it should be converted over to natural gas or another option is for them to vacate the property, clean it up and develop for a better and higher use.

He clarified that although the resolution is non-binding, they can send a message that the city council is not in favor of the plant and they can request them to stop what they're doing on the property.

Council member Lyons stated that she did some research on coal burning that is used for heating. She relayed that there are still people working in the coal mines to extract coal the old fashioned way. She felt that the city has had enough environmental issues, especially in view of the incidents of breast cancer (noting that she is a survivor of breast cancer) and the high rate of child asthma. She recalled that years ago there were coal chutes in homes to heat a house. Overall, she stated that she was an advocate of sending the message that the city council isn't in favor of the plant.

Co-chair Martinez questioned if the resolution was only meant to convey a message to the plant. Council member Torres said yes –*he read the list of suggested requests that outlined options to either improve or discontinue the process of coal burning on the property as follow:*

1. *Calls upon the PSEG Company to phase out the coal-fired Bridgeport Harbor power plant at the earliest possible date; and*
2. *Calls upon the PSEG Company to restore the land to residentially environmentally approved levels; and*
3. *Urges the Public Utilities Control Authority (PURA) and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to take immediate steps to require such a phase-out; and*
4. *The City Clerk is Authorized and Directed to provide copies of this resolution to the Mayor, The Public Utilities Control Authority, The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection and the PSEG Company.*

Co-chair Martinez suggested that they table the item to obtain answers and more background information from the city attorney's office and OPED.

Council member Brannelly requested that the actual address of the plan be submitted to ensure that they are properly discussing the correct property.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS MOVED TO TABLE THE ITEM FOR THE PURPOSE OF REQUESTING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND INPUT FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENTS THAT CAN PROVIDE INFORMATION**

**\*\* CO-CHAIR BANTA SECONDED**

**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

### **ADJOURNED**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER BANTA SECONDED**

**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Graham  
Telesco Secretarial Services