



ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
DECEMBER 2, 2014
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF BRIDGEPORT

45 Lyon Terrace
Bridgeport, CT 06604
(203) 576-7217 Phone
(203) 576-7213 Fax

ATTENDANCE: Linda Grace, Acting Chair; Jack Calcutt, Acting Secretary;
John Carolan, Robin Shepard, Maria Alves

STAFF: Dennis Buckley, Zoning Official; Paul Boucher, Assistant Zoning
Official; Atty. Ed Schmidt, Associate City Attorney; Diego
Guevara, Design Review Coordinator; Neil Bonney, Zoning
Department.

CALL TO ORDER.

Acting Chairman Grace called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

ROLL CALL.

Acting Chairman Grace introduced the members seated. A quorum was present. She reviewed the process for the hearing for the public.

PUBLIC HEARING.

C-1 (#6) 91-95 & 99 Ridge Ave. – Petition of Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust & POKO – Seeking variances of the residential density requirement of 2,700 sq. ft. of property per residential unit and 10’ of the required 20’ rear yard under Sec. 5-1-3, and also seeking a variance of all 10 of the required on-street parking spaces of Sec. 11-1-2 to permit the consolidation of 3 lots into 1 and the construction of two 3-family dwellings in an R-C zone.

Ms. Liz Torres, the Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust Executive Director, came forward and introduced herself to the Board members. She thanked the Board members for having the special meeting and also the staff in the Zoning office for all their assistance with the new application. She explained that this project was different than anything before. There are currently four applications that represent one entire project.

Ms. Torres explained that she was representing both the Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust (BNT) and POKO developers. The BNT is a community development organization. It is a non-profit that is focused on strengthening the more distressed neighborhoods,

specifically the South End. The South End is a tipping point neighborhood with a lot of positive things happening in the community. It also has a number of great amenities, such as Seaside Park and its location near both downtown and the train station.

Marina Village is also located in the South End. The Village contains over 400 units of Housing Authority distressed public housing.

Six or seven years ago, the BNT began their work in the area. As the BNT assessed the area, they discovered that there were 45 two and three family homes that were located behind Marina Village. These residences were either blighted, abandoned or at risk of foreclosure. Some of the parcels had already gone into foreclosure. The BNT then started acquiring the various parcels through purchasing them through tax liens or from the various banks. After renovating these residences, the BNT has brought them back onto the market in order to stabilize the neighborhood. About a year and a half ago, the BNT heard that the Housing Authority was looking for a co-developer to assist them with re-developing Marina Village. The BNT submitted a proposal with POKO to work with the Housing Authority on this project. One of the goals was to replace the public housing units but also to unite the community by using parcels of land that the City owned, parcels of land that the Housing Authority owned and others that were owned by the BNT.

This phase of the proposal consists of the new construction of a number buildings, which would be three family. This would create 51 units of housing scattered over a three block area. Ms. Torres said that the Master site plan gives an overview of where these parcels are located in the South End. She indicated where the Marina Village units were and reminded everyone that approximately half of the units in that development are no longer occupied. She also showed the Commissioners where the new buildings would be located on the Master Plan and pointed out the various parcels that the BNT has already redeveloped in the South End. Some of the parcels of land involved in this project have been vacant for between 30 and 40 years.

Ms. Torres was asked if this project was to replace Marina Village. She replied that a part of the project would. The Housing Authority has a plan to redevelop the Marina Village site that is not part of the proposal from the BNT. The BNT project is part of what is called the “Scattered Site Initiative” phase, which is development of several parcels.

Ms. Torres then submitted the green mailing receipts and photographs of the signage for the project at 91-95 & 99 Ridge Ave.

She explained that a common theme in all the applications were the requests for density waivers and set back waivers and parking variances. Ms. Torres then passed around copies of photos showing the current condition of the parcels at 91 Ridge Avenue. This application is requesting permission to construct two 3 family homes on the parcel. The

set back, density and parking waivers would be needed. When the application was reviewed by the City, they noted that the building was not elevated to the FEMA flood zone requirements. The buildings have now been redesigned to meet those requirements. However, this changed the set back requirements. Therefore, a request to amend the site plan is being submitted in order to comply with the flood zone regulations.

One of the other major concerns was the fact that this site will not offer any off street parking. Ms. Torres passed around photographs of the street that showed no vehicles parked on the street because there were no buildings on the street. She said that the BNT does not think that there would be a need for off street parking for this site. Part of the strategy for the development is to strengthen the community by recreating the urban fabric that was already there. This would simply duplicate what is happening throughout the South End, where many of the two and three family homes are literally right up against the sidewalk.

Ms. Grace wished to know what the total width of the lot was. Ms. Torres said that the project architect, Paul Selnow, informed her that the parcel was approximately 100 feet wide. The two buildings would be situated on this parcel. There were three lots located here that are being combined into one parcel with 100 foot street frontage. The design team considered moving the buildings back but it was decided that it would be better to have more yard space.

Ms. Torres said that of the 51 units that the BNT was developing, the majority of residents would be those who earn less than 25% of the of the AMI. This means that the majority of the residents would not own a car. Ms. Grace pointed out that there would be six families occupying these units, with a minimum of one adult per unit, but questioned whether the residents would have a car. She then asked what the residents would do when it snows and the vehicles have to be moved. Ms. Torres said that this was considered and it was a tough decision that the team had to make. She said that the team felt that the best use of the site was not to have parking on it. Ms. Grace said that parking was a major issue for the area.

Mr. Paul Selnow, the architect from Henry Shadow, came forward and introduced himself to the Board members. He said that the site is not perpendicular to the street itself. The buildings have been orientated to the street, but given the shape of the lot, the buildings are angled backwards. This means that the depth of the lot decreases sharply which affects the ability to create onsite parking.

Mr. Selnow was asked if the site would have access to parking on the other site that would be presented where there was off street parking available. Ms. Torres said that the residents would not have access to that parking. She explained that the BNT have been discussing with the Housing Authority the creation of additional parking for the units when the Marina Village parcel is redeveloped across the street. Ms. Torres said that the

Housing Authority was considering including parking for the BNT development on their parcel across the street if in fact additional parking is needed.

Commissioner Grace asked if there was anyone present who wished to speak in favor about this item.

City Council Member Jack Banta came forward and said that he and Council Member Denese Taylor-Moye, who was also present, were the representatives for the district. He said that both he and Council Member Taylor-Moye were in favor of this project. While there are many positive things happening in the South End, it can always use some help because of the empty lots and abandoned houses. Right now, on Park Terrace, two burned out buildings on two parcels have been turned into two wonderful residences. This also happened on Columbia Street. The work that is being done is phenomenal and hopefully will bring people back to the South End. This will also increase the property values. He said that what will happen with Marina Village is anyone's guess since there are so many different possibilities. However, the housing is desperately needed. Since the BHA and POKO are the only game in town and they are stepping up to the plate to change this, they have the support of Council Member Taylor-Moye and himself. He concluded by saying that he hoped the project had the support of the Board as well.

Commissioner Grace said that she had been down in the area and that she had not been able to find a parking place, so this was her concern. She then asked Council Member Banta for his opinion. Council Member Banta said that parking was part of the issue of living in the City. He said that in that location, perhaps some of the Marina Village parking spaces should be utilized. He said that it would be important for the vehicle owners to act promptly when a snow emergency is declared. He said that he had moved his vehicle to a downtown parking garage when the last snow emergency happened. He said that he hoped that other car owners were as responsible. During the last snow emergency, he explained, that the biggest problem in the South End was that people were abandoning the vehicles in the middle of the street. He said that Commissioner Grace was right to be concerned, but it was something that the residents needed to give some attention to.

City Council Member Denese Taylor-Moye was the next speaker. She said she was from the 131st District, which is the South End, and lived in Marina Village. She said that regarding the parking and stated that she had lived in Marina Village for 16 years. There were 406 units and there were parking spaces on each end and some were off the street. While not every resident had a car, there was parking available.

Regarding what Ms. Torres was saying, Commissioner Taylor-Moye said that Ms. Torres was working with the Housing Authority and POKO and the others involved. This is about building units, homes and houses for the residents to have someplace to live. When downtown Bridgeport was being developed, there were concerns about parking and somehow this was overcome. She said that she knew that the people sitting at the

table would make sure that things were done right for the residents of Marina Village and for the residents of the South End. As a resident of Marina Village, she was looking for a quality residence in a stable environment. This is something that everyone wants. If there is a storm, the residents will survive just the same way they survived the last two storms. Everyone learned a lot from the last two storms, such as building the units higher. Many people don't understand that during the storms when people couldn't get to Marina Village to help, the residents teamed up and took care of their own, such as the bedridden residents or those on dialysis. Once the first responders were able to get there with ambulances and other assistance, the residents had those who needed treatment ready to go. So, when developers like the BNT, POKO and others that want to come in and improve things for the residents, it's good.

Council Member Taylor-Moye said that she participated in the creating the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Marina Village. While this project won't be strictly for Marina residents, it will be for the residents who do need someplace to live. This will happen wherever new homes are being constructed by BHA. She listed some of the other public housing projects that could benefit. By having this project move forward, when the next ones come on line, the City will know exactly what needs to be done.

Mr. Bill Coleman from the Office of Planning and Economic Development came forward and thanked the Commissioners for their service. He said that there were a few points he would like to make in support. He said that OPED was encouraged by the support and that new construction is always a positive thing.

The question on parking was an excellent one. The more nuanced questions like this usually go before the Zoning Board of Appeals because they are looking for variances. These sites are truly hardship sites and will go before the ZBA for consideration. He explained that there were trade offs by surrounding a residence with asphalt to accommodate the cars. Generally, on the policy level, the department wants to take advantage of the asphalt that is already there. The streets are already there so they need to be used. He said that he believed it was inevitable that more thought would be given to parking. The market does respond to parking, but the overall scale here is 52 units with 41 off street parking spaces. This is a scattered site project, so this a fairly good achievement. He said that the alternative could have been putting a four story apartment building up with the parking underneath, but it would not have been very aesthetic. He said that he just wanted to validate the question and offer some thoughts.

Mr. Dennis Buckley came forward and stated that he was the Zoning Official for the City of Bridgeport. He said there had been a preliminary Coastal Site Review done and it was determined that there were no adverse impacts on the Coastal Area. There is a recommendation in the Engineering report that the anti-tracking pads should be incorporated into the project plan.

Commissioner Grace asked if there was anyone who would like to speak against the petition.

Council Member Halstead came forward and said that that they were not particularly against this particular application, but there were neighbors present who were against Application C-3 (576 & 584 Gregory St. & 189 Walnut St.).

Ms. Joy Venneer came forward and said that she was the former captain of the guard for the Community Garden on Gregory Street. She said that she expected to be captain again next year. She said that the gardeners wanted to keep it as a garden. Historically, it has been a garden since the 1980's and had developed community. People greet each other and it has created a beautiful spot in the neighborhood. There are talks and it has become a place for education, such as the butterfly garden and the rose garden. Many children think that food comes from a supermarket rather than from a garden. Ms. Venneer listed a number of activities that have taken place in the community garden, which provides green space. She said that it was an important part of the community. Others have gone out to start community gardens in other location.

Ms. Venneer said that she was speaking early because she had to attend a class. The garden provides a place for children to play and learn since there are four plots dedicated for children. She asked that the Gregory Street plot not be converted into a building but remain a garden.

Commissioner Grace asked if there was anyone else who wished to speak in opposition. No one came forward. She then asked Ms. Torres if she had anything she wished to say in terms of rebuttal. Ms. Torres said that she did not. Commissioner Grace then closed the hearing on 91-95 & 99 Ridge Ave.

C-2 (#7) 131 Columbia St. – Petition of Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust & POKO – Seeking a variance of the minimum front setback requirement of 15' of Sec. 5-1-3, and also seeking a variance of all 5 of the required off-street parking spaces to permit the construction of a 2-1/2 story mixed use building in an R-C zone.

Ms. Liz Torres came forward and stated that she was the Executive Director of the Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust. She indicated where the parcel was located on the site plan. She came forward and distributed photos of the site, which is an abandoned lot. She said that parcel had been vacant for over 30 years and that there was a request for variances for both the setbacks and the parking requirements. It will be a mixed use building with office space and a community center on the ground floor for the property management and a two bed room apartment on the second floor. There will not be any parking for the office staff or the apartment resident. She then distributed copies of photos that had been taken earlier in the day indicating that there were available parking spaces in the area near the proposed site.

Ms. Torres said on page three of the information packet showed the parcel. Commissioner Grace said that there was a fire hydrant located there and there was no parking allowed within 15 feet.

Commissioner Grace asked how many people would be working in the office at the same time. Ms. Torres said that she expected that the case manager and the property manager would be sharing the space. The property manager will most likely be on site about 30 hours a week while the case manager will likely be there more in the evening.

Commissioner Grace asked about if the staff would be from the community. Ms. Torres said that they had not decided on who would be filling those positions, but ideally it would be someone who lived in the community.

Commissioner Calcutt asked if Mr. Guevara had recommended a change in the setback for this building. Ms. Torres said that he had made some recommendations that were being reviewed. However, if the building is re-orientated, it will require additional variances. But the application had already been submitted.

Mr. Paul Selnow, the architect for the project, came forward and indicated that the site was non-conforming and this was one of the hardships. The minimum lot requirement in this zone is 9,000 sq. ft. and this site is 4,700. This is a challenge in terms of orienting the building and providing on site parking. He explained that this was a corner lot, which always provides a challenge. This building was orientated towards Columbia Street to keep it consistent with the other structures. Mr. Selnow said that he understood Mr. Guevara's viewpoint but that the developer had chosen to orientate this towards Columbia Street due to the challenges presented by the site. The site is not particularly deep, being only 36 feet deep. Having a vehicle parked on site would require 20 feet. Instead, it was decided to have more open space around the building for all the community.

Commissioner Grace asked if there was anyone who wished to speak in favor of this particular site.

Mr. Bill Coleman from the Office of Planning and Economic Development came forward and said that he liked the fact that this project would provide for on site presence rather than the absentee ownership model. This is located at the nexus of Columbia Court and Columbia Street, which is a key location. Mr. Guevara has taken a good look at the project, but the project has some funding deadline.

Commissioner Grace asked if anyone wished to speak in opposition to the project. Hearing none, Commissioner Grace closed the hearing on 131 Columbia St.

C-3 (#8) 123 & 139 Ridge Ave., 576 & 584 Gregory St. & 189 Walnut St. – Petition of Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust & POKO – Seeking variances of the residential

density requirement of 2,700 sq. ft. of property per residential unit and the minimum front and side setback requirements of Sec. 5-1-3, and also seeking to waive 25 of the required on-site parking spaces of Sec. 11-1-2 to permit the consolidation of 5 parcels into 1 and the construction of eight 3-family dwellings in an R-C zone.

Ms. Liz Torres came forward and stated that she was the Executive Director of the Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust. Ms. Torres submitted copies of the photos showing the signage that had been posted. She indicated where the parcel was located on the site plan. She displayed photos showing the current condition of the parcels and said that there had not been any building on the site for over 40 years. The request is for variances on the residential density requirements, and the on-site parking requirements.

Ms. Torres explained that the site was located in a flood zone and there were other challenges, so she was going to request that the architect present the proposal to the Board Members. The building will be raised 13 feet.

Mr. Selnow came forward to give an overview of the project. There are eight buildings on the site, with three units per building for a total of 24 units. He explained that this site will take up 3/4th of a block and borders two different streets. Mr. Selnow said that there were 11 parking spaces on site and indicated where these would be located on the site plans. The renderings include a variety of architectural styles to keep the neighborhood intact. They are consistent with the area.

Commissioner Grace asked if the renderings show what the buildings would look like. Mr. Selnow said that this was true and reviewed the details with the Commissioners. Commissioner Grace asked where the windows would be and the front doors. Mr. Selnow indicated where the staircases, front doors and windows were located. He stated that each of the units would have two bedrooms.

Ms. Torres said that she would like the record to show that the developers would comply with the email that they received from Mr. John Gaucher of OLISP who was concerned about flow conditions for the water infiltration and he also wanted to make sure that there were plans to retain the run off water on site. There are plans to do so. She added that the developers would also be complying with the Engineer's comments.

Ms. Torres was asked where the playground would be located. She explained that the City and the BHA were working on identifying a site, but did not know if they had finalized a decision. It will be moved.

The discussion moved back to parking. Ms. Torres said that there were 11 spaces on site that will be assigned by lottery. Commissioner Grace wished to know what would happen if a tenant with an assigned spot moved out. Ms. Torres said that she was not sure how it would be handled at this time. She said that she thought that the property

manager would handle it and that there would originally be a lottery and a waiting list would be compiled from those results. A new tenant would go to the end of the list.

Commissioner Grace asked about handicapped parking spaces. She was told that there were no handicapped parking spaces. It was explained that the building was exempt from the handicapped parking requirement because it was in a flood plain.

Commissioner Grace asked if there was anyone who wished to speak in favor of this particular site.

City Council Member Denese Taylor-Moye from the 131st District, which is the South End, and lives in Marina Village, came forward. She said that she was in support of this project. Regarding the garden plot at Columbia and Gregory Street, she said that it had been there for a very long time and was not taken care of. The grass is so high, it's not possible to see the garden. The discussion is about putting roofs over people's heads, not putting a plant in the ground and just leaving it alone. She said that she had filed a complaint with anti-blight about this parcel in the past. There is another garden on Ridge Street that is being taken care of. Using this parcel for a home for people is what should be done with it. She said that she was in favor of the BNT having the property in order to do what is right for people. This is not against people with gardens, it's about housing. She said that there were 35 kids from around the City who came to a class to learn how to have an indoor garden. One of the Sacred Heart University students taught the class and it went well. Gardening is important regardless of whether it is outside or inside. But this parcel is not being taken care of and it's not good for anyone. She suggested that the Commissioners stop by to see what was there the next day.

Mr. Bill Coleman from the Office of Planning and Economic Development came forward and said that he wanted to reiterate the developers' points on the issue. He said that the City would be considering where to relocate the garden.

Mr. Dennis Buckley, the Zoning Official came forward and said that a preliminary Coastal Site Plan review had been conducted on the project. The proposed project includes the recapture of the roof run off with a gallery system. No information was included in the application to indicate if the soil conditions are suitable for this infiltration. The other concern was about roof water run off being recovered. This was addressed by the City Engineer. There is a plan to treat the parking lot run off before it enters the municipal system. There is some improvement needed to have a positive report from Coastal Area Management.

Commissioner Grace asked if anyone wished to speak in opposition to the project.

Council Member Robert Halstead came forward and said that he was the Community Garden program founder in 1980. He said that this garden was established in 1985 and was 30 years old. He said that the program had been cited for National awards and the

garden could not be seen from the street because of the overgrowth. He said that the reason was because the sidewalk was so deteriorated and the sumac trees had grown up thickly around the area and block the view of the garden. The garden has won awards and is well taken care of. It also provides a lot of food for the community. There is a lot of pride that goes into it. There have been many children involved in the garden over the years.

Regarding the flooding, in 1984 the City purchased the property, which had formerly had buildings on it that had been demolished. In 1985, the raised beds were put in on concrete slabs and it was discovered that the water level was about 3 feet below the surface. Because of this, he said that he didn't understand how the water retention system would work. The area is like a basin, along with Iranistan Avenue. The sewers now handle the water from the rest of the City. Right now there is a permeable surface. He wanted to know what kind of tanks would be able to handle this, particularly after the type of flooding that the City has witnessed in recent years.

The community has been working on this garden for 30 years, so people want the garden since they go there and grow a lot of food. There are a number of people from UB who go there because they also appreciate fresh food.

The City is contradicting itself because it talks about the food business. He referred to the earlier speaker who teaches people how to garden. Council Member Halstead went on to list the various activities and said that a great deal of care had gone into this project.

Council Member Halstead then spoke about planning by design that had addressed a flood remediation plan for the South End of Bridgeport and they designated 10 million dollars for the South End planning. He wished to know why the developers were moving forward with this project rather than waiting for the plan. He said that he was not representing an agency that might be given funding or even lose funding, but was present to represent people working on the site for 30 years.

The property also has a playground that was developed by a UConn group. He said that he did not hear a discussion about that playground, which is needed for the children. Last year, there was an article in the paper about this parcel being sold to the Bridgeport Housing Authority. Council Member Halstead came to ask about it. He was told that the City had to sell the parcel to the BHA as part of a land swap. He claimed he was told he would be kept in the loop, only to read in the paper that the BNT would be constructing housing on the site. He said it was clear that he was not in the loop and didn't know what happened with the BHA. There are many questions that he has and this method of doing business is much too common in the City.

Council Member Halstead asked the Commissioners to consider that there are other players besides the Housing Authority and the developers. There is the community and

the program that has been there for 30 years. He said that it would be important for the community gardeners to be recognized since they have been there for 30 years.

Ms. Torres came forward and said that she wanted to address the concern that Council Member Halstead brought up about the suitability of the site. A Phase 1 environmental assessment was done by Fuss and O'Neill and based on their testing, no contaminants were found on the site and their recommendation was that there was no further testing necessary for the site.

Commissioner Grace closed the hearing on 123 & 139 Ridge Ave., 576 & 584 Gregory St. & 189 Walnut St.

NEW ITEM.

#1 16, 32, 36, 40, 41, 46, 47 Columbia Court, 120 & 134 Columbia St., & 77 Johnson St. – Petition of Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust & POKO – Seeking a variance of the 2,700 sq. ft. of property per residential unit, as well as, the minimum front, side and rear setback requirements of Sec. 5-1-3, and also seeking variances of the vehicle maneuvering space requirement of Sec. 11-1-10; the minimum parking setback & perimeter landscaping requirement of Sec. 11-1-13 and waiving 5 of the required 32 off-street parking spaces under Sec. 11-1-2 to combine 10 parcels of property into one and permit the construction of seven 3-family dwellings (21 units) in an R-C zone.

Ms. Torres came forward, introduced herself, and then submitted the green mailing receipts and some photos of the posted signage. She indicated where the parcel was located on the master site plan. She also distributed photos of the parcel's current condition.

Mr. Selnow came forward and introduced himself to the Commissioners. He explained that Columbia Court was a difficult site to work with because it had been identified as a non-conforming street by the Bridgeport Fire Marshal. He was pleased to say that this obstacle has been overcome by the design team. The Fire Marshal has endorsed the proposed plan. Mr. Selnow then reviewed the details of the site plan.

Commissioner Grace asked if there would be 8 two family dwellings and 1 three family residence. Mr. Selnow said that this was so. Commissioner Grace pointed out that the developer had increased the density from the original proposal. Mr. Selnow agreed. He said that working with the Fire Marshal and the coverage requirements had changed the design. Commissioner Grace said that the designers had added an extra floor to each of the units. Originally there were nine buildings, but now there were seven.

Commissioner Grace asked about the parking plan. Mr. Selnow said that there were 32 spaces. Ms. Torres said that the request was for a waiver for five of the parking spaces. Commissioner Grace asked how the parking spaces would be allocated. Ms. Torres

indicated where the spaces were located on the site plan. She said that in another 30 unit building that the group was managing they had decided to wait to see if there was a demand for the parking spaces before doing a lottery. The demand never happened. If it came to having a lottery, a letter would be sent to the residents to let them know about the lottery. Commissioner Grace asked about visitor parking. Ms. Torres said that the development hadn't reached that level quite yet. The discussion moved to a dead end street that the developer may be taking over in the future.

Commissioner Grace asked if this would become a situation where the Housing Authority would be responsible for snow removal. Ms. Torres replied that POKO would be the one removing the snow, since they will be the managers. However, this arrangement will need to be done in the future. Discussion followed about whether this was a paper street or an actual road.

Since the developer does not own the parcel at this time, Commissioner Grace pointed out the Board is being asked to waive parking on something the developer does not own at this time. Mr. Selnow explained that the reason this was done was to satisfy the Fire Marshal's requirements. Ms. Torres explained that they will be very strict regarding the parking in certain areas.

Ms. Torres added that for the record that they had received comments from the City Engineer and fully intend to comply with his comments with the exception of one regarding parking, which is the one they are requesting a variance for.

Commissioner Grace asked if there was anyone present who wished to speak in favor of this application.

Mr. Bill Coleman from the Office of Planning and Economic Development came forward and thanked the Board for holding this special meeting. He said that the department was very supportive of this approach because it moves some of the typical public expenses on the private developer. He pointed out that the existing road does not serve the residences that are already there on Columbia Court and the Fire Marshal had declared it not up to code. This will change the road into a compliant street. By adding a unit or two, it will help with the cost of the public infrastructure that will be required.

Parking is obviously a key, Mr. Coleman said, and requested that the Board members consider using the policy objective that the developer is trying to reach. Approximately 4/5th of the parking will be off street. He said that this was the rebirth of the Marina and requested the support of the Board.

Commissioner Grace asked if there was anyone who wished to speak in opposition to this application.

A resident of 42 Park Terrace came forward and said that she had been confused about the site plan. She said that the area described as an “empty lot” has a house and a church parking lot. She said that she was skeptical of that claim. The resident said that she came in support of the community garden, and said that it was important to have an area where people can come together, rather than growing a pot of parsley on a window sill.

Regarding raising the property values, as a nearby property owner, she already pays \$9,000 in taxes in the South End. It won't help her if her taxes go up again.

She said there was a study on population density and what happens when a large number of people were concentrated in a small area. Common sense says that when too many people are in a small place, even if it is in keeping with the style of the community, it becomes a problem. She said that Park Terrace already has three family homes and there is no parking there. During the last major snowstorm, it was four days before her street was plowed. She suggested that the old buildings be renovated rather than tearing down existing structures. There has always been problems with parking in the area. When the photos were taken in the morning, many of the residents were at work. Taking a photo at 7 p.m. would show a different problem. Regarding the community garden, there are no more empty lots to move it to. There won't be a playground. She said that she was not against more housing, but objects to the density.

Council Member Robert Halstead came forward and said he was the Council Member from the 132nd District. He said that Columbia Court was a high crime area and there had been a number of murders on that corner. The white house nearby was one of the largest crack and drug houses in the City for some time. This is a very densely populated area. The houses on that street are shoulder to shoulder, which were designed pre-World War II and built before the car was even invented, so people did not need a place to park. He said that it takes years to build a community and last year they had decent participation. It takes years for people to buy into it. He said that this garden had won a city contest in 2008 with funding from the Fairfield Community Funding and the United Way. He spoke about the volunteers who came in and built the garden.

It's been stated that this parcel is not in the flood plain. Anything that runs off this property goes into the flood plain and the area is like a basin when it floods under normal rain, never mind a hurricane. He said that it is not technically a flood plain, but the water runs down the street. It's kind of a loophole to say that it's not a flood plain but it was formerly one.

The density is too high. The street was originally two and three family houses, many of which were torn down in the 70's. It is still too crowded. He asked what would be done when it snows. The snow comes off the roofs and blows into the streets. There is no place to put the snow. People learned that lesson last year.

Council Member Halstead also spoke about a substantial grant of 10 million dollars and how he had visited a site in New York. He said that he had spoken to a designer of one of the Priority Housing projects about the community gardens. The designer agreed with him and said that the community garden should be included in the plans. Council Member Halstead said that he had been told by the BNT that they would be in touch with him about the gardens, but he did not hear anything about it until he saw the Legal Notices in the paper.

Council Member Halstead said that he has a Master's degree in Regional Planning from Pratt Institute and is a City Planner. He said that on one hand, the City staff trumpet green space and on the other hand, they talk the talk, but don't walk the walk. They are eliminating two community gardens.

He said that he applauds the BNT for some of their projects, but they should be doing more of it by taking vacant, abandoned property and fixing it up. This is mostly City land and they are ignoring vacant properties in the neighborhood. He said that the City should wait for the 10 million dollar plan that HUD will be funding. The BNT is the only non-profit housing group other than Habitat for Humanity. He hoped that they will do some of the traditional non-profit work and get all the foreclosures rather than dictating what will happen in the neighborhood without talking to people. He said that this was not an either or situation. There is a way to have both housing and gardens.

Ms. Torres came forward and said that she had been an active member of the NRZ for about six years and this presentation was made to the neighborhood group. However, she explained that the NRZ could not issue a letter of full support due to the fact they are not in compliance of their bylaws. Those issues are currently being worked on by the NRZ.

Ms. Torres went on to say that the BNT was not abandoning the goal of working on the vacant properties in the nine block area where they are working. The BNT fully expect to continue to address these areas and hope to be back in front of the ZBA with other proposals.

The community gardens that Council Member Halstead spoke about are on a parcel of land at 34 Columbia Street that the BNT now has owned for the past 12 months. There has been no activity on the parcel and that is part of the reason why no community garden was included in this phase of the project. The BNT is looking to work with the City and the Housing Authority to find a location for a community garden, but do not believe that this particular parcel is one that should remain a community garden.

Commissioner Grace closed the public hearing portion of the special meeting.

DECISION SESSION.

C-1 (#6) 91-95 & 99 Ridge Ave. – Petition of Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust & POKO – Seeking variances of the residential density requirement of 2,700 sq. ft. of property per residential unit and 10’ of the required 20’ rear yard under Sec. 5-1-3, and also seeking a variance of all 10 of the required on-street parking spaces of Sec. 11-1-2 to permit the consolidation of 3 lots into 1 and the construction of two 3-family dwellings in an R-C zone.

Commissioner Calcutt pointed out that this was an urban area and that the parking would be controlled by market forces. Commissioner Carolan pointed out that access in that area is already difficult. One of the reasons the land was vacant was because there was no access or parking. Discussion followed about emergency vehicle access, quality of life, density and other issues.

**** COMMISSIONER CALCUTT MOVED TO GRANT APPLICATION C-1 (#6) 91-95 & 99 RIDGE AVE. – PETITION OF BRIDGEPORT NEIGHBORHOOD TRUST & POKO – SEEKING VARIANCES OF THE RESIDENTIAL DENSITY REQUIREMENT OF 2,700SQ. FT. OF PROPERTY PER RESIDENTIAL UNIT AND 10’ OF THE REQUIRED 20’ REAR YARD UNDER SEC. 5-1-3, AND ALSO SEEKING A VARIANCE OF ALL 10 OF THE REQUIRED ON-STREET PARKING SPACES OF SEC. 11-1-2 TO PERMIT THE CONSOLIDATION OF 3 LOTS INTO 1 AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF TWO 3-FAMILY DWELLINGS IN AN R-C ZONE WITH THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:**

- 1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SUBJECT PREMISES SHALL BE IN STRICT ACCORD WITH THE PLAN SUBMITTED TO AND APPROVED BY THE BOARD.**
- 2. THE PETITIONER SHALL FILE PLANS AND APPLICATIONS FOR THE ISSUANCE OF A CERTIFICATE OF ZONING COMPLIANCE AND A BUILDING PERMIT.**
- 3. ALL CONSTRUCTION SHALL CONFORM TO THE BASIC BUILDING CODE OF THE STATE OF CT.**
- 4. PARTICULAR ATTENTION SHALL BE PAID TO THE LANDSCAPING AND THE INSTALLATION AND PROPER MAINTENANCE OF ALL SHRUBBERY, PARTICULARLY IN FRONT OF EACH HOME.**
- 5. THE APPLICANT IS TO ADHERE TO ALL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CITY ENGINEER IN HIS LETTER DATED 11/21/14.**

FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

- 1. THE CHANGE IN SETBACKS ON THE REVISED PLAN REDUCES THE VARIANCES REQUESTED.**
- 2. THE CONSOLIDATION OF THREE UNDERSIZED LOTS INTO ONE LOT ENABLES THE DEVELOPER TO PROVIDE TWO**

- MODERN MULTI-FAMILY DWELLINGS MORE CLOSELY CONFORMING TO THE DENSITY REQUIREMENTS.
3. HISTORICALLY, (ACCORDING TO THE PETITIONER) LOW-INCOME TENANTS DO NOT HAVE MANY VEHICLES; THEREFORE RIDGE AVENUE IS WIDE ENOUGH TO ACCOMMODATE THE REQUIRED PARKING SPACES.
 4. THIS DEVELOPMENT WILL HAVE NO NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE COASTAL AREA.

**** COMMISSIONER CAROLAN SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

C-2 (#7) 131 Columbia St. – Petition of Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust & POKO – Seeking a variance of the minimum front setback requirement of 15’ of Sec. 5-1-3, and also seeking a variance of all 5 of the required off-street parking spaces to permit the construction of a 2-1/2 story mixed use building in an R-C zone.

Atty. Schmidt pointed out that it would be important to note for the record that the two employees would be on site to provide services to the residents and improve the quality of life.

**** COMMISSIONER SHEPARD MOVED TO GRANT APPLICATION C-2 (#7) 131 COLUMBIA ST. – PETITION OF BRIDGEPORT NEIGHBORHOOD TRUST & POKO – SEEKING A VARIANCE OF THE MINIMUM FRONT SETBACK REQUIREMENT OF 15’ OF SEC. 5-1-3, AND ALSO SEEKING A VARIANCE OF ALL 5 OF THE REQUIRED OFF-STREET PARKING SPACES TO PERMIT THE CONSTRUCTION OF A 2-1/2 STORY MIXED USE BUILDING IN AN R-C ZONE WITH THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:**

1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SUBJECT PREMISES SHALL BE IN STRICT ACCORD WITH THE PLAN SUBMITTED TO AND APPROVED BY THE BOARD.
2. THE PETITIONER SHALL FILE PLANS AND APPLICATIONS FOR THE ISSUANCE OF A CERTIFICATE OF ZONING COMPLIANCE AND A BUILDING PERMIT.
3. ALL CONSTRUCTION SHALL CONFORM TO THE BASIC BUILDING CODE OF THE STATE OF CT.
4. PARTICULAR ATTENTION SHALL BE PAID TO THE LANDSCAPING AND THE INSTALLATION AND PROPER MAINTENANCE OF ALL SHRUBBERY, PARTICULARLY IN FRONT OF EACH HOME.
5. THE OFFICE STAFF SHALL CONSIST OF 2 EMPLOYEES ONLY.
6. THE APPLICANT IS TO ADHERE TO ALL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CITY ENGINEER IN HIS LETTER DATED 11/20/14.

FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

- 1. THE FRONT SETBACK VARIANCE IS DUE TO THE FACT THAT THIS PROPERTY IS A CORNER LOT WITH TWO STREET FRONTAGES.**
- 2. PARKING FOR THE TWO OFFICE STAFF PERSONNEL WILL BE DURING THE DAY WHEN MOST VEHICLES ARE OUT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.**
- 3. THE TWO SPACES FOR THE 2ND FLOOR TENANTS CAN BE ABSORBED ON EITHER RIDGE AVENUE OR COLUMBIA STREET AS THIS IS A CORNER LOT.**
- 4. THE SIZE AND CONFIGURATION OF THE LOT NECESSITATES VARIANCES FOR A GOOD QUALITY DEVELOPMENT.**

**** COMMISSIONER CALCUTT SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

C-3 (#8) 123 & 139 Ridge Ave., 576 & 584 Gregory St. & 189 Walnut St. – Petition of Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust & POKO – Seeking variances of the residential density requirement of 2,700 sq. ft. of property per residential unit and the minimum front and side setback requirements of Sec. 5-1-3, and also seeking to waive 25 of the required on-site parking spaces of Sec. 11-1-2 to permit the consolidation of 5 parcels into 1 and the construction of eight 3-family dwellings in an R-C zone.

The discussion centered on the fact that these units would not be handicapped accessible because the units were raised and only accessible by stairs.

**** COMMISSIONER CAROLAN MOVED TO DENY APPLICATION C-3 (#8) 123 & 139 RIDGE AVE., 576 & 584 GREGORY ST. & 189 WALNUT ST. – PETITION OF BRIDGEPORT NEIGHBORHOOD TRUST & POKO – SEEKING VARIANCES OF THE RESIDENTIAL DENSITY REQUIREMENT OF 2,700 SQ. FT. OF PROPERTY PER RESIDENTIAL UNIT AND THE MINIMUM FRONT AND SIDE SETBACK REQUIREMENTS OF SEC. 5-1-3, AND ALSO SEEKING TO WAIVE 25 OF THE REQUIRED ON-SITE PARKING SPACES OF SEC. 11-1-2 TO PERMIT THE CONSOLIDATION OF 5 PARCELS INTO 1 AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF EIGHT 3-FAMILY DWELLINGS IN AN R-C ZONE.**

Commissioner Carolan said that his concern was the density. Atty. Schmidt suggested that the Commission consider which issues they wished to have the developer address or modify. Discussion followed about the details.

**** COMMISSIONER CAROLAN WITHDREW HIS APPLICATION TO DENY.**

**** COMMISSIONER CAROLAN MOVED TO CONTINUE APPLICATION C-3 (#8) RE: 123 & 139 RIDGE AVENUE, 576 & 584 GREGORY STREET, 189 WALNUT STREET – SEEKING VARIANCES OF THE RESIDENTIAL DENSITY REQUIREMENT OF 2,700 SQ. FT. OF PROPERTY PER RESIDENTIAL UNIT AND THE MINIMUM FRONT AND SIDE SETBACK REQUIREMENTS OF SEC. 5-1-3, AND ALSO SEEKING TO WAIVE 25 OF THE REQUIRED ON-SITE PARKING SPACES OF SEC. 11-1-2 TO PERMIT THE CONSOLIDATION OF 5 PARCELS INTO 1 AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF EIGHT 3-FAMILY DWELLINGS IN AN R-C ZONE TO JANUARY 13, 2015 TO COMPLY WITH THE RECONFIGURATION OF DEVELOPMENT AND REDUCTION OF THE NUMBER OF BUILDINGS REQUESTED BY THE BOARD.**

**** COMMISSIONER SHEPARD SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

NEW ITEM.

#1 RE: 16, 32, 36, 40, 41, 46, 47 Columbia Court, 120 & 134 Columbia St. & 77 Johnson St. – Petition of Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust & POKO – Seeking a variance of the 2,700 sq. ft. of property per residential unit, as well as, the minimum front, side and rear setback requirements of Sec. 5-1-3, and also seeking variances of the vehicle maneuvering space requirement of Sec. 11-1-10; the minimum parking setback & perimeter landscaping requirement of Sec. 11-1-13 and waiving 5 of the required 32 off-street parking spaces under Sec. 11-1-2 to combine 10 parcels of property into one and permit the construction of seven 3-family dwellings (21 units) in an R-C zone.

There was a discussion regarding the details of the access to the parcel. Atty. Schmidt pointed out that in terms of City plowing, the City is obligated to plow the major access routes first. If the road becomes part of the development, the developer would be responsible for having the area plowed.

**** COMMISSIONER CALCUTT MOVED TO GRANT APPLICATION #1 RE: 16, 32, 36, 40, 41, 46, 47 COLUMBIA COURT, 120 & 134 COLUMBIA ST. & 77 JOHNSON ST. – PETITION OF BRIDGEPORT NEIGHBORHOOD TRUST & POKO – SEEKING A VARIANCE OF THE 2,700 SQ. FT. OF PROPERTY PER RESIDENTIAL UNIT, AS WELL AS, THE MINIMUM FRONT, SIDE AND REAR SETBACK REQUIREMENTS OF SEC. 5-1-3, AND ALSO SEEKING VARIANCES OF THE VEHICLE MANEUVERING SPACE REQUIREMENT OF SEC. 11-1-10; THE MINIMUM PARKING SETBACK & PERIMETER LANDSCAPING REQUIREMENT OF SEC. 11-1-13 AND WAIVING 5 OF THE REQUIRED 32 OFF-STREET PARKING SPACES UNDER SEC. 11-1-2 TO**

COMBINE 10 PARCELS OF PROPERTY INTO ONE AND PERMIT THE CONSTRUCTION OF SEVEN 3-FAMILY DWELLINGS (21 UNITS) IN AN R-C ZONE WITH THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

- 1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SUBJECT PREMISES SHALL BE IN STRICT ACCORD WITH THE PLAN SUBMITTED TO AND APPROVED BY THE BOARD.**
- 2. THE PETITIONER SHALL FILE PLANS AND APPLICATIONS FOR THE ISSUANCE OF A CERTIFICATE OF ZONING COMPLIANCE AND A BUILDING PERMIT.**
- 3. ALL CONSTRUCTION SHALL CONFORM TO THE BASIC BUILDING CODE OF THE STATE OF CT.**
- 4. PARTICULAR ATTENTION SHALL BE PAID TO THE LANDSCAPING AND THE INSTALLATION AND PROPER MAINTENANCE OF ALL SHRUBBERY, PARTICULARLY IN FRONT OF EACH HOME.**
- 5. THE APPLICANT SHALL ADHERE TO ALL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CITY ENGINEER IN HIS LETTER DATED 11/24/14,**
- 6. THE APPLICANT SHALL INCORPORATE ALL OF THE FIRE MARSHAL'S CONCERNS REGARDING ROAD MARKINGS, SIGNAGE AND FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEMS IN EACH DWELLING.**
- 7. THE APPLICANT SHALL INCORPORATE ALL OF THE CONCERNS OF THE O.L.I.S.P. ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYST IN HIS EMAIL ON 11/12/14.**
- 8. THE DUMPSTER LOCATION SHALL BE FENCED IN WITH A 6' HIGH PRIVACY STYLE FENCE WITH A SUITABLE GATE OPENING.**

FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

- 1. THESE ODD SHAPED LOTS CONDENSED INTO ONE PARCEL WILL LESSEN THE VARIANCES NEEDED TO REDEVELOP THIS AREA.**
- 2. THE NARROW ACCESS ROAD/DRIVEWAY WAS RECONFIGURED TO ESTABLISH A "NO PARKING ZONE" FOR EMERGENCY ACCESS, RESULTING IN THE NEED FOR FRONT SETBACK VARIANCES.**
- 3. AS TO THE COASTAL SITE PLAN REVIEW, THE PROJECT AS APPROVED, (INCORPORATING THE CONCERNS NOTED ABOVE IN LINE #7) WILL HAVE NO NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE COASTAL AREA.**

**** COMMISSIONER ALVES SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

OTHER MATTERS THAT MAY PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE BOARD.

There were no additional issues to discuss at this time.

ADJOURNMENT.

**** COMMISSIONER SHEPARD MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** COMMISSIONER CALCUTT SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services.