

A **REGULAR MEETING** of the City Council & WPC Authority was held at the City Hall Auditorium on Monday, October 21, 2019. Present were Mayor Elinor Carbone and City Councilors Frank Rubino, Marie Soliani, Fred Simon, and Anne Ruwet. Councilor Paul Cavagnero arrived at 6:33 p.m. and Councilor Gregg Cogswell was absent.

Corporation Counsel Victor Muschell, Public Works Director Raymond Drew, Economic Development Director Rista Malanca, Superintendent of Streets and Parks Bill Mayers, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation Brett Simmons, City Treasurer Daniel Farley, Blight Enforcement Officer Ashley Clement, Pennrose, LLC Regional Vice President Charlie Adams and The Cloud Company, LLC Chairman and CEO Sandy Cloud were also present.

Mayor Carbone called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. beginning with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes

On a motion by Councilor Simon, seconded by Councilor Soliani, the Council voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the regular meeting held October 7, 2019.

Open to Public

On a motion by Councilor Soliani, seconded by Councilor Rubino, the Council voted unanimously to open the meeting to the public.

Board of Education Chairwoman Fiona Cappabianca expressed her concerns regarding the proposed development on Franklin Street. She expressed concerns about the additional financial burden that new low-income housing units could have on Torrington Public Schools and expressed her opposition to the proposed 15-year tax abatement. She also expressed concerns regarding the property's close proximity to an alternative incarceration facility at 70 Franklin Street.

Board of Education member Gary Eucalitto also expressed his concerns regarding the proposed development on Franklin Street and discussed the importance of improving Torrington's public school system.

Sharon Waagner expressed her opposition to the proposed tax abatement for the development on Franklin Street and stated her concerns regarding the impact that the multi-use apartment complex could have on the City's police and fire services, as well as the school system.

Raymond Bottass expressed his frustration regarding a photo in the Republican-American newspaper, taken during Gov. Ned Lamont's October, 2019 visit to Torrington, in which Mayor Carbone was positioned behind the Governor and Rep. Michelle Cook. Mr. Bottass emphasized the Mayor's importance to the City and stated that Mayor Carbone should have been at the front and center of the photo.

Stephen Ivain, Jr. requested that any action be postponed regarding the proposed Franklin Street development project in order to give the public more time to review the proposal. He expressed his concerns regarding the 15-year tax abatement and the impact that the project could have on the taxpayers.

Torrington Development Corporation President Peter Herbst, Esq. stated that the TDC's Board of Directors voted unanimously in favor of supporting the proposed financing for the project on Franklin Street and explained how the project fits in to the City's Municipal Development Plan.

Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce President and CEO JoAnn Ryan expressed her support for the proposed development on Franklin Street. She discussed the Working Cities Challenge and emphasized the importance of attracting young people to the region.

Travis Lipinski expressed his support for the proposed development on Franklin Street and discussed the opportunities that could result from the new complex, including affordable housing and work spaces for start-up businesses. He expressed optimism about the revitalization of downtown Torrington.

Five Points Gallery Founder and Executive Director Judith McElhone expressed her support for the proposed development on Franklin Street and stated that the multi-use apartment complex could provide affordable housing to artists.

Northwest CT Arts Council Executive Director Rufus de Rham expressed his support, on behalf of the Arts Council, for the proposed Franklin Street development project and expressed his excitement about the revitalization of downtown.

Jenna Reichen expressed her support for the proposed financing for the Franklin Street development project and stated that there is a need for more affordable housing in the area. She also discussed the positive impact that the development could have on businesses downtown.

Allan Borghesi of Borghesi Building and Engineering expressed his support for the Franklin Street development project and expressed his satisfaction regarding recent road repairs and improvements to the downtown area. He also discussed the tax abatement that was granted to him to develop the Industrial Park in Torrington and stated that the tax abatement resulted in significant tax revenue in the long-term for the City.

Diane Holland urged the City not to accept the proposal from Pennrose, LLC to develop 100 Franklin Street and expressed her concerns regarding the impact that the proposed project would have on taxpayers.

Jacque Williams expressed his concerns about the communication and lack of trust between the City and the people of Torrington. He also expressed his concerns regarding the potential influx of additional students if the Franklin Street Development project was approved.

Mayoral Appointments

On a motion by Councilor Rubino, seconded by Councilor Ruwet, the Council voted unanimously to appoint Diane Holland as a regular member of the Board of Assessment Appeals to fill the remainder of a three-year term to expire on December 6, 2021.

On a motion by Councilor Soliani, seconded by Councilor Ruwet, the Council voted unanimously to appoint Patricia Ward as a regular member of the Board of Assessment Appeals for a three-year term to expire on December 6, 2022.

WPCA Invoices

On a motion by Councilor Ruwet, seconded by Councilor Rubino, the Council herein acting as the WPCA voted unanimously to approve the following payments from Fund #490 Sanitary Sewer Capital Improvement:

DATE	INVOICE	CONTRACTOR	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
10/14/19	-----	P&G Pepper Construction	\$7,741.49	Sewer Repair – Dalton St
10/14/19	-----	P&G Pepper Construction	\$5,145.04	Sewer Repair – Marvin St
9/13/19	497441	Weston & Sampson Eng.	\$7,660.00	Homestead Rd Sewer Design
8/2/19	496404	Weston & Sampson Eng.	\$10,100.00	Homestead Rd Sewer Design

Sewer Pipe Inspection Equipment

On a motion by Councilor Ruwet, seconded by Councilor Simon, the Council herein acting as the WPCA voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the Public Works Director, Acting WPCA Administrator and Purchasing Agent to award Bid# SPE-030-092419 – “Sewer Pipe Inspection Equipment” to Bahr Sales, Inc. of Wallingford, CT for the total delivered and installed sum of \$69,425.

Tree Trimming & Removal Services

On a motion by Councilor Soliani, seconded by Councilor Ruwet, the Council voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the Superintendent of Streets and Parks and the Purchasing Agent to extend the Tree Trimming and Removal Services contract with Asplundh Tree Expert Company of Willow Grove, PA (branch location in East Windsor, CT) for the Fiscal Year 19/20 at the current rate and under the same terms and conditions as the Fiscal Year 18/19 contract.

Cleaning Services – Armory & Teen Center

On a motion by Councilor Ruwet, seconded by Councilor Simon, the Council voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the Purchasing Agent to award the contract for cleaning services for the Armory and Teen Center facilities to Building One Facility Services of Durham, CT for \$31,500 and authorize the Mayor to act on behalf of the City regarding the execution of the contract and its administration.

Pennrose MOU

On a motion by Councilor Soliani, seconded by Councilor Ruwet the Council discussed the proposed Memorandum of Understanding with Pennrose, LLC regarding the development of the Riverfront Recapture Area on Franklin Street. Mayor Carbone addressed the public’s concerns regarding insufficient notice about the Franklin Street development project by recounting the events and public meetings that took place throughout the year 2019, including:

- **March 18, 2019** - The City Council authorized the Mayor to release a Request for Developer Qualifications for 100 Franklin Street.
- **June 3, 2019** - The City Council approved the appointment of Pennrose as the preferred developer for the project and authorized the Mayor to negotiate the terms of the agreement.
- **August 15, 2019** – The Architectural Review Committee reviewed Pennrose’s plans for the project and voted to make a favorable recommendation to the Planning and Zoning Commission.
- **August 20, 2019** – The Inland Wetlands Commission reviewed the site plans for the project and approved Pennrose’s application.
- **September 11, 2019** – The Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed and approved the site plan for Pennrose to develop 100 Franklin Street.

Mr. Adams provided a brief background about Pennrose and discussed the company’s specialization in mixed income and mixed use developments. He expressed Pennrose’s interest in Torrington and described the company’s plans for developing 100 Franklin Street. Mr. Adams explained that Torrington’s vibrant arts community and commitment to developing the Franklin Street plaza were driving factors behind Pennrose’s interest in the property.

Ms. Malanca presented on the proposed multi-use development project at 100 Franklin Street and explained that the development would be consistent with several of the City’s strategic plans including the Municipal

Development Plan and the Naugatuck River Greenway Plan. Ms. Malanca provided information regarding grant funds that would be available for the project, discussed the challenges for developing the property, and explained why Pennrose was selected as the preferred developer. She also described the plan for developing 100 Franklin Street, addressed concerns regarding tax incentives and the impact that the development would have on Torrington Public Schools, and explained some of the positive outcomes that could result from the development, including a rise in property values, increased foot traffic for downtown businesses, and increased opportunities to develop the rest of the area.

Mr. Cloud discussed his company's partnership with Pennrose and expressed his interest in supporting the development of downtown Torrington.

Councilor Ruwet expressed her concerns regarding tax abatements and questioned whether Pennrose had experience with owner-occupied developments. Mr. Adams stated that Pennrose has experience with owner-occupied units, but explained that not as much state funding is available for home ownership.

Councilor Soliani requested additional clarification regarding the type of units that would be available for rent. Mr. Adams clarified that there would be 60 units available for rent at a wide range of price points, with 25% of the units priced at the market rate. He stated that the rental rate for units would range from \$319/month to \$1600/month and eligibility would be based on income level to ensure that tenants could afford the rent. Mr. Adams also clarified that the development would be intended to attract working-class families and noted that there would be restrictions on the number of people living in each unit.

Councilor Rubino requested clarification regarding the finances for the project. Mr. Adams explained that the application for funding from the state is due November 6, 2019. Mayor Carbone clarified that the details pertaining to sewer and building permit fees would be part of the contract negotiations.

Councilor Cavagnero requested clarification regarding the type of materials that would be used for construction and expressed his concerns regarding soil contamination. Mr. Adams clarified that the complex would be constructed with brick and Mayor Carbone explained that the City would have approximately 1.2 million dollars with funding through the DECD and the EPA Revolving Long Fund to address the contamination. Councilor Cavagnero also expressed his concerns regarding the amount of low-income housing in Torrington and the impact that the development would have on the Board of Education and Torrington Public Schools. Mr. Adams explained Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and Ms. Malanca and Mayor Carbone explained how the development would help to attract and retain young people.

Councilor Ruwet expressed her support and called for the motion to approve the MOU with Pennrose. Councilor Soliani seconded the motion and the Council voted with four votes in favor and one opposed (Councilor Cavagnero) to approve the MOU.

Blight Hearing Officer's Report

Blight Enforcement Officer Ashley Clement gave a report on blight enforcement in the City. She explained that blight enforcement in Torrington is complaint driven and her goal is to bring properties into compliance. Ms. Clement presented a spreadsheet showing all blight enforcement activities that occurred since the revised blight ordinance was adopted on September 18, 2017. She reported that she has been successful in bringing approximately 50% of the cited properties into compliance.

Councilor Soliani asked if the City has issued fines for any blighted properties. Mayor Carbone explained that the citations identified in the report were notices from the City informing property owners that fines had commenced. She stated that the City made the fines significant enough to warrant legal proceedings if and when property owners do not address their violations. Atty. Muschell further explained that the cases get referred to Corporation Counsel after the fines exceed \$10,000 at which point they may result in legal proceedings with the possibility of foreclosure. He credited Ms. Clement for bringing nearly half of the properties into compliance. Councilors Soliani, Ruwet, and Simon also thanked the Blight Enforcement Officer for her work.

Building Dept. Report

On a motion by Councilor Rubino, seconded by Councilor Simon, the Council voted unanimously to accept the Building Department's report for August, 2019.

Tax Collector Refunds

On a motion by Councilor Simon, seconded by Councilor Ruwet, the Council voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the Tax Collector and authorize the 33 tax refunds indicated on the list dated October 21, 2019. Councilor Soliani requested an update on the vehicle immobilization program to collect delinquent car taxes that the Tax Collector previously considered implementing.

On a motion by Councilor Ruwet, seconded by Councilor Soliani, the Council herein acting as the WPCA voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the Tax Collector and authorize the four sewer usage refunds indicated on the list dated October 21, 2019.

Business by Dept. Heads

On a motion by Councilor Simon, seconded by Councilor Ruwet, the Council voted unanimously to consider business by Department Heads. No business was reported.

Business by the Mayor and Council Members

On a motion by Councilor Simon, seconded by Councilor Rubino, the Council voted unanimously to consider business by the Mayor and Council members.

Councilor Cavagnero stated that he believes future City Councils and Boards of Education will regret the decision to approve the MOU with Pennrose for the development of 100 Franklin Street.

Councilor Rubino asked Mr. Drew how long the City's sewer permits are valid for and Mr. Drew reported that each permit is valid for one year.

Open to Public for Agenda Items Only

On a motion by Councilor Rubino, seconded by Councilor Simon, the Council voted unanimously to open the meeting to the public to discuss agenda items only.

Gary Eucalitto expressed his frustration regarding the Council's vote to approve the MOU with Pennrose. He voiced his concerns about the potential cost to clean up the contamination at 100 Franklin Street and urged the Council to put the City's education system first.

Sharon Waagner expressed her concerns regarding the tax abatement for Pennrose to develop 100 Franklin Street and emphasized the importance of supporting the school district. She also commended Ms. Clement on her work as Blight Enforcement Officer.

Nicholas Tella, Jr. expressed his disappointment regarding the Council's vote to approve the MOU with Pennrose and stated that he and his family would be leaving Torrington due to the taxes and over-burdened school system.

Adjournment

On a motion by Councilor Rubino, seconded by Councilor Ruwet, the Council voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Jonathan R. Draper, Asst. City Clerk

ATTEST:


CAROL L. ANDERSON, MMC
CITY CLERK