

THIRD TAXING DISTRICT
Of the City of Norwalk
Library Adhoc Committee Meeting
April 15, 2014

ATTENDANCE: Commissioners: Charles Yost, Chairman; David Brown;
Debora Goldstein; Dr. Michael Intrieri, Treasurer

STAFF: James Smith, General Manager, Stan Siegel, East Norwalk
Library Director

OTHER: East Norwalk Association: Jim Anderson, President;
David Castle, Marlene DeBellis, Katherine Cray, Kevin Emro,
Sarah Mann, Nancy Stephanek

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Yost called the meeting to order at 8:03 p.m. and asked the Commissioners of the Third Taxing District to introduce themselves. He then asked the members of the East Norwalk Association to introduce themselves, and those in attendance are as listed above.

Mr. Yost stated that this was the first meeting in partnering with the East Norwalk Association in choosing a consultant for the Master Plan funded by the Third Taxing District. He stated that there will be a public meeting on May 8, 2014 at 6:45 p.m. at Marvin Elementary School with moderator John Hartwell. Mr. Yost stated that the goal of the meeting is to engage the community, gather and display information on the scope of the RFP for consultants on the Master Plan.

Mr. Anderson asked for a point of order on the agenda that calls for public comment as the first item but this was not done.

Public Comments

Ms. Mann stated that the Association held an Executive Session tonight to discuss the Master Plan as discussed at the Third Taxing District Annual Meeting in March 2014. She stated that they took a vote and it was unanimously agreed that the Association will look at the plan themselves and will seek professional advice if required.

Mr. Siegel stated that the word communication is something that he wanted to elaborate upon as the challenge here is the lack of communication on the issue.

Mr. Siegel asked the members if he had permission to speak on behalf of the Board and it was noted that this was acceptable for him to do so. He stated that the underlying issue here is that the Third Taxing District does not have the authority to tell the Association what should be done with regard to the Library.

Mr. Yost stated that this was not the intention of tonight's meeting to discuss district authority, but was under the impression that this was a work session to determine the next steps of the process.

Ms. Mann stated that based on the agenda issued and posted by the TTD this was not the interpretation of the purpose of the meeting.

Mr. Siegel stated that the electors have given the Association the go ahead to enable \$20,000 to hire a consultant, but the concept of a consultant for the Library was not voted upon. The premise that a consultant is necessary is premature and does not exist. What the Board should be doing as far as the further direction of the Library is not within the purview or oversight of the Third Taxing District.

Mr. Anderson stated that this issue would be similar to management of the Fire Department. Just because the TTD owns the building they have no managerial or operational oversight over day-to-day Library operations.

Mr. Yost stated that the TTD was merely doing their due diligence to oversee the allocation of the item with the funding approved for by the district electors at the annual meeting.

Mr. Siegel stated that the public did not give authority to the TTD to manage this but merely asked for a grant and was not awarding or given oversight ever on past or future operations of the East Norwalk Library.

Ms. Goldstein stated that this was not entirely true as \$20,000 for a Master Plan was authorized by the district and voted upon at the annual meeting, which suggests oversight, and cooperation with management on the process. She added that with any municipality, there is due diligence as part of the process of input, as this would be a waste of money if it will not be used what it was designated for. She added that the funding was a result of the Commission being asked to go through a wish list of items needed and there is an expectation of cooperation with the TTD for oversight of the expenditures.

Mr. Siegel stated that the key word used by Ms. Goldstein is suggests, not mandate, which is what the TTD is doing with the funding approval. He added that the assumption is not what the electors have asked or approved, and that it is the East Norwalk Library Master Plan, not the TTD Master Plan.

FINAL

Mr. Yost stated that one can make a case that TTD involvement is required for spending district money and if no one will monitor how it is used, the Board could decide to retain it and just say thank you very much for the money.

Ms. Goldstein said the TTD just can't give the money away without governance; it is a line item in the budget of which the Commissioners have oversight.

Ms. Mann asked if there was discussion of this in a regular TTD meeting, and Mr. Yost replied that the district had discussed this before the annual meeting. Ms. Mann stated that she was concerned with what was discussed prior to coming to this meeting.

There was an exchange of comments with regard to when this was discussed and at which meeting, and if meeting minutes are posted on the website.

Ms. Goldstein stated that it would be in the minutes for the regular District meeting prior to the annual meeting. She added that funding an item in the budget without fiscal responsibility is what was pointed out at the annual meeting during the budget discussion.

Ms. Mann stated that the Library is in good financial shape, the audit report is clean, and there are no red flags. She feels like the Board has been hit over the head with a 2x4 and this could have been avoided with a discussion of what the \$20,000 be spent on. She added that a power play was unnecessary and it is not appropriate to be slammed with a 2x4. The Board's perception is that they have worked hard for the best interest of the Library and were looking for cooperation and a healthy relationship with the TTD Board rather than blaming the Library Board and taking credit for fixing its problems.

Mr. Yost stated that he wanted to make sure the District will get the best bang for their buck.

Dr. Intrieri stated that he is new on the Commission and is the Treasurer with no voting power and wanted all to know that he came here tonight with the expectation to work together as a team and to listen to comments from the Association relative to comments made at the annual meeting. He read from those minutes and highlighted statements such as more services for the tax dollars spent, make use of the history room, improve facilities, make handicap accessible, and expand the basement. He stated that the goal was to enhance and upgrade the building, and this was the feeling for the meeting and the expectation and he is sorry for any misunderstanding that the Library Board has, as that was not the intent of the meeting.

Ms. Mann stated that the statement she made tonight expressed the consensus of the board and Mr. Yost asked if it was a unanimous vote. Mr. Anderson said it was unanimous.

FINAL

Ms. Goldstein asked if this attempt can be overlooked and the clumsy approach forgiven and have this false start done over.

Ms. Mann said the Association wants to facilitate and examine if there is a need to hire a consultant, and we want to be in the driver's seat. Ms. Cray stated that she feels \$20,000 is much too high and not a good use of the money, and that based on the size of the budget, there is no consultant needed.

Ms. Goldstein stated that her intention coming into this meeting was to form a steering committee to develop more detail and identify the scope of the project to bring all ideas and information to the Table.

Mr. Siegel said if that was the case, why was a public meeting already scheduled?

Mr. Yost asked, "When was the last public survey of services done?" Mr. Siegel replied it is being done now with "Love Your Library Because" cards.

Mr. Yost added that this is very disappointing because the district cannot even voice ideas.

Ms. Mann said the Board needs to start somewhere. We have just started with increasing membership and usage with 18+ age membership guidelines. Mr. Anderson read from the Bylaws on membership terms, and Mr. Yost asked for a copy of the Bylaws.

Mr. Yost stated that the analogy used by Mr. Anderson on comparing this issue with that of the Fire Department is not the same, as the District does not have knowledge or managerial input on how to operate a fire station.

Mr. Anderson stated that this does apply and stated, "Why would the District presume they know how to run the Library?"

Mr. Yost replied that we do know how things can be done in a better way.

There was further exchange of comments on clarifying the issue and next steps.

Ms. Mann stated that the Board would reconvene, and based upon the statements made tonight, will come back to the TTD with the next steps.

Mr. Brown stated that he came here with the preconceived perception of comments from the annual meeting. It would be nice to have an open dialogue rather than what happened tonight. We should start with how can we make it better and come to a meeting of the minds.

FINAL

Mr. Siegel stated that as Ms. Mann has read the Association vote and now indicated the Board would reconvene, and based upon the statement read tonight, come back to the TTD with the next steps.

Ms. Mann stated that this meeting tonight was not entirely unproductive.

Ms. Goldstein stated that the Commissioners have had meetings with respect to this trying to figure out how to structure the Steering Committee, but the TTD has other business to attend to and there needs to be a timeline for the Library plan.

Mr. Yost stated that this was the intention, and unfortunately we can't do that without cooperation of the Library Board.

Ms. Mann asked to just "knock off" the power play tactics and these are two equal entities. Normally a meeting agenda is done jointly as a partnership not forced this way, and there needs to be equal input and direction.

Ms. Goldstein stated that in order to proceed with an Ad-Hoc Committee there needs to be parameters set with voting authority such as the way the commission is set up.

Dr. Intrieri stated that we should all think positively and come to work cooperatively with the intent to collaborate on ways to improve the Library.

**** MS. GOLDSTEIN MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES AND TO
DISREGARD THE REMAINDER OF THE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING
BEYOND PUBLIC COMMENTS.
** MR. BROWN SECONDED THE MOTION.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Adjournment

**** MS. GOLDSTEIN MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** MR. BROWN SECONDED.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Knox,
Telesco Secretarial Services