

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
PUBLIC HEARING
February 9, 2015

PRESENT: Mayor Sellier
Trustee Schwarzfeld
Trustee Winston
Attorney McLaughlin
Manager Pierpont

ABSENT: Trustee Annunziata
Trustee Vandenberg

CONTINUATION OF THE PUBLIC HEARING ON CANAL ROAD URBAN RENEWAL PLAN

Mayor Sellier gave a brief background on the plans to develop a commercial tax base to help alleviate property taxes. He said that this idea went back as least to Mayor Kiernan and perhaps even before that. The Mayor noted that two shopping areas on Pelham Parkway, Post Road Plaza and Pelham Manor Shopping Plaza with Fairway Market and BJ's respectively, have been great successes. The Village engaged the planning firm AFRF to find out the best use of the Canal Road Property. It was determined that having a single property would allow the best and highest use of property. This has been going on quite a while with numerous meetings with property owners and the owners couldn't come to an agreement. Mayor Sellier told the owners that the Village could use the power of eminent domain. Because of that action, a number of property owners have gotten together. Mr. Fesjian's property is also in this area. Mayor Sellier said that in his view, fiduciary duty is to all residents not just one, but also said that the power of eminent domain should be used sparingly. He said that he and the Board take very seriously the concerns of Mr. Fesjian. The Mayor said that he and the Village Manager have gone down there several times, looked at alternatives and spoken with other owners. It is our conclusion that it is possible to carve out Mr. Fesjian's property without jeopardizing the project. The Mayor said that he will ask for a Motion to approve the Urban Renewal Plan excluding Mr. Fesjian's property.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Robert Fesjian, 660 Colonial Avenue, thanked the many people who supported him with their comments and the Board for this decision.

Letters supporting the exclusion of Mr. Fesjian's property from the Canal Road Urban Renewal Plan are attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Trustee Neal Schwarzfeld told Mr. Fesjian that he made a convincing argument for excluding his property from the Canal Road Urban Renewal Plan.

Rob Beyer, principal of Amincor, said that he thought property owner Adi Altmark was going to present a design tonight. The Mayor said that he received an e-mail saying that the presentation was not quite ready. Mr. Beyer said that he agreed with AKRF's study and thought that development should be done in a comprehensive manner. He said that the property requires an anchor store. The parcels widen out in back. Mr. Beyer brought some materials to demonstrate. He showed an aerial photograph. Mr. Beyer said that he also agreed that Mr. Fesjian's site was not necessary for the success of the project. He showed the de-mapping of Canal Road and stressed the importance of not developing this property in a piecemeal fashion. He advocated for a comprehensive approach to developing the property. He said that the retail market is in a sub-prime financial crisis. He said that brick and mortar may become obsolete with the internet and said that there is a need to have the right tenant mix probably with a big box relationship. He said that the main property owners are not in attendance and said that he is operating in a vacuum without them. He stressed that you have to manage expectations. He spoke of the cost of improvements and said he had a pretty good idea of what it costs to develop property.

Mayor Sellier said that Mr. Beyer was welcome to come back to the next meeting.

Joseph Ingrassia, Vice President of Amincor, said that it took five years to foreclose on the former Imperia Brothers property. He said that he has worked with Rob Beyer on serious environmental issues,

riparian issues, the bulkhead, assembly issues and property owners' thoughts on property values. He said he agreed with Rob Beyer on comprehensive development. He said if it isn't done in a comprehensive manner, it will be a failed development or no development. He said that there needs to be rational development and the owners have to understand worth and the correct valuation of property.

Gina Lubin, said that she is a commercial real estate broker and resident, said that a big box retailer was needed for the area and stressed that development must be done right. She said that the Village should pick someone who can execute the plan.

Sara Whitney, said that she is a resident who has worked with Robe Beyer on a huge rehabilitation project. She said that he oversaw details and was extremely detail oriented.

Tony Marrella, 103 Iden Avenue, spoke about a linear problem and asked if Mr. Beyer could work backwards. He asked if you know what exists, what type of retail establishment would you look to develop?

Robe Beyer said that a number of establishments are already in the area. Home Depot became a BJ's. So a home improvement center might be a consideration. He said that you want desirable establishments with reasonable credit that people will frequent. He gave an example of a loading bay at the back of the store that faces Pelham Parkway not being desirable for retail and suggested that cars might be too close to the river. He said that as much as he loves bookstores, they wouldn't work for commercial development. Mr. Beyer said that you can see what works and said that Levin, Post Road Plaza, is now dynamic. He said if you do it right, it works.

Trustee Schwarzfeld said that at the end of the day, the Board does not choose the tenants – the developer does.

Maggie Klein, editor of The Pelham Weekly, asked if the concept of the ice skating rink and entertainment center were still being considered.

Mayor Sellier said that he was not sure that would be the best use for the property. He said that the planner gave that idea - a rink with retail.

Rob Beyer said that the plan the Village has developed is a sound plan, but it is a narrow site without much visibility. He said that a large box store can only be sited at the rear which is where the property widens. He said that you have to create a place that tenants will like and be able to afford.

Mayor Sellier said that when he was on the Planning Board, Lorri Gorman was Mayor. He said that she spent a lot of time contacting upscale stores for Pelham Parkway and they weren't interested. Approximately eighty percent of the people, who shop there, are from the Bronx. He said that he would love to see an Apple store but said that's not going to happen.

MOTION TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Sellier made a motion to close the public hearing.

After discussion and upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

RESOLVED, That Public Hearing on the Canal Road Urban Renewal Plan be and hereby is closed.

Clerk