

West Norwalk Association November 2020 Board Meeting

Date: November 2, 2020

Members in attendance: Isabelle Hargrove, Ken D'Arinzo, Anthony Carrano, Stephen Galyas, Brian Forschino, Rob Notley

Guests in attendance: None

This meeting took place via Zoom.

The meeting commenced at 7:33pm.

Old Business

No old business was discussed.

New Business

283 Richards Avenue Property

On October 18, neighbors that live near the 283 Richards Avenue property (vacant lot) reached out to Anthony Carrano to discuss their concerns about a potential buyer of the lot. The following paragraph contains a summary of an email sent to Anthony by a concerned neighbor:

According to one neighbor, in August, a man (henceforth "interested party") with New York license plates began looking at the property. When one of the neighbors asked the interested party what he was planning to build, his response was "a house for my son." The neighbor approached by the interested party informed him that all neighbors on that street are on well and septic, making it a good choice for a single-family home. A few weeks later, the interested party asked the same neighbor if he would be interested in selling their house so he can live next to his son; the neighbor declined the offer. A few days after this conversation, the interested party approached another neighbor and inquired about buying their house so he can build a Sikh Temple and School on the property. The Sikh Temple which the interested party is affiliated with is located at 622 West Avenue in Norwalk. The neighbor who reached out to Anthony is very concerned about such a structure being built on this property.

Isabelle commented that several neighbors also reached out to her regarding this property.

Anthony pointed out that the interested party originally lied about his intended use of the property.

Ken informed the attendees that the sale of the property went through on October 30, 2020. Ken reached out to Tom Livingston and inquired about any variances that the owner needs to

handle regarding the property; Tom was not aware of any variances. Ken believes that the interested party will need to reach out to the city regarding variances.

Isabelle briefly discussed the [Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act \(RLUIPA\)](#), an act that “gives churches and other religious institutions a way to avoid zoning law restrictions on their property use” (quoted text taken from [here](#)). The RLUIPA can potentially be used to protect the interested party’s decision to build a temple and school on the 1-acre 283 Richards Avenue property. When the interested party asked for zoning, the zoning application was denied, but the interested party countered the rejection by claiming that according to RLUIPA, he can build whatever is needed to practice his religion. If the interested party wins the zoning case, the interest party’s lawyer can sue the city for their charges. This is very similar to what happened several years ago regarding the mosque. Isabelle informed the neighbors about RLUIPA so they can research it on their own time.

Brian asked if RLUIPA can force the city to tie the property into city water, which would result in significant costs.

Anthony asked Isabelle when the neighbors reached out to her. Isabelle responded that they reached out to her several weeks ago.

Anthony noted that the concerned neighbors reached out to him in hopes that the West Norwalk Association could provide funding necessary to fight this proposition.

Brian acknowledged that the RLUIPA may be a problem if the city does not want to spend the money required to fight the act.

Anthony informed the attendees that he will talk to Steven Kleppin in regards to zoning for this proposition.

Rob expressed a concern that this may become a situation similar to the mosque several years ago.

Isabelle commented that most cases that utilize RLUIPA are settled to avoid the spending of significant amounts of money.

Anthony asked Ken if the contingencies on the sale of the property were waived. Ken said that he does not know.

Ken clarified that he does not know who bought the property; all he knows is that the sale was closed.

Isabelle informed the meeting attendees that the concerned neighbors have reached out to Mayor Harry Rilling.

Brian asked if one of the neighbors who knows the previous owners of the property can reach out to them and find out who bought the property.

The meeting concluded at 8:08pm.