

April 15, 2008

Planning Commission

Proceedings by Authority

State of New York,
City of Jamestown, ss:
Mayor's Conference Room

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission for the City of Jamestown, New York was held on Tuesday, April 15, 2008 at 3:30 p.m.

Members Present: Chairwoman Martha Zenns, Joe Trusso, Douglas Champ, Jeffrey Lehman

Members Absent: James Olson, Paul Andalora, Jeff Nelson

Others Present: Amanda Bleck, Bill Rice, Jennifer Harkness and Dr. Len Faulk

Chairwoman Zenns called the meeting to order.

ABANDONMENT OF 170' OFF OSMER STREET

Mr. Lehman: We have a request from Lake Shore Paving to abandon 170' off the dead end of Osmer Street. I don't know if anybody's been out there to look at it. You wouldn't even know it's a street. If you look to the other end, there's about a 30' drop off from the train tracks so it's not a street that we've ever looked to extend. They've gotten a sign-off from the adjacent neighbor saying that he's okay with it and that he's not interested in the property. At this point, I would recommend the abandonment.

Ms. Zenns: Is it being used currently?

Mr. Lehman: Currently it's actually being used as if it were abandoned. You can see from the map here there's an old barn that was built on it long ago so that kind of cleans up that issue.

Ms. Zenns: So essentially the intended use is current use?

Mr. Lehman: Yes.

Ms. Zenns: Okay.

Mr. Lehman: The other thing – it will give them a little bit more control as to people getting in and out of that site. I have a little problem with people dumping on the back site nights and weekends.

Mr. Rice: So that will eliminate that problem?

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Mr. Lehman: Well, it will make it easier for them to fence it off. We get a lot of complaints from the neighbors about people going up there and dumping.

Ms. Zenns: This is a recommendation to the City Council?

Mr. Lehman: Right.

Ms. Zenns: Okay. So motion to accept...Can I have a motion? A second?

Mr. Trusso: I motion to accept.

Mr. Champ: I second the motion.

Ms. Zenns: Any further discussion?

Motion carried.

STRATEGIC PLANNING & PARTNERSHIP COMMISSION

Ms. Zenns: Actually, I found when I went over our last meeting, actually the motions don't require a second. We can get by with just one.

Ms. Zenns passed out information from the Strategic Planning & Partnerships Commission. Again, Len Faulk and Jennifer Harkness of the Strategic Planning & Partnership Commission are here. As you recall, we have talked about working on revitalization issues especially in regards to the neighborhoods in the City of Jamestown. They're working on similar issues in terms of their Commission then instead of going in separate directions or potentially duplicating or even working against each other, that it would be a good idea to invite them and have them talk to us. Greg Rabb was also invited. He has other business in Buffalo that he's at today, so Jennifer is Co-Chair along with Greg and then Len's been kind of working with this for quite a few years. Right? I mean, this is not new.

Mr. Faulk: As long as the Commission has existed...

Ms. Zenns: Okay.

Mr. Faulk: 12 years.

Ms. Zenns: So it's not a new idea, but one that still needs attention.

Mr. Faulk: Right. And we haven't always focused on neighborhood revitalization – other issues over the years – and they've changed and been updated and this is a new initiative.

Ms. Harkness: And really the neighborhood issue keeps coming back to the forefront. Anytime you go out to the community and ask what their priorities are, they continuously come up as a priority and really Len has led this action team, so I really would like to turn it over to you.

Mr. Faulk: Okay. Thanks Jennifer. This is a process...the Commission as you know is charged to make recommendations to City Council and they are about various initiatives and also will assist in the partnership development – working with other organizations in the community, other communities – so it's a broad base. Let's bring some more people to the table to work on issues. So that's kind of the function of the Commission that has members broadly of the community and representing community organizations as well as residents. Neighborhood revitalization was identified as a priority over a year and a half ago. The Neighborhood Revitalization Committee was established, and I think in your documents, there's a list of the members of that task force who started to meet in January of last year. We met over six months. Each month...basically a monthly meeting, updating the committees, their progress and then in July finally developed a series of draft recommendations on a neighborhood revitalization strategy. This is separate from a comprehensive plan. It's an action strategy so it's not to be confused with a more comprehensive, let's say, neighborhood zoning, the Codes, and all of that kind of thing. So this is an action plan and the stage where we are now, there's been a lot of folks involved. There have been indeed movements on several of the items – I'll give you an update, but I think key to our discussion is broadening the team, involving the Commission itself on the actions, taking a look at the kinds of things that the City itself could be a part of the initiative, of course, which it is. The Department of Development folks were at all of our meetings and were part of the recommendations since a year ago January. Basically, what I could do is kind of update you but I guess maybe have a discussion on how the Commission would like to proceed in terms of the partnership, and I think, representation of the community here as it plans short term/long term.

We basically have two recommendations: (1) to look at the strategic priorities which is basically a set of action items to begin immediately and (2) that came out of the task force was that we wanted to recommend to the City that it begins the process of deliberating about establishing a Neighborhood Revitalization Plan similar to the Urban Design Plan which as you know has resulted in very specific action plans as well as an implementation of the plan which was the Renaissance Corporation, etc.. Neighborhoods are so important that we need to look at how we might add to the structure that we already have and the momentum over the years...the City has been a primary leader in revitalization efforts. The amount of funds and expertise within the neighborhoods for decades has been there. The next step, I think, is a broader involvement of the community – and when I'm talking about the community, I'm talking about people in the neighborhoods, the neighborhood organizations, talking about community institutions, banks, real estate, etc., insurance companies...who's there at the table, who's there at the table at other communities who have had success in neighborhood revitalization strategies? So this is a set of recommendations which gives you a sense for our priorities. We have three main strategies. Quickly we can look at those which is (1) you build

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neighborhood revitalization based on the strength and involvement of citizens in neighborhoods and our recommendation is really that we ought to support those neighborhoods, support the development of additional neighborhood organizations such as Northside Pride that's been very successful as an organization, as an organizational model. We have suggested that the City could create a City "Office of Neighborhoods" that would be kind of an information gatherer. There are different models. I've talked to the Mayor on this and he suggested that these things are being looked into. It could be. There are a variety of communities that do have an Office of Neighborhoods. There's a great model in Riverside, California and I don't have copies for everyone, but they have a great website where they've organized neighborhoods throughout the City – there's a Commission or a partnership and they assist in providing the leadership development of people in neighborhoods. They have an on-line tool book of how to organize the neighborhoods and I think that's kind of our sense is how to support these efforts. Secondly in addition to what has happened through Northside and through CHRIC that has a Northside initiative, some local folks in CHRIC and myself included, Lillian Ney was part of the group that couldn't make it, we went to Boston to a kind of neighborhood organization summit conference. As part of that, we proposed as an incentive item to come from Neighbor Works, funds to develop a neighborhood website. Well, Neighbor Works has come back and said "we're going to fund it and we're going to use our own technical people to help you develop a website." So John Murphy, in fact just today, sent out a notice that he's establishing a committee to develop a website which will be a link for Northside Pride but all neighborhoods to join in. It'll be an information source, hopefully we can persuade Riverside, California to borrow their toolkit because it's great and have a variety of features on the website, a section for youth and youth involvement is critical in neighborhoods that are successful. So that has moved forward. That's our first priority – is neighborhood revitalization organizations.

The second priority is marketing Jamestown neighborhoods and developing part of this, I mentioned the website. A lot of concerted action needs to bring forth a positive marketing neighborhoods. "Why is it that I want to live in a Jamestown neighborhood?" There's been a lot of very successful neighborhood marketing that's gone on – there's a definite approach to it. You don't sell what's wrong with your neighborhood – you sell what's right and we have lots of things that are good.

The third strategy is promote home ownership. We're simply saying "let's continue to support that." Chuck Cornell, who's been very supportive of this, introduced the County Housing Trust Fund that's being looked at. This is a county-wide action for the first time in my memory – Joe's got a lot longer memory than I do, but the County itself gets directly involved in such a manner in housing. We never really traditionally thought of the County in that respect. It's been the cities, except for CHRIC, as you know I developed CHRIC because we needed a county housing corporation. But here's the County saying "we have a responsibility and actually it's an economic development tool, we have good neighborhoods, if values increase on housing, guess what pays the bill? It's property taxes. If you don't have decent property, you don't have the funding, so is it an interest to the County? I think so and now we have an example of interest in doing that. Secondly, because of the discussion, Jamestown was one of the models for being

one of the first in the County to reduce taxes for home improvements up to \$5,000. That's not done by the County. Chuck Nazzaro, as a result of these discussions and at the meeting that Chuck Cornell had, has introduced that legislation. What does that mean? It means that everyone in the County now, including Jamestown residents, pay their county taxes, get the \$5,000 exemption which is a sliding scale – it's not a full exemption – on your City taxes if it passes on your County taxes. Why wasn't that ever thought about before? Well, we haven't talked about this in a broad way and essentially that's what I think the plan with some publicity does.

The fourth strategy is a broader strategy of home improvement and rental improvement since City recommendations again, these are things that are nothing new to those of us that have been in this field for decades. The City is imminently involved and we had some additional suggestions. That's my update and I think at this point, we need to look at roles of the Commission, roles of the Department of Development, roles of the Planning Commission in terms of how we can support each other to get a plan implemented, so I take your advice.

Ms. Harkness: The home ownership programs – Northwest Savings Bank partners with Northside Pride – we have a down payment assistance program called First Front Door and people can get up to \$5,000 towards closing costs which is really a great program that's available. We're very much behind the whole Northside and the neighborhood initiative. There's other things that we're talking about, but we're not really ready to roll it out, but there's involvement from the private sector as well.

Ms. Zenns: Is there a commitment cap to that, and I think yes, once you do start advertising you could possibly see a lot of activity...

Ms. Harkness: There was a press release on it. We haven't done an ad campaign. We don't do a whole lot of advertising as a bank. There's a cap of \$5,000.

Mr. Lehman: Hopefully, the media could get on that because it's a huge thing.

Mr. Trusso: Is there any grants involved with this?

Dr. Faulk: With what Joe?

Mr. Trusso: With repairing, remodeling, refurbishing...

Dr. Faulk: There are an alphabet soup of programs out there with grants and loans and incentives. Those are generally run through organizations like CHRIC, CODE, COI, and so they're the folks that are kind of the experts in grants and loans to qualify low-moderate income folks. Part of the website for example is to say "where do I go for assistance?" What the City has had over the home ownership, rehab....so essentially it's "where do I go?" Some of these programs don't get used well. Some of the home ownership things that have been there, I'm not sure it's something you can say, and have not had the kind of customers. So how do we get that message out to folks in the broader

community? That's why a web site tied into the City site, tied into real estate brokers, tied into CODE, COI, might be helpful.

Mr. Trusso: If I had a property in one of these areas that you're going to lift up, why should I do it? What advantage is it to me? I remodel house maybe \$10-20,000. My taxes go up accordingly...is there tax breaks that are given to the people that deliver just like the ones that had on the south side where you build a home and you had partial taxes forgiven for a certain period of time. Is there anything that would suck these people in for an advantage other than remodeling their home? Is there an advantage to this financially?

Dr. Faulk: Well, we just talked on it – there are city tax incentives for the first \$5,000 of a remodel as well as tax incentives for building a new home you also get a sliding scale. There are programs, and I can't go through all of them, I used to know them when I was in the business, but there are low interest payment programs for folks that are doing rehab; there are low down payment programs, shaved interest rate programs, yes, there are a lot of vehicles out there.

Mr. Trusso: So it is beneficial to the City, take these blighted areas off and it's beneficial to the people that own the property.

Dr. Faulk: That's right. And they've already said that if you have one bad house in the neighborhood, there's an automatic decline in value of the other houses there. So if we get that bad apple fixed up, everybody appreciates it in the neighborhood. I think the other part of that is when you have neighborhood groups that are watching out for each other that are actually lending a hand for some folks who aren't able to do the painting; I mean on the Northside they've gone and painted a house when someone wasn't able. There are neighborhood fix-ups – the web sites that I've looked at like Office of Neighborhoods, etc. will have a front yard of the month – those folks that have got the best landscaping...so you reward the folks that are doing a good job, you also advertise – “here's a property of the week in a neighborhood,” an opportunity for coming in and doing work on this. I think the long term is for folks in the neighborhood is the question of “If I'm going to put something in this – how do I know that I'm just going to be the only one and the property owner next to me who isn't going to do a thing will take me down. That's where I think strong neighborhood organizations in cooperation with City Codes and so forth, will have a big impact. In the late '80's, we worked on Fulton Street. Fulton Street was a street that was actually completely declined. The City came in the neighborhood for example, took a picture of every house on the block, they wrote down the things that were wrong, they came to the City and the City actually went out and put on permits of non-occupancy. What happened, because there was a neighborhood group that also got from the City street improvements and so forth, a landlord came in and said “this neighborhood looks like it wants to go in a different direction,” bought up the houses that were non-occupancy, fixed them up...another house was a crack house – that was bought through a local agency and then sold on home ownership, but there are things that can be done to change neighborhoods. That's crucial when the residents have an impact and don't tolerate substandard.

Mr. Trusso: By the way, about 20-25 years ago, I can't remember exactly, there was legislation in the County to do something similar to that. We had a lot of County land, whoever decided to build on County land, your taxes would be forgiven for a certain amount of time. But there was enough people that lived outside the metropolitan areas, that say "well, that would just benefit the people that are building the house – how about us?" "How about the farmers?" There's no benefit to them.

Ms. Zenns: I have a question. In terms of the term "neighborhood" and obviously Northside PRIDE – I guess they somewhat determined what is their neighborhood. How do you know when one starts, one finishes, is it self-selected? Is that something that would be better pre-determined?

Dr. Faulk: My response is the City has a neighborhood map that has 18 neighborhoods. It's been in existence for 30 years and it makes sense, but a neighborhood is where people identify themselves and where they're willing to do something. So I think it's an organic process, it's a process that we had some neighbors on Fulton Street – they said we want a neighborhood association two blocks – they've got a lot of work to do in two blocks. So, you know I think it's more critical to say we're going to help you kind of form and support a leadership, but it's up to you to say where is your neighborhood or where do you want to define it and where are you willing to recruit folks from etc.. So it may end up to be a combination of both pre-determined and organic – I think at this point it's more important that our neighborhood watch groups, and maybe that's one of the foundations, for developing the neighborhood groups, but I think basically it's a matter of leadership. I think my experience over time has been the smaller the better in terms of neighborhood size, there's only so much a small group of people can deal with. I think the Northside PRIDE is a 6-7 block area and that's enough. I know there's 135 residents or something...that's enough.

Mr. Trusso: Chuck determined what he wanted, he went out and had some applications printed, then went door-to-door in the neighborhood, passed them out, had a meeting and those people came to the meetings and they determined what their neighborhood was going to be – the people that attended the meeting. He just passed out a lot of stuff and the people that showed up made the decisions and that quite honestly is moving real good.

Ms. Harkness: He's a resident of that community – right?

Mr. Trusso: No. He is on Dewey Place. It's not a bad area – it's a nice area, but there could be a lot of improvement there.

Dr. Faulk: And that is the model – it's the door-to-door – that's how someone who has run for election has...and that's where the City Council legislators have a great deal to add to the process because who else has gone door-to-door?

Ms. Zenns: I liked your comment in terms of businesses also being neighbors and I knew someone who lived on Martin Road and he talked about how he loved his neighbors and he went on to say Pizza Hut, McDonald's and Burger King, so that was what was important to him so we really have to recognize that in different parts of the City, it is different. It might be all residential, it might be a mix. Since I moved, I miss that in terms of that mix of residential and business and in terms of the proximity.

Mr. Trusso: Everybody's moving. It's not that their...there are very good homes there and there are good streets, good lawns, the whole works...but they're moving – you moved, Sam moved – everybody's moving out of that area. When I first started representing that area I think I knew about 90% of the people. If I know 20% - I know a lot there.

Ms. Zenns: I mean there is a lot of transition...

Mr. Trusso: Yes...just moving for whatever reason. Why'd you move?

Ms. Zenns: Personal reasons.

Mr. Trusso: Oh, okay. I mean it would give us an insight as to why people are moving. I just don't understand it.

Mr. Champ: Well, you hit on some of the issues that I wanted to talk about. One was how you're going to throw this out to the community so the success story of Northside PRIDE can be replicated and the avenue for that, because as much as your efforts are documented and everybody at this Commission wants to participate with you, I don't know that the community really fully has any idea of what is available. The only way that can be done is not necessarily with the website, but I would urge that we would have, as I indicated the Year of the Neighborhood, and have discussions in specific areas where people can come to this meeting and try to increase the dialogue of why they want to be involved and what their individual problems are. One of the things like in New Orleans...the deterioration of that place because of the hurricane...they created what they call a soft mortgage. A soft mortgage basically identified in the City who can afford to own a house based on the rental that they're paying now. So if somebody can live and has to pay \$450 or \$500.00 a month for rent, why can't that money be pumped into home ownership? Well, they didn't have a enough money to make the down payment, or they didn't have enough money to make the improvements and make it habitable, but that kind of instrument in terms of a soft mortgage, multiplies itself over to home ownership and then home ownership requires the understanding of what it takes to actually own a home and how to take care of it. Around this City, there is so much violation that goes on and it can't be properly prosecuted in a lot of different ways. We have roofs that are basically unsuitable to be lived in. And a roof costs \$10,15, even \$20,000.00 to re-roof a house. In some cases, re-roofing a house costs more than what the house is worth. But nevertheless, this is allowed to go on and we can go down street after street and see where certain code violations are there and those are either being looked at or they're not serious enough to really be dealt with. So, how do we remove that? Do we have

concentrated Code enforcement programs that really come in logistically and come across in a way that forces this to be done? And then there's money allowing itself to have that happen? Over 35 years I've seen various housing assistance programs, rehabilitation programs, millions and millions of dollars have been put into rehabilitation in this City. A lot of it has been directed to either absentee landlords so that the moderate home owner has no vehicle for assistance. It's always based on income. Unfortunately, a lot of times, the income has a problem associated with home ownership. So what are we going to do about this? Where do we take all this, because a lot of these strategies are wonderful strategies, but the reality will prove itself as to how many success stories we can measure up against it.

Dr. Faulk: There's added layers here. I think what we're more familiar with are programs that largely hit the low-mod income groups. What we need to go beyond that is that we need to have kind of a full market strategy that includes all segments of the market. So we want a diversity income wise in Jamestown – we have a diversity; I think some neighborhoods however have those who have low resources who have left for investments outside the city. So one – the private sector needs to be a lot more involved because they're the ones that largely deal with kind of a full market area. So that's why (1) it needs to be more than just a city program that has incentives for those that are income qualifiable. So that's part of the strategy. The second strategy- we have a lot of questions and I won't be able to answer them all – the question is “how do we do this?” That's such a fundamental issue. If this is a strategy that one is developing a broader partnership across the community, in the private sector, in the public sector, and the not-for-profit sector – who's the champion? Who brings those folks on board? Part of that has been in terms of our strategy, is what strategy is...that is our goal to do that. How to do that, I think that's kind of a primary decision and a model that the Planning Commission could be very much involved with. Do we want that implementation strategy to be City-run? A City private partnership, do we want in the case of Riverside – they just developed a housing and neighborhoods division – they've got separate divisions that do this and that...and they have staff that actually are charged to go out and facilitate neighborhood leadership. The question is in Jamestown – who does that? The Department of Development, for example now, doesn't have the staff available to go out and help organize neighborhoods. Do we have an initiative within the City or is it using the model of Urban Design and the Renaissance Corporation to follow up? In some respects, there needs to be the development – the ongoing capacity. Certainly, we need more folks to be involved as volunteers – I'm one of those. But who hits the street and who kind of follows up on the on-going development of the strategy? Who institutionalizes that work? I think that's the question here that I think this group could be helpful on.

Mr. Trusso: Don't you have elected officials that are out there? That's what formed Northside PRIDE was an elected official – he went out and did his job. It's not only that you attend meetings as an elected official – you've got to do more than that... you've got to be involved in your district – you've got to get these people to come out and work in the district. And if they come out – they're going to work. If they don't – forget about it, they won't come out. And the second thing...are you going to get banks,

savings and loans, money market – whatever – involved in this so that they can sit down with these people and talk to them and find out if they can afford to do this? Otherwise, this is not going to go. You have to have the bankers, the savings & loans, whatever else that will do it. You have to have people from your organization sitting in on these meetings describing what they can do, how they can do it, here's the forms, fill them out and then we'll tell you if you can afford to do this, that or whatever. But I would get the elected officials involved in going out, at least getting the people into a meeting. I don't know if they can go any further than that. Chuck didn't do it, he just brought the people in and then they took over. That's why it's working.

Mr. Rice: That's the critical part of it. It's one for the elected officials to bring them together, but if they don't get involved and get on it, it fails.

Mr. Trusso: Absolutely.

Mr. Rice: It's so critical for the neighborhoods to get together and make it work.

Mr. Champ: When we have a situation where houses cannot be rehabilitated, the dollars that can be put on it just doesn't justify it, the house has to be torn down... what are we doing about looking at the model for homes for the future for Jamestown? What type of housing can be rebuilt in this City? Because let's face it – the housing stock in the City of Jamestown is pre-1940's. They are constructed with deteriorated type materials that unless it's been maintained over the years, it's been very difficult and very costly to bring them back into Code. So, therefore we have many houses that need to be torn down. There's no question about it. They're not capable of being rehabilitated. So what I'm asking is that part of your initiative is that I think we should look at a model type of a house that we could sit in the City of Jamestown that could be lived in, that could have a value attached to it, new construction for somebody to live in. I don't think that's being looked at all.

Ms. Harkness: Well we were talking about focusing on the Northside because there's so much energy already there and looking at the houses that should be torn down, they're vacant, or they're on the block right now...looking at putting together a program to demolish the house and rebuild...we're not at a point where we can lay out details on it, but that is being discussed.

Mr. Rice: There's other issues involved with that – when you take it down who's going to be responsible for that empty lot? There's a lot of different issues. But you know, your comment there...that might even be premature because if you have a dwindling population, do you need extra housing? You've got a lot of multiple layers of things that you got to start thinking about.

Mr. Lehman: We have started some of that too. Because initially, we did some of the street reconstruction – one of the things we looked at is how do we provide more off street parking? How do we make the off street parking that's there better? We've got

a number of places that went from a single family home to apartments, now they've got three or four people – they park on the front lawn. So we've tried...and actually it lended itself pretty nicely in some of the cases to provide a better situation because now I've got three off street parking spots, now I can rent three apartments and I can afford to make improvements to my property.

Mr. Champ: Some of these neighborhoods like the Northside where I've lived for over 35 years, you can't rebuild on that parcel. Okay? And what I'm saying is that parcel assemblage becomes a possibility in certain parts, there's alternative housing models that could be looked at in terms of occupancy. Because if we rely solely on the rehabilitation model, I don't know that we are really fully performing what we need to do in this City. Example: CODE has developed a housing building application. Is that what we want to see? Or do we want to see single family non-attached housing? And what is that model to be?

Ms. Harkness: Well, I think that's the point of having the neighborhood plan similar to the Urban Design Plan to clearly define the areas and where certain development happens and do we mix it all together? We've had a lot of discussion on "should we focus all low income in one area, or should we...we want every class living together." Develop that properly and...

Mr. Trusso: What happened to homesteading? We used to have homesteading in Jamestown. There were several homes on Sixth or Eighth Street that were homesteading and people are still living in them now. They were dumps. I disagree – I think that if you can get people that really want homes and there's a lot of immigrants that have come into Chautauqua County and into Jamestown that are renting now and landlords are screening their I.D. If we could get these people interested and they can do a lot of the sweat work there and once they remodel their home with the help of the City or the County or whoever, then the home is theirs. I'm sure a lot of these people would love to have their own homes and not live in row houses.

Ms. Zenns: That's the model for Habitat for Humanity – is that a partner to bring in?

Mr. Trusso: That's right.

Mr. Rice: When it comes to demographics, I think characteristics of people have changed a great deal and I think you should really think about providing different styles and types of housing for people. Some would prefer to have a row house. Some would not. I think you have to be able to accommodate a wide variety of people.

Dr. Faulk: Habitat has been involved in new construction and rehab in Jamestown.

Mr. Trusso: On Cross Street right there – they've got a couple of houses on Cross Street.

Dr. Faulk: And they built one on Chandler...

Mr. Trusso: And they've been very successful, people are living in those homes and they are prospering as far as I could see. The homes are kept up, the lawns are kept up – that's the people that really want a home.

Ms. Harkness: Well, I think Doug is right – if you're advertising in the paper, you're not going to reach...none of them read the paper; a lot of people don't get on the website but you need to go right into the communities. We had a lot of discussion on that, but who's the one to go into the neighborhoods? That falls under the marketing piece that Len said – we just haven't gotten that far to define who that champion is to bring the different agencies together. Our bank has the stuff to offer...every bank has some kind of product that they – they all want CRA credit. We have this First Front Door helps us with our CRA credit. It's a \$5,000 grant for down payment assistance. Every bank has some kind of product through Devine. But if you're not going right into the neighborhoods and letting people know what you have...we are not doing that...but that's the way to do it.

Mr. Trusso: That's why you have councilmen. That's why you have legislators. They don't find it hard during election time to go out and spend three months going through all these neighborhoods. Can't they pick out a neighborhood they would like to see this happen to and go out and talk to them and see if they can get these people into a meeting? Once you've got them into a meeting, you could explain it – Lenny and the rest of you people can explain it – the bankers and all that – you can whet their appetite. These people want to improve their properties. I know – I came from a neighborhood like that, from Franklin Street, from Chandler Street – those people for years and years and years improved their properties, went out and there was no tax breaks or anything...they improved them because they wanted to improve their properties. Today it's different. You go to the same neighborhoods and the houses are falling apart, nobody's taking care of the house because there's no organization, no pride left in that neighborhood.

Mr. Rice: When it comes to the information, I think a clearing house for the information would be a good thing to do – a one spot where they could actually touch bases with and get links to each one of those different types of areas so they can sit down and think about the stuff that sells before somebody comes in and tries to sell them. The other thing I kind of like with some of the things you're talking about is encouraging to maintain houses and keep the value up I think is the key in making this work well. By doing that your tax base is going to improve, but it also improves and maintains that level of quality within the neighborhoods and I think that's something that is suffering in spots. But I also do think there are areas that are potentially too far gone that you're going to have to have multiple layers of strategies as to how to attack this and not just one blanket all the way around.

Dr. Faulk: I mean there are lots of strategies out there.

Mr. Trusso: If you tear down a house in Jamestown, no one's going to build on that. The house is gone. The taxes are gone. What you have to do is encourage people to remodel and to refurbish homes on those properties. Tear them down – they're gone. That's it.

Mr. Lehman: Yes, but you're talking about the area – you're just talking about Chandler Street, Cross Street... I happened to be on that street last week doing some work and there's no place to park on some of those streets.

Mr. Trusso: Sure there is.

Mr. Lehman: ...on some of the streets...the side streets...

Mr. Trusso: ...on Franklin Street they made arrangements to have two parking areas down there – one on Center, the City opened that up, and the other one is at the bottom of Franklin.

Mr. Lehman: Would you agree with me Joe that they're not ideal for the average home owner? They're not convenient to your house, you're not to unload your groceries...but when you're talking about tearing down these houses, maybe you make room for additional space on the houses that are remaining.

Ms. Zenns: ...subdivide....

Mr. Lehman: You know, where you're taking out every third house...

Mr. Trusso: But you've lost the taxes on that.

Amanda Bleck: Well, are they being paid now?

Ms. Zenns: ...but it could increase the value of the surrounding homes...

Mr. Lehman: But if somebody builds a garage next to the house that remains and makes it a marketable home, maybe it's a good thing...

Mr. Rice: One of the big issues that you're thinking though is the lost population. The population back 30, 40 years ago was what in Jamestown compared to what it is right now?

Dr. Faulk: Back in 1940 there was 48,000...

Mr. Rice: And you're down to about 30 or 40,000?

Dr. Faulk: That was our peak.

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- Mr. Lehman: In 1940 how many cars were in the average household also?
- Mr. Rice: Yes. Totally changed.
- Mr. Lehman: Times have changed – to me, off street parking is huge in the City of Jamestown.
- Mr. Rice: But what I’m saying is the strategies you’re coming up with, you need to start to think about the simplest things like population, you’ve got to be practical about that because that’s where your market is. Do you have a market for all the housing opportunities we have right now? Or don’t we?
- Ms. Harkness: Well, we know that...how many teachers were hired not too many years ago? It was 300 teachers, wasn’t it, in the Jamestown School System? And they all bought houses in Lakewood – that’s where all the new construction is. And they have decent salaries...
- Mr. Rice: But it’s also the type of housing that they want.
- Ms. Harkness: Exactly. And we don’t have that available in Jamestown. Well, they have it in the new development...
- Mr. Trusso: If we had rules like they do in Buffalo and other places, where if you work for the City, you must live in the City, it’s easy to work for the City, belong to the unions and say “I want so much,” but you don’t have to pay those taxes because you live outside the City. What you have to do is get hard. They people that work for the City should live in the City and pay taxes in the City. We don’t have that. We don’t have anything like that.
- Mr. Lehman: I don’t disagree with you at all Joe, but you’ve still got to provide the house that they want to buy. And you aren’t going to force them to live in a house that they don’t want.
- Mr. Trusso: Go on the south side. See the homes they’ve built over there. You’ve seen that.
- Mr. Lehman: I have seen that, but it’s part of that...
- Mr. Trusso: Okay...
- Mr. Lehman: Those are quarter acre plus size lots, Joe, that’s what I’m saying...
- Mr. Trusso: Well, what do you think they’re doing in Lakewood – these teachers and all that? They’re building over there.

Dr. Faulk: Let me kind of get back to who's going to do all this? I mean Doug kind of asked that question – who's going to do it? I'll do my part but I think there needs to be some thought from this of how others are plugging into this. There needs to be more advocates. There needs to be...obviously, City Council...lots of folks can do a lot more, but we have to identify that, we have to charge those folks. We're probably going to need some resources as well to do this if we have an Office of Neighborhoods and housing services or whatever – I don't know...I mean that's what we have to decide – what's the best model for us that is really going to maximize the use of all of our resources together. It's just not a city thing because the city doesn't have enough resources. The private sector doesn't have enough resources. If we start blending together, we have a better chance. And the other point here is in the short term – let's concentrate on a few models. Okay? Let's build that new house or two – let's do some market rate rehabs for the folks that have money. Let's do some other things. Let's make sure it's an energy efficient house and let's show people across the community how we can save 25% of the utility bills. Let's extend the district heat to neighborhoods and have neighborhoods that would have a value in heating; and I'm sitting by somebody who's proposed this for years. We have assets here. Let's get busy and use them. I can't do that myself – we have to have support.

Mr. Trusso: You have to put the utilities, phones, electricity underground. They do that...you go on the south side, all that's underground now. If they can do it there, why can't they do it to the rest of the City? I know it's going to be expensive, but you've got to remember these storms and all that, you're not going to have all the blackouts you're having now. In fact, when I built up there in my contract it said that all my utilities, phone and everything, would be underground. Well, we had the people from the BPU who said "it's too expensive." They didn't do it. It was part of my contract. That whole area was supposed to have it underground. You want a modern city, make a modern city. Don't go half way. Do these things. Do things that people will want to come into the City.

Dr. Faulk: That's true.

Ms. Zenns: Len, I have a question. You said you went to the Neighborhoods Conference in Boston.

Dr. Faulk: Yes.

Ms. Zenns: ...and then the information in terms of the Riverside website...one of the things that Doug and I were talking about before is training opportunities and I was thinking there might be a possibility here of appropriate training in terms of neighborhood leadership for this Planning Commission that would really serve a dual purpose: One – the hours that we are required to have, but two – to better enable us to potentially either train others or ourselves be some of those champions in the neighborhood. Is that an area where you feel comfortable in terms of providing educational training to another group, or in conjunction with other resources? Do you understand what I'm saying?

Dr. Faulk: Yes. Actually, the Neighbor Works National Organization, they have organizations that are specifically set up to do that kind of training and it's someone you could bring...It's called Neighbor Works. Neighbor Works is a national organization with 300 affiliations across the country. CHRIC is a Neighbor Works organization. So through John Murphy and you can arrange for...part of their organization set up is training workshops. There's 100 workshops – you could pick the one you wanted. There was 5 or 600 people at this all over the East Coast – well actually, from New York to Boston. So yes, there are resources. The toolkit here from the Office of Neighborhoods in Riverside is very specific about “how to.” But I think you're right – I think if you talk to John Murphy, they'd be very willing to set up a training, whether it's initially for the Commission or the people that you name to be involved – sure, I think that would be useful.

Ms. Harkness: If you had a training for you to get your necessary hours, can you invite other people to it? It doesn't matter – right?

Ms. Zenns: I don't know why not.

Ms. Harkness: ...because that would be great that you could have some of the other

Ms. Zenns: And it might be better for them. It might be a case that more is better, and I don't know how they work it in terms of funding or bringing someone in that they might need a set amount before they'd be willing, or is that John Murphy who would be doing the training?

Dr. Faulk: Well, I think they probably have some folks in this region that could do it. It would cost something to bring them. You'd have to come up with some expenses, obviously, for it, but I think that's doable. I think they've offered to do that.

Mr. Trusso: Don't make it complicated. You'll lose everybody.

Dr. Faulk: Right.

Mr. Champ: One of the connections here that has to be looked at is the Planning Commission's role regarding neighborhoods and we are faced with strict things that we have to look at in zoning requirements, and the future of zoning and how that's going to be either adhered to or changed. That has a direct impact in the sectors of the community - residential in particular, what is allowed to happen and how well it happens. So as we embark on some talk about updating the zoning plan, that's key in terms of what we want to attain regarding this housing issue. We need to give some thought to how that's going to be folded into the overall plan. Do we want to make a real earth-shaking statement and say “R-1 is R-1 and it's going to continue to be that way, or it's going to change in some respects or we're going to modify some of the other requirements to some other changes that we've had problems with.”

Mr. Rice: I think you're talking about doing your plan much like the Urban Design Plan, I think you need to do that first and then look at zoning as part of the implementation for that. What changes should be encouraged in the zoning to make that happen?

Mr. Champ: But that's part of our responsibility – the Planning Commission – so that we don't become segmented regarding what's happening out here on this side – they want to see certain objectives, certain strategies, made and then we're faced later on implementing the requirements that doesn't adhere to the overall requirements that they would like to see made.

Dr. Faulk: I think that the training you talked about, the second major activity you could be involved in is setting up in a sense a request for proposal for a neighborhood revitalization plan. What is it that we want to do in terms of having a neighborhood revitalization "action plan?" Again, it's different than comprehensive – here's what we think can happen in our neighborhoods, here's the strategy that we think will work to make it happen. Now that's a study that we would bring in some outside consultants. The foundations at our table have said that they would be interested in participating in funding that; I think your leadership could be central to moving that forward. If this Commission makes the recommendations, develops at least a preliminary RFP, what are we talking about here – and then that could be forwarded to the City Council for action and obviously to partners in terms of funding. So I think that's a second action that you can concentrate on. That was our second recommendation.

Ms. Harkness: Would your recommendation go to the Housing Committee of City Council, or whatever it's called?

Ms. Zenns: Paul Whitford?

Ms. Harkness: Things have to go through that committee before they go to the Council?

Mr. Rice: Probably.

Mr. Trusso: That's the committee that recommends to Council.

Ms. Harkness: Your recommendation goes to them then?

Mr. Trusso: I would.

Ms. Harkness: Because they're on board. We haven't gotten as far as the RFP. That would be something you would do – right Bill?

Mr. Rice: I'd probably have a lot of involvement in that.

Dr. Faulk: So maybe that's one of the next steps.

Ms. Zenns: Is there training in that area? I'd suggest that there might be some members of your Commission that would also be interested in that.

Ms. Harkness: I would think some of the Northside PRIDE people, and if there are other communities or areas, other neighborhoods that have people that are kind of bubbling up as leaders, it might be a good place for them to...

Ms. Zenns: Well, I know it's been talked about before, we don't have a lot of financial resources in terms of training as if there were organizations or commissions that might be willing to help fund an activity to have it widespread, and that might serve a larger purpose too.

Ms. Harkness: My guess is if we could get the funding for it, I can't imagine it would be very expensive to bring someone in, hold it at JCC or whatever...

Mr. Trusso: What are you talking about – what kind of funding?

Dr. Faulk: I would presume you'd have somebody from New York City or... 500...

Ms. Harkness: 500 – 1,000....travel expenses...

Dr. Faulk: Yes, I think somewhere in that neighborhood...so we're not talking overwhelming amounts...

Mr. Trusso: What about the foundations?

Ms. Harkness: Community Foundation has a field of interest grant. We still have some money in there. The Commission still has some money that we used for Susan Stohr so it can be...I've talked to Randy before...it can be redistributed if we had to.

Dr. Faulk: So if you want to make a request, I guess not a request, but to make a motion that you would co-sponsor some training and what you would like to accomplish on that, we'll work with you to set it up and help sponsor it.

Ms. Zenns: Do you think that's an appropriate training educational opportunity?

Mr. Rice: I'm not sure exactly what the State requires for training...they're not specific at all. I don't think it would be...leave it to the State...I don't know if it would satisfy the requests.

Ms. Zenns: But we certainly want something that's useable.

Mr. Rice: Well we have another avenue for the basic training for Planning & Zoning that we could use just as an additional type of training session that satisfies the required session out of the other stuff. We're going to try and make it simple maybe with DVD's from the APA so maybe we can loan them out so people don't have to sit in one room or they can take it home with them, so we'll make it very simple. But I think this could be an additional training. It might not be the required training, but it never hurts to have more.

Mr. Trusso: What's your resolution?

Dr. Faulk: The Planning Commission would like to co-sponsor a training session on development of neighborhood revitalization strategies and organizations. The second resolution would be that this Commission would undertake to support the initiative to prepare an RFP for a neighborhood revitalization plan and that it would seek partners with the community to fund it.

Mr. Trusso: I move to sponsor both resolutions.

Ms. Zenns: Okay. There's a motion on the table. Do I hear a second?

Mr. Champ: I'll second.

Ms. Zenns: Discussion?

Mr. Champ: You did mention in there that we wanted to create these leaders within the city...a leadership model...an individual that's going to be a block manager, for the lack of another name, that's going to be part of this process, isn't it?

Ms. Zenns: Yes. A "champion" as they called it.

Mr. Champ: Exactly.

Ms. Zenns: Use your strategy...there's a motion on the table – all in favor say aye.

Motion carried.

BPU POWER PLANT PRESENTATION

Ms. Zenns: Before you do go, Greg Rabb had said that on Wednesday, April 30th, there is a presentation at the Weeks Room at JCC on the power plant – I think that the SPPC that's getting that together. That is something that's available to the Planning Commission as well. Would you like to say a few words in regards to that?

Ms. Harkness: It starts at 5:00. 5:00 to 6:30 P.M. We could stay...if questions go on longer than that – that's fine. ???Rick Victor from Prax Air will be there as well as

Dave Leathers. Dave Leathers will give an overview of the project. They're going to do kind of a chronology of the whole process and where we are today. What are the next steps...what kind of approvals and that do we need...try to get everybody up to a base level of understanding. The big piece that's changed from most of the commission members that are just not familiar with the Prax Air piece, we have heard presentations I think it was 2006 when Wally was going around and talking about the project in different community forums...to really kind of get us all up to speed and see if there's a next step other speakers that we need to hear from, some other points of view. We're really trying to educate ourselves on the project. That's kind of the purpose. It will be open to Council Members as well.

Mr. Champ: Is this going to have something different an approach whereby you have the opposite side as well as the panel. Are you going to have Walter Simpson there as well to give an alternative point of view?

Ms. Harkness: In this first one, we're just going to have those two just to get our knowledge up.

Mr. Lehman: This is just showing where the BPU is right now.

Ms. Harkness: Yes...this is just to get our understanding up and then we'll develop...

Mr. Champ: I wasn't sure who was going to be on the panel.

Ms. Harkness: It's not really a panel, it's just David and Prax Air.

Mr. Trusso: Information only session...everybody's been asking for it.

Ms. Harkness: And then what we're going to do is we'll develop what some of the questions are and who else should we hear from to educate ourselves with commission members. That's kind of where we left it. So this is not necessarily the only informational session we'll have – it's just how we're going to start.

Mr. Trusso: I understand that Simpson already had an opportunity to talk on this and called the BPU and the Council liars.

Dr. Faulk: I was there last night. He didn't say that.

Mr. Trusso: What did he say?

Dr. Faulk: He said that they had difficulty in having a conversation with the City Council and/or the BPU so I think...what I took out of it was that they were interested in a closer dialogue to discuss some of these issues. My sense is groups are going in appropriate directions like this, and I think there is an opportunity to kind of ...

for the public to have a greater sense of answers to issues on...and there's multiple sides here.

Mr. Champ: This is a way of helping that process...

Dr. Faulk: Yes, this is a start and there could be other folks that could have useful information and I think what you don't want to go through a process that has confusion and people not having all the answers and I think that's probably...you're not going to get everything, but I think you have...I think you are at least required to give us your best shot and give them information and then make a decision.

Ms. Zenns: Well, I thank both Jennifer and Len for being with us today.

Dr. Faulk: ...and thank you for your support and your undivided interest.

Mr. Champ: ...and we'll see you in the neighborhoods.

PLANNING COMMISSION TRAINING

Ms. Zenns: One final issue that Doug has a separate training opportunity that he wanted us to be aware of.

Mr. Champ: Well, I was sent this in the mail by Southern Tier West 15th Annual Southern Tier West Local Government Conference to be held May 7th from 9:00 to 4:00 P.M. at Houghton College in Houghton, New York. They did it last year like this. It's pretty comprehensive and it certainly satisfies any requirements that anybody would have to be a Planning Commissioner, or anybody else. The reason why I just propose this is that it's there – do we want to attend? Any individual want to go? Because I could see we could go down as a group...

Mr. Rice: Well, Jim and I have been talking about the American Planning Association has DVD formats that use the basics for planning and zoning. And, it probably would be more cost effective to it this way – buy it - because you can reshow this over a series of years and going to those is nice, but it takes time, it takes...it's fine if you're retired, but if you're not, then it becomes an issue.

Mr. Champ: Don't say that.

Mr. Rice: But it does.

Mr. Champ: I'm as busy as anyone else....

Mr. Rice: But sometimes it's much harder to get those things if you're working because they're offered in daytime.

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Mr. Champ: Well, they have to be offered, unless they're offering a weekend and most people don't want to get off on Saturday. But I think it's pretty comprehensive in terms of what they're offering here. Whether one can choose to go or not, I just...my question would be if I go to this, is that reimbursable?

Mr. Rice: I would think so. You'd have to talk to Jim to make sure...it's up to the City to provide...

Mr. Champ: I think it's \$25.00 or \$35.00 plus mileage.

Ms. Zenns: \$35.00. It's \$35.00, \$45.00 at the door.

Mr. Rice: But I would say that it would be reimbursable because you're required to have the training. And the City is responsible to cover the cost of the training.

Mr. Champ: And this is something that's happening next month so that those who are interested – it's available.

Ms. Zenns: Is there anything else to come in front of the Commission today?

Mr. Lehman motioned to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting was adjourned.

James N. Olson
Director of Financial Services/City Clerk