

COMMON COUNCIL

Special Meeting

March 29, 2004

A special joint meeting of the Common Council and the Norwich Town Board was held at 7 PM on March 29, 2004, at the Norwich Town Hall, Hale Street Extension.

Present - City of Norwich:

Mayor Robert Raphael

Alderman James Cushman

Alderman Joseph Maiurano

Alderman Joseph Biviano

Present - Town of Norwich:

Supervisor David C. Law

Councilman Charles W. Brooks

Councilman John W. Baker

Councilwoman Joanna Chiarino

Also:

Clerk/Director of Finance Brian Molinaro

HR Director Deborah DeForest

Police Chief Joseph Angelino

Public Works Director Carl Ivarson

Deputy Clerk Donna Philippone

Clerk Sharon Gohl-Muserallo

Highway Supt. Stanley D. Foulds

Supervisor Law called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM, for the purpose of a joint review and discussion of the proposed hotel resort project to be located in the Town of Norwich. The City and Town of Norwich have been asked to formally support the project.

Stephen Stark of Alteren Resort LLC presented an overview of the project to date. He reviewed the details of the multi-phase project, which includes a full-service hotel with restaurant, conference center, day spa/salon, 18-hole golf course, equestrian center and a residential community. He outlined the revised master plan and timetable for development.

Ald. Biviano asked if the timeline was realistic; what the particulars were with regard to the financials and what Mr. Stark's experience was with projects of this magnitude. Mr. Stark said he grew up in Norwich, attended SUNY Buffalo where he received a Master's Degree in Urban Planning and has worked extensively in real estate finance and investment banking for the past 15 years. Mr. Stark indicated that he has not been involved with a project of this magnitude. Regarding the timeline being realistic, he said he is enthusiastic about the timeline; however moving it back would not seriously affect the project. He also noted that several feasibility studies have been conducted with favorable findings. Mr. Stark noted that marketing initiatives are being deployed to promote the natural and cultural assets of the Greater Norwich Area with the intent to bring people in from all over. Ald. Biviano indicated the City would like to see the demographics and financial projections to determine the viability of the project.

Ald. Cushman asked who would hold title to the property. Mr. Stark said currently Alteren Resort LLC holds title, however, his legal representative is looking into whether it would remain that way.

Discussion ensued regarding how the project would impact existing businesses. Mr. Stark said the impact would be positive and explained that Norwich will be showing up in the New York Times. The project will bring awareness to the area that will benefit all. Supervisor Law indicated professional people and athletes have already contacted him inquiring about the project. Mr. Stark also noted with regard to the golf course, with some creative packaging all of the area golf courses would benefit. Ald. Biviano asked what would be done during the off-season. Mr. Stark said x-country skiing, snowshoeing and attracting the snowmobile enthusiasts to the nearby trails are options for the winter season.

Ald. Maiurano raised concern about how the project could help the local hotels. Mr. Stark said the efforts that the project will create would give others an opportunity to share the benefits of more and bigger events with more people coming into the area than the 150-room hotel could accommodate.

Comments and questions from the audience included the following:

- ◆ A woman raised concerns about the Airport's ability to support an increase in air traffic. Supervisor Law indicated there are plans underway to expand the Airport including the runway to allow for larger planes, which would increase air traffic by approximately one flight per day.
- ◆ When asked if there were any plans for a gambling casino, Mr. Stark said there were not.
- ◆ A man asked where the entrance would be located. Mr. Stark explained where the three entrances would be located and noted that once the road is built, it would be dedicated back to the Town.
- ◆ A man raised concern about what the impact would be to residents relative to the water and sewer installation. Supervisor Law noted the Town cannot use taxpayer money, however, that are grant-funding options available.
- ◆ A man asked if there has been impact study done on traffic. Mr. Stark said it was done as part of the SEQR (environmental review) that is required for the project.
- ◆ A man asked if there would be a new water district formed. Supervisor Law said the Council would have to make that determination and noted there are other properties in the area that would benefit from a district. Board member Brooks expressed his concerns regarding the infrastructure and the cost of water. Discussion ensued. Mayor Raphael noted that the residents of the Town pay the same rate as

the City for their water. Supervisor Law indicated that the Town receives good service from the City for water, sewer, fire and ambulance and noted that there is a cost for installation of water lines.

- ◆ Alteren Resort LLC representative asked if the City and Town have considered the addition of 200 jobs and the overall impact of a project of this magnitude. Supervisor Law referred to a tabulation of projected impact to the area.

Stephen Stark reiterated that he has asked for a letter of support from the City and Town, to be contingent upon the project breaking ground.

Ald. Thornton said he appreciates the proposal and the opportunity it gives to bring the City and Town together working for the best interest of the community. He indicated that having a joint letter of commitment to the project is a show of support to others that we are working together to bring development in. Ald. Thornton also said that both municipalities must be willing to give up something for the good of all. Mayor Raphael reiterated Ald. Thornton's statements. Ald. Biviano noted his optimism over the two entities working together; a joint meeting of this type is unprecedented.

It was the consensus of the Town and City Boards that another joint session be held on April 13, 2004 during the Common Council works session and Mr. Stark would provide a financial package relative to the project prior to the meeting.

Adjournment – There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM.