

Tax board approves \$460K for parking

Secures additional spots and potential future expansion

By Robert Koch

NORWALK — The Board of Estimate and Taxation Monday evening approved a \$460,000 special capital appropriation to secure additional parking and potential future expansion space for the Norwalk Main Library on Belden Avenue.

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Alex Knopp, former Norwalk mayor and current library board chairman

tion to purchase agreement.

Under that agreement, the city would secure immediate use of the 28-space private parking lot fronting Mott Avenue from 11 Belden Ave. and have six years to decide whether to buy some or all of the larger property for up to \$5.8 million.

Anne Yang-Dwyer, a Republican on the tax board, asked that more financial protections for the city, such as limitations on additional indebtedness, be written into the agreement.

“I think that those things would need to be clear before this

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option agreement, at least from my opinion, should go forward,” Yang-Dwyer said. “I would propose approving the agreement, but subject and contingent upon the satisfactory addition of these provisions which will protect the city in greater detail.”

Tax Board Chairman Gregory Burnett moved initially to go into executive session to discuss the negotiations that led to the agreement. Instead, the board recessed and, after consulting with Corporation Counsel Mario Coppola by telephone, added language to address Yang-Dwyer’s concerns.

The board approved the \$460,000 appropriation subject to language proposed by Coppola.

Coppola including in the option agreement additional provisions, which in his opinion provide additional protection to the city.

Alex Knopp, a former Norwalk mayor and current library board chairman,

opposed amending the agreement for risk of jeopardizing it. He reminded the tax board the Norwalk Public Library Foundation had withdrawn its appeal of a 69-apartment development approved for the 28-space lot. Knopp later found Coppola’s proposed language consistent with his letter from July 6.

“Please note that we are still in the process of working with the Seller to complete a final draft of the Agreement, including certain documents that will be attached thereto and incorporated therein as exhibited to the Agreement,” Coppola wrote. “However, the draft Agreement that is attached hereto provides all of the substantive terms of the deal and any additional revisions, additions and/or deletions amongst the lawyers during the process of completing a final draft shall not significantly change any of the principal terms.”

Knopp described the option agreement as “far better than anyone could have expected when we started to negotiate.” He said the agreement places

the city “in the driver’s seat” regarding the future of the library and 11 Belden Ave.

“Putting the city in the driver’s seat, stopping a 69-unit development adjacent to the library, getting immediate access to parking and giving us the opportunity to leverage this agreement into the future to our advantage, is a much better deal than I think anybody could have expected at the start of these negotiations,” Knopp said.

Knopp credited Mayor Harry W. Rilling, ex-officio member of the tax board, with supporting the negotiations.

The Common Council is scheduled to vote Tuesday evening on the option agreement and \$460,000 appropriation. At least 10 votes are needed among the 15-member body to approve the appropriation.

Approvals would allow the Norwalk Parking Authority to combine the private lot with the library’s 14-space lot and reconfigure both for public use. Library users would park free in the new, expanded public parking lot.