

**LCI Board Meeting Minutes**  
**July 28, 2021 (Via Zoom)**

**PRESENT:** Seth Poole, Patricia Brett, Neil Currie, Nadine Horton, Arlevia Samuel (Acting Executive Director), Evan Trachten (staff )

**Absent:** Hon. Ernie Santiago, Timothy Yolen

**Guest:** Gary Hogan, Elks Lodge

**Meeting called to order at 6:04 P.M.**

**Review of LCI Board meeting minutes from May 26, 2021 Regular Meeting. A motion to approve was made by Pat Brett, seconded by Nadine Horton; Approved unanimously.**

**New Business**

**71-75 County Street**

Evan told the Board this sale is part of the Dixwell Plaza revitalization project. Staff have been working with the Elks look for about two years to find a new site. Staff are teeing this up because many more steps are required. Staff will also be providing architectural support for the Elks project. Staff are proposing a negotiated sale of this lot at \$36,000, the appraised value is \$70,000. The site is currently a grassy lot. The City does not own the paved area which is owned by Bethel Church. Evan told the Board the site has been a vacant City lot for over a decade since the City foreclosed on these parcels. The site is across the street from the Armory and other non-residential uses. This proposal requires a Special Exception from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Gary Hogan of the Elks discussed the project with the Board. Gary noted there is a lot of work to do for this project. He told the Board he did some door knocking on County Street as part of his outreach. More outreach is planned as this proposal heads towards zoning, the applicant will present to the CMT and will continue their neighborhood outreach efforts. Gary Hogan noted, the Elks have been in New Haven for 114 years.

Nadine told the Board there is a community garden across the street from this site at the Armory, where she spends time on Saturday's with members of the Beaver Hills community. The proposed site would be next-door to a residential property. Nadine is concerned about this use being adjacent to a residential property. This street has several homeowners, some children, and limited on-street parking. Nadine wondered why County Street was selected as the site and not a site on Dixwell Avenue? The Elks events could run late and interfere with the adjacent property owners' quality of life.

Gary Hogan echoed Nadine's concerns and about being next-door to a residential home and the parking issue. Gary told the Board he wants to be a good neighbor and welcomed to the area. The Elks do a lot of things for the community and are always doing new things to support the community they serve. Gary talked about being a friend

of the park and the garden. Gary said the drawings (façade / site plan) for the site will begin once there is an approval at LCI Board.

Pat Brett asked about the zoning of the area. Evan told the Board it's residential, but the use is permitted by Special Exception. No use variance is required. A special Exception does not require a hardship. Evan addressed the question of why County Street was selected: Evan told the Board many sites on Dixwell Avenue were examined over the past two years. Evan believes the Elks continue to look in the private market for potential sites while they investigate developing this site. Evan acknowledged the challenges for this location. Pat asked to look at the street on Google Street view: Evan characterized the street as residential on one side and non-residential on the other side of the street. Pat expressed concerns about the impact of this use on families and children on County Street.

Nadine asked about the property line and possible designs to lessen the impact on the adjacent residential property at 69 County Street. Gary acknowledged Nadine's concerns about noise and will look to mitigate noise during the design process which will begin after an approval at LCI Board. Gary continues to work with a realtor and is looking for a site, County Street was not the Elk's first choice. He does not want to move to Hamden which is an option. Gary would like to use local contractors to build this new location.

Pat asked about the Elks current location. The Elks have sold 87 Webster Street to Conn Corp as part of the Plaza revitalization. The site needed substantial rehabilitation and the new plaza could not accommodate the Elks staying on site. Gary told the Board he tried to buy Walt's Cleaners from the City, but the site was challenging because of environmental issues and lack of environmental remediation funding. He also looked at a site at 321-325 Dixwell but the Alder didn't support the site because of an adjacent use being incompatible. Gary also looked at moving to the Monterey Club site, it didn't work out. The Elks were originally located at 120 Goffe.

Neil asked a few questions. How many people might attend a Friday night event? Gary is decreasing the capacity of the lodge; Gary thinks about 100 to 150 people. When the lodge gets larger events such as a repass or a wedding, about 150-175 people. The lodge is used 7 days a week, they have a social room and they also do community events and programming during the week: health care for residents, mentoring, food pantry, homeless outreach, senior meals, multi-age community service. The number of people at the lodge varies by what event is happening. Neil asked about the Elks. Gary said the Elks are a non-profit and have an element of religion in their club membership requirements.

Neil noted that if we are willing to offer the Elks this discount, we should also afford this to all religious organizations and non-profits to be consistent. The City has a history of treating churches differently from other non-profits which has no legal basis. Seth echoed Neil's comments about consistency around a discounted sale price, and equal treatment of a non-profit or religious organization. Neil has raised this issue several times. Evan noted the negotiated price reflects the fact that this is part of a relocation and Revitalization of the Dixwell Plaza.

Pat asked about a letter of support for the file. Gary told the Board alder Marks is in support. Staff have received an email from the alder highlighting support for this proposal. Seth asked about making the building “green / sustainable”. Gary told the Board he will explore many green ideas to make this new building the greenest possible.

Nadine wanted to clarify the approval process. If approved here, that will allow for the concept to be more fully developed with drawings that can be used as part of the community outreach. Nadine noted Gary’s honesty about the challenges of this site. She will share that transparency with the CMT when the Elks appear. Nadine recommended highlighting the positive aspects of the organization and not the late-night events that occur infrequently.

Seth asked about parking on County street. Gary doesn’t want to negatively impact the street. Gary supports the homeowners first; the Elks will figure out how they fit into this community. There is zone parking on this street. Nadine noted there is a lot of parking on the street at night by area residents.

**Neil Currie made a motion to approve the item, seconded by Nadine Horton, Approved (3-0) Pat Brett abstained.**

**Evan reviewed the PAD Guidelines with the LCI Board. A brief overview of the types of dispositions and the process of committee review.**

**A motion to adjourn was made by Pat Brett, seconded by Nadine Horton. All were in favor, approved unanimously.**

**Adjourned at 7:05 P.M.**