

NORWALK LIBRARY

LIBRARY

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Parking authority would manage lot

By Robert Koch

NORWALK — Main Library patrons would park for free, and others would pay to use an enlarged and revamped Mott Avenue parking lot leased to the city and managed by the Norwalk Parking Authority.

“The parking has to be free for library patrons even if they have to find a method to charge other, non-library users for the parking benefit,” said former Mayor Alex Knopp, chairman of the library’s board of directors. “We’re very pleased that this validation system will allow any library user to easily have a parking ticket validated similar to the way that the movie

See Library on A4

theaters validate parking and some restaurants do as well.”

Knopp, Norwalk Public Library Director Chris Bradley and Corporation Counsel Mario F. Coppola thanked the Parking Authority Tuesday evening for pre-emptively accepting the privately owned lot at 11 Belden Ave. into its inventory and, with help from city engineers, quickly putting forward three reconfiguration options.

Under the recommended configuration, the 28-space lot owned by 587 CT AVE, LLC would be combined with the library’s 14-space lot. The center island between the two would largely remain; however, one-way traffic flow would be created with motorists entering and exiting onto Mott Avenue.

Gates and machines would be added to accept validated parking stubs from library users, or cash or credit card payment from non-library users. The latter would pay the prevailing rate of 50 cents per hour to park between 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., and a \$1 flat fee after 6 p.m., according to the parking authority.

Creating and paving the lot, and installing curbs, new light poles and revenue-collection equipment would run \$191,000 under the recommended reconfiguration, according to city engineers.

“It gains you 39 regular (size) spaces,” said Kathryn Hebert, the city’s administrative services manager. “The fire lane stays there. We do not have to remove the center island, which would help us with putting the conduits because there’s no electricity or internet.”

Additionally, the parking authority would be able to landscape and beautify the island, she said.

A second option would create 43 spaces but cost



Erik Trautmann / Hearst Connecticut Media

Alex Knopp, president of the library board, announced late Wednesday night that a deal had been struck with developer Jason Milligan to provide additional parking to Norwalk Public library’s main branch patrons at the adjacent lot on Mott Avenue.

\$234,000, and 17 of the spaces would be limited to compact vehicles. A third option would yield 53 spaces, but cost \$240,000 and require moving the library fire lane onto Mott Avenue. That would eliminate trees and five on-street parking spaces, Hebert said.

Knopp and Coppola noted the creation of the new parking lot is contingent upon the Common Council approving an option agreement between the city, Norwalk Public Library Board and 587 CT AVE, LLC. Coppola is hopeful the council will take up the matter July 11. The Planning Commission reviewed the proposal later Tuesday evening. The Board of Estimate and Taxation also must weigh in on the related expenditure.

“The option agreement, we have until August to close the deal,” Coppola told the parking authority. But “we made a commitment to the property owner that we would try to close it in July.”

Under the agreement, the city would pay 587 CT AVE \$460,000 for exclusive use of the 28-space lot and have six years to determine whether to buy the entire property at 11 Belden Ave. — also home

to People’s Bank and other businesses — for \$4.8 million.

With the signing of the agreement in state Superior Court in Stamford last month, the Norwalk Public Library Foundation agreed to withdraw its appeal of the Zoning Commission’s approval of a 69-apartment development for the parking lot. Upon receipt of the \$460,000, 587 CT AVE Principal Jason Milligan would withdraw and void the plan and agree not to submit another development project for the lot without the permission of the city for six years.

“This is an opportunity with some timing constraints to it,” said Dick Brescia, parking authority chairman. “It’s an opportunity that we need to take advantage of.”

Knopp, while describing a lack of parking as “the bane of the Norwalk Library for many years,” added the option agreement isn’t only about parking. The deal also creates an opportunity for the Belden Avenue library — Connecticut’s first Carnegie Library — to expand for the first time since 1982.

“It’s also about the opportunity for expansion and modernization of the library,” Knopp said.