

On December 13, 2004, the Middletown Common Council unanimously approved the requirement of the Richman Group of Corporations that it be given 2 million dollars in gap money to acquire properties in the North End streets of Ferry, Green and Rapallo. Pam King, the Richman Group's representative in Middletown, has successfully bullied the City into believing that, since the Low Income Housing Tax Credit money it expects to receive only covers "construction" costs, the City is required to fork over \$2 million to cover "acquisition costs" of properties from their owners, slumlords and decent proprietors alike.

There is something of a paradox here, in that Pam King showed up in Middletown only last year, carrying (metaphorical) suitcases loaded with billions of dollars and portraying the Richman Group as the panacea for all the problems of urban blight in Middletown.

Richman also won approval for a vision of urban renewal unchanged for over a year: a 96-unit project building that will cover most of the north side of Ferry Street, running from west to east, from Main Street to DeKoven Drive, a distance of about 1/10th of a mile. This has been roundly opposed by everyone (including members of the Common Council) since Richman first unveiled it two summers ago, but apparently it has now passed through the Council without a fight. One wonders who is in bed with whom. This block building will hold 20 units set aside for families at 25% of Annual Median Income (AMI), the remaining 76 going at market rate rentals, thus available only to families of 60% or more AMI (excluding almost all of the residents

of this poor neighborhood). Succinctly, it will dispossess almost all of Ferry Street, this being only the first phase in the global takeover of the entire neighborhood. Details are currently being carried out by a local real estate agency acting on behalf of the city.

The city has declared itself ready and eager to employ Eminent Domain laws, indicating that it intends to proceed immediately in the application of these laws. . Evidently the repercussions of the New London eminent domain scandal, (which even made it to coverage on 60 Minutes), have fallen on deaf ears.

The brow-beating tactics of the Richman Group relate directly to the requirement that it get its Low Income Housing Tax Credits application filed by the closing date of February 29th. Mark Masselli, chairman of the Middletown Housing Authority (which handles Section 8 vouchers) lobbied against blanket approval of the Richman Group; but this was countered by the persuasive rhetoric of Gerry Daley (chairman of the Economic Development Committee) and Bill Warner (chairman of Planning and Zoning and the Redevelopment Agency) on behalf of the plan.

Bill Warner's slick power point presentation brought ovations from all members of the council, including those who as a general rule are quite vociferous in opposing any city project which involves spending money. Gerry Daley even criticized the North End Action Team for its lack of leadership by not bringing the North End neighborhood to the Common Council meeting to

applaud the cheer on the 96 unit project building! Not mentioned was the fact that NEAT had worked for over 6 years to promote a plan that would not dispossess the current residents of the neighborhood, which the city had acknowledged by giving it the back of the hand in favor of the Richman Group. .

How is it that a giant developer, with no prior history of work in Middletown, (or any other part of Connecticut) can just walk into City Hall, present a so-called “plan” involving lots of hand-waving and promises of money but little substance, then, after a year or more, reintroduce , unchanged, proposals that have been opposed by every organization and department official and otherwise, (NEAT, the Middletown Housing Authority, the Redevelopment Agency, Planning and Zoning, Economic Development, and the NEHI group of 4 non-profit developers who have been doing business in Middletown for decades), then see them pass through the Common Council without a murmur of protest?
