

Candela, Brian

From: O'Brien, William <wobrien@norwalkct.org>
Sent: Wednesday, March 06, 2019 9:25 AM
To: Strauss, Tami
Cc: Sheehan, Timothy; McCann, Brian; Coppola, Mario; Stewart, Michael; Wake, Simon
Subject: RE: Following up

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

It was barely a half hour since you left the Assessment Department and composed and sent the attached email of 2-28-19 at 12:39 PM. Immediately prior to this email communication, with others present, you were informed that the Assessment Department is not in the business or practice of classifying neighborhoods as "desirable or undesirable" (your words) for any purposes, including any support for or opposition to your or your department's agendas, or to support or refute any controversies you may have created for yourself or your agency.

If your email inquiry is sincere, then I feel concerned for you and those whom you may serve. Your title suggests you should have considerable experience in the matters of real property. If not, there should presumably be others in your agency who should have necessary credentials. If neither of these is true, then I recommend promptly gaining necessary knowledge via various publications, texts, treatises, or courses. There are plenty from which to choose. I further presume you are aware that your emails or other communications, including conversations, are subject to disclosure and FOIA.

The Assessment Department makes available to the public all non-exempt (FOIA) data as provided by law; it does not however, do research for you or others. Simon Wake of our department, in deference to you and your organization, attempted to assist you in expediting and sorting publicly available data for you, and additionally attempted to offer you some general verbal opinions for which you subsequently attempted to cite him for it in a public manner, whereupon you subsequently directed others who questioned your research that it was somehow Mr. Wake's doing and not yours. Your apparent ready unwillingness to accept responsibility for your work and opinions is astonishing.

Also based upon your follow-up inquiry to the previously mentioned discussion, I suggest you also familiarize yourself with U S Department of Housing and Urban Development guidelines and criteria, the Fair Housing Act, Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act, and particularly the portions dealing with redlining, reverse redlining, and use of terms and descriptions of neighborhoods. I would further urge you to consult with your legal professional in these regards, and/or the City of Norwalk Law Department.

As I clearly indicated to you verbally Thursday, you have a right to opine to anything you want. You may not, however, claim that the Assessment Department classifies any property or neighborhoods as desirable or undesirable, deteriorating, declining, or any other such descriptions, nor state the Assessment Department authorized you to do so in any capacity.

Given our collective discussion in the Assessment Department immediately prior to your inquiry, your question appears disingenuous.

In any case to reiterate, the duties of the Assessment Department involve valuing property for purposes of assessment and taxation consistent with Connecticut state law. All opinions related to such valuation are contained and delineated on the property record cards available to the public. We are not in the process of providing formal education in appraisal and valuation processes, nor do we provide extra-departmental opinions or consulting services; as indicated, there are courses available for that, and your department presumably has listing of outside professionals who can provide you with appraisal, consulting or other real estate services. The Assessment Department does not classify property or

neighborhoods as more or less “desirable, deteriorating or declining” (again your words), or other similar terms, nor does it rate degree(s) of marketability.

I am also taking this opportunity to inform you that we do not appreciate your attempt at invoking the unsubstantiated verbal assertions by Assistant Corporation Counsel Brian McCann that the Assessment Department must opine as to the “desirability or deterioration” of property or neighborhoods, or that he is composing a legal opinion to that extent, in your presumed attempt to pressure the Assessment Department staff into supporting your position or agenda in these regards. I doubt Mr. McCann ever made such assertions, however, I will leave that to him.

Bill O'Brien, MAI, CCMA
Assistant Assessor



City of Norwalk, Connecticut
203 854-7887

From: Strauss, Tami
Sent: Thursday, February 28, 2019 12:39 PM
To: O'Brien, William <wobrien@norwalkct.org>
Cc: Sheehan, Timothy <TSheehan@norwalkct.org>
Subject: Following up

Bill,

Thank you for taking your time to speak with me.

I'm left wondering, in your opinion, is a property with 40% physical depreciation less desirable than a property with 0% depreciation?

Thank you.
Best,
Tami

Tami Strauss
Director of Community Development Planning
Norwalk Redevelopment Agency
(203)854-7810 x46787
tstrauss@norwalkct.org
We hope you enjoy our most recent [Urban Highlights](#)