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## PARKING PUZZLE

# Deal near for library lot?

### Council discusses purchase of parcel

By Robert Koch

NORWALK — An agreement could come together that will satisfy the city, the Main Library and the owner of an adjacent private parking lot that has long been coveted by library patrons.

Common Council members discussed in executive session at City Hall on Tuesday evening “negotiations pertaining to proposed option to purchase agreement by and between the City of Norwalk, The Norwalk Public Library Board and 587 CT Ave. LLC,” according to the meeting agenda.

“We’ve been interested in pursuing extra parking for the library and right now there are negotiations going on,” Mayor Harry W. Rilling said Wednesday. “We really can’t discuss those negotiations right now. Shortly, we’ll probably have some of statement to make.”

At issue is the city’s desire to secure more parking for the Main Library at 1 Belden Ave. while accommodating the interests of 587 CT Ave. LLC, which secured Zoning Commission approval in April 2016 to building apartments with parking on the lot fronting Mott Avenue

See *Parking on A.*



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The unused parking lot next to the Norwalk Public Library Main Branch on Mott Avenue.

## PARKING

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immediately west of the library building.

“There’s some pretty obvious issues with the area,” Jason Milligan, a principal with 587 CT Ave. LLC, said Wednesday.

“There’s a lack of parking. There’s also a desire for more people in the downtown and there’s a desire for apartments in an affordable price range. Many of Norwalk’s brightest minds have been working to find a well-thought-out solution.”

Milligan praised Rilling for appointing former Mayor Alex Knopp as chairman of the Norwalk Public Library Board of Trustees.

Knopp, who served a mayor from 2001 from 2005, also chairs the Norwalk Public Library Foundation Inc., a nonprofit organization that supports the library through donations

and volunteerism.

Last year, the library foundation appealed the Zoning Commission’s approval of The Lofts @ Mott Ave. The approved plan calls for 69 apartments with on and off-site parking for the parking lot owned by 587 CT Ave. LLC.

Norwalk Assistant Corporation Counsel Brian L. McCann, who has defended the commission against the appeal, said Wednesday that the court case has been put on hold to “further a proposed settlement.”

“The reason for the postponement is so that city officials and city attorneys can take the proposed settlement to the Common Council and other legislative bodies for approval,” McCann said.

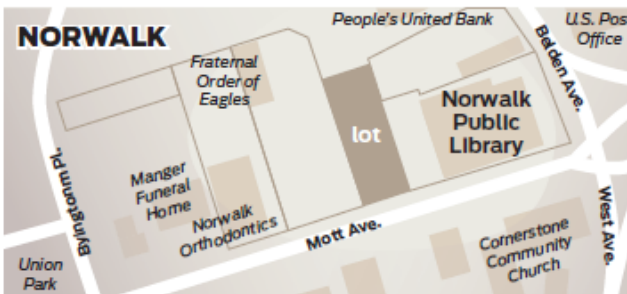
The Main Library, which was built in the early 20th century with money donated by businessman and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, has about 25 park-

ing spaces and several hundred visitors daily.

The effort to secure more spaces comes as the library moves forward with a master plan for the historic structure. The resulting redesign could create, among other things, a new study area and space for art galleries and concerts, according to Norwalk Public Library system director Chris Bradley.

Adequate parking is critical to that vision, according to Knopp.

“When I was appointed president of the library board I promised to leave no stone unturned to find a solution to the parking problem,” Knopp said. “With the support of the mayor’s office the library has been exploring several options and we hope to have some final recommendation to present to the Common Council.”



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