

MOTT AVENUE

Parking lot deal reached for library

Last chapter in lengthy saga?

By Robert Koch

NORWALK — The city and a private property owner have reached a revised agreement that will reopen the parking lot next to the Main Library on Belden Avenue for use by the public, according to officials.

Mayor Harry Rilling and Jason Milligan, owner of the parking lot facing Mott Avenue from 11 Belden Ave., signed the revised agreement Monday. Milligan de-

ferred to Rilling and former Mayor Alex Knopp for comment.

“It’s signed, sealed and delivered,” Rilling said. “We had a lot of issues that we needed to clear up first. There were some negotiations. It wasn’t always easy, but we put heads together and came up with what we believe will be a fair deal that will provide parking for the library for a very long time, and will give us the option of purchasing a piece of property in a key location for the future development of the Wall Street area.”

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Knopp, now chairman of the Norwalk Public Library board of directors, expressed similar sentiments about the new agreement regarding the parking lot, which has long been coveted by library patrons.

“The library is extremely happy that this extensive negotiation has finally concluded on approximately the same terms we have been discussing for the last year,” Knopp said. “The agreement opens up a great new opportunity for library patrons, because now they will have access to free parking on site and we’ll be able to start planning the expansion of the 1980 (library) facility that we’re now in. So this is really a historic day for the Norwalk Library.”



The parking lot adjacent to the Norwalk Public Library main branch.

Assistant to the mayor Laoise King said the lot will be opened to the public “shortly.” She described the agreement signed by Rilling and Milligan on Monday as “virtually the same deal that had been worked out over the summer with a few minor tweaks to it.”

“Instead of giving him (Milligan) parking at the Yankee Doodle Garage, he’s going to have enough parking spaces at the beauty salon by moving the property line,” King said.

King said the deal represents “a 1 percent change” to the property line between the parcels at 11 Bel-

den Ave. and 15 Belden Ave. The monetary aspects of the agreement signed Monday remain the same as those reached last summer, according to her.

On June 2, Rilling, Knopp and Milligan announced an option-to-purchase agreement, under which the city was to pay Milligan \$460,000 to secure exclusive use of the lot and have six years to decide whether to buy the larger parcel at 11 Belden Ave. for \$4.885 million.

The chain came down, the Common Council approved the agreement and the lot remained open to library patrons until early September when the deal broke down. Each side assigned the other blame. Milligan charged the city

with “moving timelines and goal posts.” The city said Milligan had sought additional concessions.

The agreement approved by the council last July gave the city’s law department authority to write into it additional protections. Talks over an addendum to the agreement broke down, but Milligan and city officials later returned to the table.

King said the council approval last July authorized the city’s law department to make minor changes to the agreement. She said Monday the property line adjustment and clarification of insurance costs constitute minor changes. As such, the new agreement does not require council approval, she said.

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