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Normal School

School HQ building sold, but not before council tempers flare

By Patrick Thibodeau
HERALD REPORTED

NEW BRITAIN — A divided Common Council last night approved the sale of 27 Hillside Place — school administration headquarters — following a sometimes heated debate between Mayor William J. McNamara and Ald. Thomas Bozek.

The building will go to Crowninshield Management Corp. which offered \$251,500 for the 1882 building near Walnut Hill Park — two years ago.

The Peabody, Mass., company wants to convert the former Normal School building — the first home of what is now Central Connecticut State University — into approximately 22 luxury condominiums.

The sale was approved 10-5 at the City Hall meeting.

OBLIGATIONS

The debate on the council floor was whether the city was legally or morally obligated to sell the building after two years. Some wanted new bids in the hope that the city would make more money.

In February, 1986, the council approved the sale, to help the developer take advantage of anticipated changes in the federal Tax Reform Act. Those tax changes never occurred, and the actual sale — with a lease-back provision to the city — never went through.

What the council was being asked to approve last night was a new sales agreement.

McNamara, who had been lobbying some aldermen for support, made it clear that he believed the city had given its word that the building would be sold to Crowninshield Corp., and was legally and morally obligated to complete the sale based on the council's prior action.

Other issues were involved.

Some aldermen felt that if the city rejected the bid, other developers would see it as a sign of bad faith.

"They're going to say — forget New Britain — you can't deal with them because their word is not good," said Ald. Ralph F. Hedenberg, majority leader.

The aldermen were told by Karen M. Pierson of the Municipal Action Council that if the sale wasn't approved, the city would have to pay to heat the empty building and provide security.

BOZEK—GIVEAWAY

Bozek was the most vocal opponent, arguing that the building was worth much more than what Crowninshield was
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