

**CITY OF NORWALK
NORWALK HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
MARCH 29, 2016**

ATTENDANCE: Tony Mobilia, Chair; Dennis Santella, John Romano (10:49 a.m.);
Dr. John Pinto (11:13 a.m.)

STAFF: Geoff Steadman, Consultant; Michael Griffin, Harbor Master

ConnDOT Mr. James Fallon, ConnDOT; John Hanifin, ConnDOT;
Stacey Epps, ConnDOT; Chris MacDonnell, Parsons
Brinckerhoff (PB); Joe D’Agostino, PB; Chet Muckenhirn,
Cianbro-Middlesec Joint Venture; Heather Cwikla, PB; Christian
Brown, HNTB ; Domenic LaRosa, ConnDOT; Elizabeth Stocker,
City of Norwalk

OTHERS: Tony D’Andrea, Select Plastics; Jeff Roig, CMJV;
Vin Penna, A.J. Penna Construction;
Harold Corbin, Nancy Chapman

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Mobilia called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. He led those present in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. He greeted everyone and requested that all those present introduce themselves.

ConnDOT: Walk Bridge program Status Update

Mr. Fallon came forward to speak about the design phase of the project. He said that the meeting was intended to bring the Commissioners up to speed, answer questions, and address the Commission’s comments previously submitted to ConnDOT. This presentation was to provide information to the Commission and the general public. There will be a website launched in the few weeks that will have more information on it.

Mr. Hanifin then gave a brief overview of the purpose and need. He said that the goal was to replace the structure with a reliable, safe and resilient bridge structure. A consultation model will be used to allow for input from the various stakeholders to come up with a preferred structure.

Mr. Hanifin then displayed an aerial map that showed the four different projects that would be underway, including a fender repair project, the area where the bridge would be replaced, the details of a 4 track switching system to the east and where the rail yard

would be located on the Danbury line along with the other RR bridges in Norwalk that are slated for work.

There is only one contractor/joint venture on the team (Cianbro Middlesex JV). There is also the designer, HNTB and Program Management Consultants, Parsons Brinckerhoff. He said that the anticipated start of the fender repair was in 2016 and would take about 5 months to 6 months to replace all the damaged portions of the fenders which protect the bridge turning pier from being hit by vessels.

Mr. Hanifin then spoke about the reasons for the need for Danbury Branch Dockyard. This will include signal work, and is anticipated to start in 2017 and have a duration of two years.

The anticipated start of the Walk Bridge replacement project will be in Mid-2018 and last approximately 4-5 years. The project will also include replacement of Osborne Avenue and East Avenue RR bridges.

Mr. Chris Brown then gave an overview of the Public Scoping Meeting from Feb. 2015. He indicated where the buildings including the Maritime Aquarium are located on the western bank of the river. ConnDOT needs to maintain rail traffic as much as possible. Previous rehabilitation of the bridge did not meet the goals of resiliency and track alignments. The data has been collected underneath the bridge and in the river bed; what the navigation needs are and locations of piers, along with environmental conditions.

The final phase of the project will be the construction. There are about 180 trains that cross the bridge on a daily basis. The design phase also includes making sure the bridge can withstand an extreme storm event.

Mr. Brown then displayed a slide showing different types of moving bridges that were presented in February 2015. He then updated the Commission on the current design. He added that there would be a Public Involvement Program web page available.

The design of the main moveable span will likely evolve over time. He said that the Through Truss Rolling Bascule Bridge and Through Truss Vertical Lift Span Bridge were being considered. He displayed drawings showing these two designs and went on to describe the bridge replacement challenges along with the contractors' means and methods. The project is still at the preliminary phase. One major concern is reducing the impact of the project on the water traffic and rail traffic.

He spoke about the main span superstructure, the overall constructibility and the change in vertical clearance when the structure is closed. This change will provide approximately 11 feet in additional vertical clearance to the existing 16 feet in vertical clearance. For the Bascule Bridge Design option, the control house would be located on

the east bank. For the Vertical Lift Bridge Design option, the control house could be located on either side of the river. He displayed potential designs for span colors and what the control house would look like.

Mr. Fallon said the project was still at the 30% design stage and that it would be too early to discuss the details of crane movements and other water traffic details.

Mr. Mobilia asked about the public presentation that was done a year ago and whether there would be another meeting. Mr. Fallon said that there would be another meeting in late April or early May to update everyone. Once the website is up at www.walkbridgect.com, it will help the public get information.

Mr. Santella asked if the new span was being shifted to align with the Straffolino bridge. Mr. Brown said that this will be done to allow the water traffic to use the west channel. The new pier on the east side will be moved to the current east channel. There will be fenders protecting the piers. The fenders on the current illustration are just representational and may vary.

Mr. Steadman said that the DOT had done a study regarding the original repairs on the Walk Bridge after the bridge did not close properly in 2014 (not to be confused with the Fender Repairs) and wished to know whether the repairs were completed. Mr. Fallon said that the interim repairs had been completed.

Mr. Steadman asked the team to review the scope of the environmental review and wished to know when the public would have input. He wished to know how the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) laws would be handled. All alternatives that were assessed for the project will be outlined in the Environmental Assessment Document.

Mr. Romano joined the meeting at 10:49 a.m.

Mr. Brown said that it was important to separate construction impacts that would become part of the CEPA document and the environmental impacts. He then listed how this would be done.

Mr. Steadman said that he understood evaluation of the bridges had determined that a fixed bridge was not feasible. Mr. Fallon said that a fixed span would not have the desirable outcome and that the State was complying with all the CEPA and other regulations.

Harbor Master Griffin said that his concern was what the river would look like after the project was completed. Mr. Fallon said that there was a concern about the water dependent uses that were in the immediate area. There would be some disruption to the

businesses while the construction was underway and the State was keenly aware that the length of construction would have an impact on the businesses and property owners in the area. There have been discussions with the rowing clubs and others who use the river. The staging and location of construction equipment is not something that can be discussed at this point. The details of how this will be managed are not clear at this time.

Overview of the Fender Repair Project

Mr. Steadman said that the Commission had reviewed the application for a Certificate of Permission (COP) from the CT DEEP for the fender Repair and passed on their comments to the DEEP and ConnDOT. The Commission had no issues with the proposal provided best management practices are employed to avoid adverse impacts on the environment and navigation. With those conditions the Commission found the application consistent with the Harbor Management Plan. Mr. Steadman said that there had been discussion with the Coast Guard as well. He noted that this was replacing an existing structure without any further encroachment. He added that the Commission's comments on the fender project should not be construed as a finding on the larger bridge project but specially addressed the fender repairs.

Mr. Steadman asked for clarification on the timeline for the fender repair. Mr. Fallon said that they had spoken with the rowing clubs to determine their needs. The rowing peak season is from March through early November. The peak months mentioned were May and June due to championships in June. Mr. Fallon said that the team will be working on when the best time would be to start the project.

Mr. Mobilia asked if the team had considered some of the water dependent businesses needs. Mr. Romano pointed out that Devine Brothers would be bringing in sand, rock and gravel during the summer and heating oil during the winter. Harbor Master Griffin pointed out that he had listed all the water dependent businesses and their high points and low points of activity in a document early in the process.

Harbor Master Griffin left the meeting at 11:03 a.m.

Review of the NHMC December Letter

Copies of the December 2, 2015 letter from the Harbor Management Commission to ConnDOT. (See attached) Mr. Steadman pointed out that back in February of 2015 the Commission did not fully understand the role of the scoping meeting with respect to the CEPA review. He said that the comments from the Commission in December are appropriate for addressing in the CEPA review.

Mr. Fallon said that the first three points in the Commission's letter focused on property acquisitions. Mr. Fallon stated that the Department's Division of Rights of Way continues

to coordinate with affected property owners. Mr. Steadman replied that some of the affected properties have water dependent uses.

Mr. Fallon spoke about the last bullet point which had to do with the NRG power plant site on Manresa Island. Mr. Steadman said that he believed any DOT plans for using that property for staging during the Walk Bridge project would be subject to review by the Norwalk Planning and Zoning Department. It was noted that the contractor was negotiating terms with NRG but now there is no intention of the Program using the Manressa property.

Regarding the water dependent use, the comments are understood and appreciated. Safe rowing and pass throughs for the barges will be incorporated into the construction plans.

Mr. Steadman asked what height clearance is needed for the tugboats to pass under the bridge and it was stated that the tugs needed 34 feet. Mr. Brown said the bridge designs now being considered would provide 27 feet of clearance at mean high water.

Mr. Steadman said that Maritime Aquarium has been involved with these issues. Mr. Fallon said that there had been several meetings with the Maritime Aquarium staff and administration about the project.

Mr. Steadman mentioned that the DEEP previously said there should be no net loss of water-dependent facilities. Mr. Brown said that the team continues to communicate with DEEP

Dr. John Pinto joined the meeting at 11:13 a.m.

Mr. Fallon said that understood the concerns about navigation and will continue to coordinate with the commission. Mr. Steadman said that in the past, the City had worked with Congress and the Corps of Engineers to change the federal navigation channel boundaries and the construction will require changing the navigational channel again.

Mr. Fallon reviewed the concerns about the construction practices and public access. He said that the team is working on the inclusion of a bike and walkway trail on both banks of the river. He said that there were on-going conversations with the historic stakeholder groups about interpretative signage.

Mr. Fallon thanked the Commission for their comments because the team was now aware of the concerns.

Mr. Steadman said that this was the most complex project that the Commission will have to review and that the Commission's role is to review this project for impacts on the river and the harbor and evaluate the project's consistency with the Harbor Management Plan.

The Commission will provide thoughtful comments to ConnDOT and uphold the public review process.

OPEN DISCUSSION

Mr. Harold Corbin asked about the temporary track structure and having an alternative dual track to bypass the bridge. Mr. Brown said that there might be a dual track temporary bridge that would be constructed north of the existing bridge and would tie into the existing track structure. It is still part of the process. It is actually feasible to build the bridges without the bypass. It is not a foregone conclusion that a bypass would be used.

Mr. Corbin asked if the dockyard on the Danbury line would be a fully manned operation with crew quarters. Mr. Brown said that it would mainly be for the rail service maintenance equipment and would not have crew quarters.

Mr. Vincent Penna said that he was a property owner that was adjacent to the property that was being taken. He asked if the project budget figure of \$700 million dollars was realistic. Mr. Fallon said that similar to the design, the cost estimates were not firm. However a cost of \$700 million would be a reasonable number.

Mr. Penna then asked about the Fort Point and East Avenue bridges to be replaced in conjunction with the project. Mr. Fallon said that they would be done in conjunction with the Walk Bridge project.

Mr. Penna said that he had been told that he had to be out of his property in a month or two and wondered why he was not receiving more assistance in relocating his business. While the Right of Ways staff has been very nice, he said, he has not received much assistance. He commented that no one wanted to have a construction yard near them. Mr. Brown said that the 2018 start date was realistic, and Mr. Fallon said he would be willing to have a conversation about this with Mr. Penna.

Mr. D'Andrea said that he was a former member and chairman of the Harbor Management Commission and a property owner that would be affected by the project. He said that as a former chairman and property owner he was never asked for public input on the Walk Bridge project. He wished to know when he would have that opportunity. Mr. Fallon said that there was a public scoping meeting in 2015 and that there would be another public scoping meeting towards the end of April. He also mentioned the environmental process that Mr. Steadman had referred to earlier in the meeting. Mr. Fallon said that the public input and comments was on-going and could be submitted through all these various channels.

Mr. D'Andrea said that he was familiar with the CEPA and NEPA requirements and they require evaluation of economic impacts. He wished to know if there would be separate documents issued on these two items. Mr. Fallon said that there would be one document issued that would cover both sets of requirements. Mr. D'Andrea commented that the current requirements call for a detailed environmental analysis. Mr. Fallon said that the staff member who was in charge of the environmental issues was not able to attend the meeting, but that all of the requirements would be met. Mr. D'Andrea pointed out that the environmental analysis would not be done until after the State acquires his property and that he felt that this was potentially putting the cart before the horse. Mr. Fallon said that ConnDOT has the Federal Transportation Administration's (FTA) approval to acquire properties before the environmental evaluation is done.

Ms. Nancy Chapman said that there had been a number of comments about the dockyard generating noise and vibration. Mr. Hanifin said that the work is being done in the rights of way that are currently in use on the Danbury line and that during use, there should not be an increase in noise and vibrations than there is now.

Mr. Santella asked about details of the retaining walls and the track alignment. Mr. Brown indicated where the retaining walls might be located on the aerial view depending on which design was chosen. Mr. Santella said that he owns property by the East Avenue bridge and that there is a railroad retaining wall that is in need of repair. Mr. Brown then indicated where it would be on the aerial map. The retaining wall in which Mr. Santella referred to is not within the project limits.

Mr. Mobilia pointed out that to open the bridge, one has to make a request two hours in advance. Now it is difficult to do this. Mr. Hanifin said that this would be a function of the ConnDOT Office of Rail and the Coast Guard. Mr. Mobilia said that he would like to see the bridge opening process improved. Mr. Fallon said that he would bring that comment back to the full team. Mr. Mobilia said that in Essex, the bridge had been opened and only closed on demand. Mr. Fallon said that there probably had been less demand on that rail line.

Mr. Steadman said that when they reviewed the proposed new rules for opening the bridge, the original idea proposed by ConnDOT was that the new rules would remain in place after the project was completed. Mr. Brown said that there were on-going conversations about this with the Coast Guard. Mr. Steadman reminded everyone that the Commission had commented that they felt this was premature and the new rules for opening the bridge should not be finalized until after the bridge was constructed.

Mr. Mobilia thanked the team for coming down. He said that he would see if he could schedule a meeting with the up-river stake holders for the temporary fender repair project.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Mobilia adjourned The meeting at 11:44 a.m.

Respectfully submitted

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services