

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING/ WORKSHOP
DOVER CITY COUNCIL
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
WEDNESDAY
OCTOBER 5, 2005
7:00 P.M.

SPECIAL MEETING:

1. Councilor Mayberry led the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Scott Myers, Councilor Otis Perry, Councilor Matt Mayberry, Councilor Robert Keays, Councilor Doug DeDe, Councilor Dean Trefethen and Councilor Bob Lewis.

Absent: Mayor Pro Tem Jason Hindle and Councilor Darlene Colwell Ellis.

Mayor Myers explained that Mayor Pro Tem Hindle has been excused due to a prior commitment.

3. PUBLIC HEARING: Initial Public Input for Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

Mayor Myers opened the public hearing explaining that this is the first opportunity for the public to give their thoughts and direction to the Council regarding the CIP as the staff is currently putting together their lists to submit to the Manager. The Council and Manager are looking for where the public wants the city to focus our resources.

Norm Champagne, 13 Church St – began by stating that in the long run, the CIP adds expenses to the tax bills that most people can't afford. He recently received his assessments on 2 properties he owns which was a combined increase of \$220,000. He explained that the rental unit property currently has tenants that are already behind in their rents and cannot afford another increase. They are hard working people and long time tenants who find that they aren't able to afford to live in Dover anymore. He continued that projects like the McConnell Center and the Waterfront development are adding expenses to the taxpayers and the waterfront development is going to force out the working class people in that area. He feels the Council should be thinking about ways to stop spending and to remember that heating season isn't even here yet and there will be many people who won't be able to afford to heat their homes, and therefore, the welfare budget is going to go through the roof. He concluded by asking the Council to stop spending.

Dona Layton, Open Lands Committee Chair, reviewed the productive year the Committee has had with the various land purchases for conservation areas and several that will be coming before the Council at the next meeting. (see folder for spreadsheet of Open Lands Committee projects)

Ray Bardwell, 199 Spur Road – stated he doesn't feel qualified to give honest input for the CIP as he doesn't know what debt is being retired from previous bonds. He does feel that they should not fund more that what is being returned and not add debt onto debt. Next, he discussed the Mast Road gravel pit which he feels should be going to the general fund or CIP and is disturbed that it is level-funded until the gravel is exhausted, especially when we go out to bid for gravel and the cost keeps going up. He stated that contract should be renegotiated.

Seeing no one else wishing to speak, the Mayor closed the public hearing.

4. OTHER - NONE
5. ADJOURN

Perry moved to adjourn into a workshop at 7:10 p.m., seconded by Mayberry. Motion passed unanimously.

WORKSHOP SESSION:

- A. Presentation Re: State of NH's General Sullivan Bridge Project *(See folder for power point presentation document)*

City Manager Mike Joyal introduced Frank O'Callaghan, the consultant from Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB) for the State of New Hampshire Dept. of Transportation to review the Alternative 3 option for the Spaulding Turnpike reconstruction.

O'Callaghan began by introducing Chris Waszczuk, Project Manager for the NH DOT and some of the members of the Project Advisory Task Force who were in attendance including; Jack Newick, City Planner Bruce Woodruff, Tom Fargo of the Conservation Commission and SRPC and Steve Wells of COAST representing transit interests. He also mentioned Rick Card of the Chamber of Commerce who was not able to attend this evening. He explained that this group has been meeting for many months and are looking at Alternative 3 as the most favorable to the City of Dover.

Next, Chris Waszczuk reviewed the history of the committee up to this point where they are seeking input from the City of Dover. He explained that they are in the middle of the 3rd phase of 5 in the Environmental Impact Statement process. There will be a public informational meeting held in November and a public hearing next spring.

Frank O'Callaghan then went through a brief slide show presentation reviewing the Alternatives 2 and 3 and how they ultimately arrived at Alternative 3.

He explained that they are still reviewing Bruce Woodruff's amendment to the proposal to use the General Sullivan Bridge for pedestrian/bike traffic which would be ADA accessible and would provide a 22' local connector with 14' clearance to the Park. It also lowers the profile of the turnpike and saves \$1.8 million on fill and a retaining wall.

A question that keeps coming up is will this reconstruction impact Hilton Park and the short answer is NO, as the widening will occur before that area. The 8 lane option puts the addition closer to the General Sullivan Bridge if it is retained. If the bridge is removed then there will be a multi-use lane added to the new construction.

Mayberry thanked the State for keeping people informed. He explained that this project affects his Ward 3 and that he lives in the area himself. The committee meetings have been held on Wednesday nights which have made it difficult for him to attend, but he has attended when possible. He asked then asked about sound barriers.

Mr. Waszczuk stated that piece is being finalized as to what design will be needed and they are not ready to present that yet.

Mayberry asked if any there be any properties taken by eminent domain.

Waszczuk explained that they still have to get a record of decision and formal approval of the layout before they can start that process. They will get full appraisals and full market value for the properties which may occur sometime in 2008. He stated they have been approached by some property owners for early consideration but this needs to go through a process to determine eligibility.

Mayberry asked how the Wentworth Terrace neighborhood will be affected by traffic.

O'Callaghan stated there will be a change in traffic volume peak impacts but this area already has the Dept. of Motor Vehicle which generates all day traffic. He stated yes it will change volume and there should be calming measures taken.

Mayberry asked what prompted the removal of the loop in that area.

O'Callaghan stated during the morning peak hours the volume of traffic backs up down the southbound ramp and the loop allows people from Dover Point/Boston Harbor road to jump ahead and therefore, from a safety perspective they are making this into a traffic light intersection.

Mayberry stated he likes Woody's ideas to keep the General Sullivan Bridge as a path for bikers and walkers and would prefer to go with the 8 lanes even it is just to give us room to grow and not put the pedestrian lane on the new portion.

O'Callaghan explained that that the extra lane would serve as a management lane during the high traffic morning/evening commutes.

Mayberry asked if the 4th lane could be used as a breakdown lane for now and then re-stripped later if needed.

O'Callaghan stated that this had been considered as far as making it a shoulder area but the Federal Highway Department will not allow it except as a temporary fix.

Mayberry asked about the current construction in Newington and when will that be completed.

Waszczuk stated the west side will be completed in November and the whole project will be complete in June/July of next year.

Mayberry concluded that he doesn't want Spur Road turned into an expressway to avoid lights.

Trefethen stated that he looks at this from 2 perspectives, as a Councilor and as a commuter which is frustrating on a daily basis. He congratulated everyone for the work they've done so far and for all of the public input they've sought. First, he asked about keeping the General Sullivan Bridge versus tearing it down in regards to the cost of rehabbing it and having to then keep it up in the future.

O'Callaghan explained that the first concern is that it is an historic structure which is protected under federal law and therefore we have to prove that there is a burden that requires it to be removed. It is also the highest historic structure in the State and there has to be no other practical or prudent alternative to removing it in order to do so. He stated that *right now* we still have the 2 options. He agrees that there will be a continued cost to maintain it in the future.

Waszczuk further explained that the decision hasn't been made but the federal highway and Division of Historic Resources both feel it is a significant historic structure. It will cost approximately 9-10 million to remove it. Also there is safety in keeping the pedestrian lane separate and the General Sullivan Bridge is the only place connecting both sides of the bay and 20 years down the road it could be used as a local connector, but once it's gone, it's gone. He stated that there was also discussion of using it as a dedicated bus way, but that probably wouldn't happen. He concluded by stating that Dover wants the bridge preserved and Newington feels it takes up space.

Trefethen then discussed the configuration of Exit 6 north and west and is concerned with the fact that there is significant truck travel and this will cause them to be stopping/starting at an incline at the lights. He stated that this is supposed to be improving traffic flow, but lights are contrary to that.

O'Callaghan explained that the traffic cues would not be allowed to back up as it would allow more room than a 2 lane on-ramp that would lose 400' feet and would run into the backup of traffic to the tolls. He feels this is a safer more efficient alternative even though some trucks will have to stop.

Trefethen continued stating that people from Dover go to Newington to shop and right now to get to the mall it's not broken and feels like the alternatives look like spaghetti.

O'Callaghan stated there are different perspectives that do change over time and explained the history of that area to the present.

Trefethen talked about the traffic flow over the bridge stating that it appears that the crown of the bridge makes people slow down because they cannot see what is on the other side and wonders why the new design keeps the same profile and wonders if this was considered.

O'Callaghan stated that it is not the profile that is the problem, but the fact that all of the traffic is entering at the same point and causes a funnel effect.

Trefethen asked about not being able to move a car off the bridge after an accident due to police investigations when it is allowed/required in other parts of the country.

O'Callaghan stated that the lack of adequate shoulders also compounds that problem, but he is aware that there is a new incident management program being worked on by various safety agencies.

Mayberry clarified that it is now State law to remove the vehicles.

Lewis stated it is his understanding that the Turnpike Authority is responsible for Hilton Park and he is concerned with the mock up of the remodeling of Hilton Park as there used to be a public boat dock that has disappeared. (Councilor Lewis displayed a map of the area in question)

Waszczuk stated the Dept. of Fish and Game is aware of this situation as well. He then referred to Lewis's map stating it is from 2001 and is no longer valid.

Lewis wants that to be replaced by next season as it causes unsafe conditions for people launching their boats. He also wants the park to become a part of the overall plan because it is a valuable piece of property and should be impacted in a positive way.

Waszczuk stated that Fish and Game does have plans to make repairs to the launch and possibly the dock but there are permitting issues. He reiterated that there are no physical impacts to the park as a part of this plan and they cannot justify spending resources on this area because it is a recreation area.

Lewis then asked how many studies were done prior to this in regards to the impact more public transportation would have before widening the road, etc.

O'Callaghan stated that they did look at a number of transit related service improvements in conjunction with employer based programs, i.e. flex-time hours, etc. He explained that even with all of the different alternatives it would only have a small impact and wouldn't preclude widening. He referred to the State website for a study done back in January regarding the rising gas prices as well. He stated that COAST bus will have an express between Rochester and Portsmouth and there is a Park and Ride being put in at Exit 9 in Dover.

Mayberry stated that Executive Councilor Ruth Griffin is working on getting a meeting scheduled as well.

Mayor Myers stated he shares Councilor Trefethens' concerns with the diamond configuration at 6N and having no access from Hilton Park to go northbound.

Waszczuk stated that Alternative 1 has proposed a parallel connection from Wentworth Terrace but the pavement would have impacted private properties.

Joyal asked why the current access to the park can't be retained.

Waszczuk stated that there would then be 5 interchanges within a 3 mile length which would cause safety problems due to weaving in and out which would be perpetuating the current problems.

Woodruff stated that Alternative 1 did include an extra lane from exit 5 to 6, but the neighborhood would lose what it has fought to keep i.e., the bike path, their property.

Myers also addressed the southbound "cheat lane" that currently exists and would like to see that addressed now instead of later. He also is concerned with the configuration that would require Dover Point residents wanting to go north to enter the turnpike prior to the toll and will then go down to exit 7 to get on after the tolls and will add to the traffic problems in that area.

Waszczuk stated that isn't the only area that ramp would serve i.e. Scammel bridge traffic, so yes, it may have that effect.

Myers stated he would rather encourage the use of the turnpike without the tolls.

He then opened the discussion up to the audience.

Woodruff stated as the staff representative he was charged with making sure the impact to the Hilton Park/Dover Point area was minimal with no quality of life degradation including noise and sight issues, access to pocket neighborhoods should not be any worse and finally, no taking of homes. He also did not want the area to be dissected by a large wall and to make alternative transportation an integral part. He stated that Dover people have been adamant about keeping the General Sullivan Bridge. He therefore, supports Alternative 3 with the revisions to keep the cross access road closer to the channel and to keep the General Sullivan Bridge.

Tom Fargo is pleased that VHB has come up with an alternative cross access roadway location under the bridge abutments, but shares the concerns about the diamond configuration. He stated that the Advisory Task Force is looking for a consensus of the Council as to whether or not they support Alternative III.

Jack Newick spoke regarding replacing the pier at Hilton Park and hopes that he will be consulted before this is placed because it will be important where it is placed so it won't be a more dangerous situation. He thanked everyone for all of the work put in thus far and stated that he would also like to keep exit 5 open.

Ray Bardwell stated he has been lobbying for 6W roundabout and still feels that free flow traffic would be better than the diamond/lights and feels that tractor trailer trucks will intimidate other drivers at the left-hand turns. He stated if we could keep Exit 5 open it would give people at Wentworth Terrace another way out. He stated that if we are going to endorse alternative 3 he would rather keep the light at Spur Road instead of the proposed right-hand turn only which he feels will be an inconvenience to the neighborhood.

He agrees that we do need to replace the boat dock and concluded by asking that when the new piers are being built will they be connected to eliminate the current whirlpool situation.

Mr. Waszczuk indicated yes from the audience.

B. ADJOURN

Mayberry moved to adjourn at 8:55 p.m., seconded by Keays. Motion passed unanimously.

Valerie A. French
Deputy City Clerk