

**ENFIELD TOWN HALL
MINUTES OF A PUBLIC HEARING
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2019**

A Public Hearing was held in the Council Chambers of the Enfield Town Hall, 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, Connecticut on Wednesday, April 17, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.

Present from the Town of Enfield were Director of Public Works, Donald Nunes; Assistant Town Engineer, John Cabibbo; Deputy Director of Economic and Community Development, Nelson Tereso; Roads Engineer, J.P. Rodriguez; Town Council members Robert Cressotti, Donna Szewczak and Mayor Michael Ludwick and State Representative Thomas Arnone

This Public Hearing is to allow interested citizens an opportunity to express their opinions regarding the **South River Street Bridge Replacement (Project No. 48-198)** and **Connecticut River Access Project (Project No 48-190)**

Present from the Connecticut Department of Transportation was Priti Bhardwaj, Project Manager for the South River Street Bridge Replacement Project No. 48-198. Ms. Bhardwaj also acted as Moderator for this evening's Public Hearing.

Ms. Bhardwaj requested that anyone wishing to speak use the sign-in sheet, as well as a voluntary sign-in sheet for everyone present in order to collect demographic data and determine the success of this public outreach effort. She explained the purpose and format for this hearing. She noted documents are available for public inspection and copying at the Town of Enfield, Engineering Office located at 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, CT. She stated the public will be limited to comments and public statements only, not questions. She noted for anyone who has any additional questions, they will stay and answer those questions after the hearing has concluded.

Donald Nunes, Director of Public Works, introduced staff that is present – Nelson Tereso, Deputy Director of Economic and Community Development, and he will be the Project Manager for the Connecticut River Access Project; John Cabibbo, Assistant Town Engineer, and he will be the Project Manager for the South River Street Bridge and J.P. Rodriguez, Roads Engineer. He also introduced Mayor Michael Ludwick and Council members Donna Szewczak and Robert Cressotti.

SOUTH RIVER STREET BRIDGE REPLACEMENT (PROJECT NO 48-198)

Present for this item was Paul Brand, Project Manager from GM2 Associates

Mr. Brand stated GM2 Associates is the designers of record for Project 48-198, which is the South River Street Bridge over the Freshwater Brook. He stated also present for this project are Priti Bhardwaj and Marc Byrnes.

He stated the bridge is located south of Main Street, north of the Asnuntuck underpass, east of the Connecticut River and slightly west of the Amtrak train tracks. He presented slides illustrating the location of the bridge.

Mr. Brand stated the roadway is currently very limited because of erosion that has occurred on the west side of the bridge. He noted a portion of the west side of the bridge has been blocked off by the chain link fence approaches.

He stated this bridge was originally constructed in 1920 and is about 38 feet long from abutment to abutment. It's about 22 feet wide, and it has a reinforced concrete deck that sits on steel girders supported by brownstone walls and abutments. Just to the west of the bridge is a major 24-inch cast iron sanitary line that sits on an I-beam that's independently supported and not supported by the bridge itself or the abutments. There are also two gas mains that hang from the edge of the bridge on the east side.

Mr. Brand stated there are significant safety deficiencies with the roadway and the bridge itself. He noted currently there's no guiderail on the bridge, but just a chain link fence, which does not meet standards for crash test rating, and there's also the issue of the narrowness of the roadway. He stated the Town standards and Federal standards are 24-feet wide, and at either side of the bridge it's 17 and 18 feet to the north and south respectively.

He stated the Department of Transportation inspects these bridges every two years. He noted the bridge was inspected in 2016, at which time it was rated a "4" and because of this rating it was put into the bridge program for replacement. He stated it came up for inspection again last May, and at that time, inspectors found significant section loss in the steel girders from rust. He noted at that time they rated this bridge as a "2". He explained the rating system goes from 0 to 9, so this was one of the lowest ratings the bridge could receive, and it was considered in critical condition and not safe for travel, therefore, it had to be shut down immediately. He stated over the course of the fall, the bridge was repaired, re-inspected by DOT, given a "4" rating, and reopened in October. He noted "4" is still considered a poor rating, but it was enough to allow traffic to resume over the bridge surface. He stated because of the condition of this bridge, it cannot be rehabilitated and must be replaced soon.

Mr. Brand stated some of the other project goals included widening South River Street to conform to the 24-foot wide design standards, as well as protecting the 24-inch cast iron sanitary sewer pipe, which is the main sewer that runs through the area. He noted this pipe has about five million gallons of flow per day. He stated the goal is not to disturb that sewer main at all during construction, which makes construction a little tighter.

He stated the Town had a goal of providing pedestrian access across the bridge, which would become part of the Connecticut River Access Project. He noted this would be a main portion of the trail that they need to connect the Asnuntuck underpass with Main Street.

Mr. Brand stated with any of these types of bridge projects, they always try to attain a balance of minimizing different impacts to the traveling public, impacts to the properties near the project, and minimize the construction time and cost.

He stated following their preliminary engineering study, they made a recommendation to the Town and State to replace the existing bridge with a new 47 ½ foot pre-cast concrete deck bridge that would sit on abutments supported by micro-piles. He explained micro-piles are shafts that are drilled into the ground beneath the concrete abutments to support them, and they're drilled all the way down to bedrock, which is 30 to 35 feet below the roadway surface.

Mr. Brand stated part of this project that the Town asked them to look into was adding an aesthetic aspect to the bridge itself, so they proposed a concrete parapet with simulated stone facing on both sides of the parapet walls. He showed an illustration of such a design.

He stated they are recommending a realignment of South River Street with a widening to 24', basically two 12-foot lanes and a six-foot sidewalk running along the west side. He noted they're also recommending some drainage improvements on the south side of the bridge that would tie into the existing drainage outlet, which will be relocated when the bridge gets widened.

Mr. Brand explained why they're recommending the realignment of South River Street. He showed an illustration of the existing condition, which shows the limits of the road as it currently sits. He noted it comes and goes in width as it goes from Main Street to the bridge and then away from the bridge. He stated there's quite a pinch point at the Main Street intersection. He stated the house on the corner is very close to the Amtrak right-of-way. He referred to an illustration, and stated the right-of-way juts out into the street. He stated at the corner of Main Street, more than half of the roadway is currently in Amtrak property. He noted the issue they had while looking at different options to realign the road was that the house itself is so close to the embankment that supports the rail that they could not fit a 24-foot road with a six-foot sidewalk through that area. He noted even a four-foot sidewalk was taking off a corner of the house. He stated if they're going to impact the house with the roadway widening essentially requiring an acquisition of the property, it would be best for safety's sake to realign the roadway into a straighter approach to the bridge with a widened intersection with Main Street. He stated the house is only about 12 feet from the Amtrak property.

He stated one of the main things they must look at when designing these projects is how to maintain traffic during construction. He noted they first looked at a staged option that would stage construction and allow a portion of the roadway to remain open during construction. He noted unfortunately there's very limited area on both sides of the bridge, and there's very little room to stage construction to allow traffic to pass by.

Mr. Brand stated they looked at a detour and found it not only saved about 10% in cost, but it also allowed them to minimize the amount of time that the bridge would be closed by about four months. He noted the overall construction time would be about 8 months, but the actual time that

the bridge would be closed is only four months. He noted they believe that can be decreased even more by working with the contractor.

Mr. Brand then reviewed the project schedule. He noted they still have about 18 months of design and hope to complete the design at the end of 2020. He stated during this time of design, the rights-of-way process will begin to acquire the rights for the properties that are necessary for construction. He noted following the final design, there will be a short shutdown period, the bidding process is about 3 ½ months, and they will then get into the construction phase of the project, which would start in early spring of 2021. He stated there will be a four-month closure from June to September.

He stated the detour they are proposing is similar to what was experienced last year. He noted it's understood that there were many logistical issues with the previous closure. He stated the Town was able to come up with a plan for emergency services south of the bridge, and they were able to determine that they could get fire trucks beneath the Asnuntuck underpass, and police and ambulance services had a plan of action for reaching anyone who needed emergency service south of the bridge.

Mr. Brand stated the maintenance for the access of the sewer pump station would need to be worked out. He noted access to the boat launch would remain, but would be limited to the height restriction of the Asnuntuck underpass, which is about 7'11", therefore, larger boats wouldn't be able to access the boat launch during that four-month period.

He stated the Town has committed to a more comprehensive action and communication plan that would start well before construction to keep everyone informed as construction goes on, and they will provide regular updates as well as work with residents to provide plans for things such as oil and package deliveries.

Mr. Brand stated there are environmental considerations for the project. He noted the boat launch is considered a public recreational area, so it requires a Section 4F Compliance Determination. He noted they must look at all the impacts to the boat launch to be sure they're not doing anything detrimental to the long-term viability of this public area. He then highlighted proposed impacts to the boat launch area as follows:

- Partial acquisitions of land
- Right to remove and relocate fence
- Right to install sedimentation and erosion control
- Right to install sidewalk
- Right to grade and reconstruct driveway

Mr. Brand stated there are environmental permits required from the CT DOT Flood Management, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Town of Enfield Inland Wetlands and Watercourses.

Mr. Brand stated the total construction cost of bridge and roadway realignment is \$2.4 million dollars. He noted this project is under the Federal Local Bridge Program, which means it's eligible for 80% of Federal funding with 20% being matched by the Town.

CONNECTICUT RIVER ACCESS MULTIPURPOSE PATH – PROJECT NO. 48-190

Present for this item was Dominick Celtruda, Project Manager from BL Companies. BL Companies are the engineers and landscape architects of record for Project No. 48-190

Mr. Celtruda introduced the team for this project: Lauren Whitten, Director of Development Services; Nelson Tereso, Deputy Director of Economic & Community Development; John Cabibbo, Assistant Town Engineer; from CT DOT—Scott Roberts, Project Manager and Jon Dean, Project Engineer

He provided illustrations showing the project location. He noted besides the Connecticut River Access Multipurpose Path other projects proposed in this area include the South River Street Bridge Replacement, Thompsonville Rail Station Project and the Transit-Oriented Design and Economic Development Project.

Mr. Celtruda highlighted the history of this project. He noted this is a Federal earmark to construct a high-speed rail crossing to bike and pedestrian trails in Enfield. He noted the goals are to provide a multipurpose path to link active transportation users to the Connecticut River for the use and enjoyment of the public; expand the network of bike and pedestrian access in Connecticut and increase public access to the Connecticut River.

He explained proposed work includes installing an accessible access path to the Connecticut River; installing pedestrian overlook at the Connecticut River; maximizing the width of the path; restoring disturbed areas with native plantings; installing pedestrian bridge over Freshwater Brook and installing path site furnishings (benches, seat walls, etc.)

Mr. Celtruda stated they would incorporate safety and operational elements such as fencing and guiderails; wayfinding and operational signage; gates and bollards; improved lighting and new crosswalks and signage at roadway intersections.

He showed photographs of the existing conditions and showed an illustration of the proposed plan and explained they want to draw pedestrian and cyclists from Freshwater Pond, down Pearl Street, and they want people to have good access to the Connecticut River overlook and the boat launch. He noted included in the plan is a recommendation for a 96' long pedestrian bridge over Freshwater Brook. He showed an illustration showing potential path amenities.

Mr. Celtruda stated eventually the Asnuntuck underpass will be closed off for vehicles and will become pedestrian access only, with emergency access only.

He stated Federal, State and local permits will be required for this project.

Mr. Celtruda stated the estimated cost for construction is \$2.6 million dollars and anticipated funding comes from Federal High Priority Project Program funding with 80% Federal and 20% Town funding.

He stated their design schedule will be working in concert with the South River Street Bridge replacement, and once that bridge is completed, they can begin this project to be sure there's a seamless transition between the two projects.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION – DIVISION OF RIGHTS-OF-WAY

Present for this item was Dennis McDonald, a representative from the Connecticut Department of Transportation Division of Rights-Of-Way. He provided an explanation of the rights-of-way process.

Mr. McDonald stated the function of the Division of Rights-Of-Way is to acquire all property rights necessary for transportation projects. He noted all property rights will be acquired in accordance with Connecticut General Statute Section 13a-73 and 13a-98e. He stated if Federal funds are used in any portion of the project, as is the case here, the Department must adhere to the provisions of the Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as Amended.

He stated the plans for these projects, as presented, indicate one total acquisition and several partial acquisitions. He noted these impacts are subject to change as the design is refined.

Mr. McDonald stated as they begin the rights-of-way process, the effected property owners will receive a letter stating the Department's intent to acquire, along with a property map depicting the specific property impacts. He noted thereafter a valuation process will take place where they will determine an offer of just compensation, and that offer will be sent to the property owner in writing and subsequently a right-of-way agent will meet with the property owner to discuss the project, the specific property impacts and explain the State's offer.

He stated if the negotiations reach an impasse, the State may proceed to acquire the necessary property rights via eminent domain. He explained in that event, the State will file a notice of condemnation in the Superior Court, along with the deposit in the amount of the State's offer. He noted this money is available to the property owner at any time without prejudice. He stated the property owner will then have six months to file an appeal for a reassessment of damages.

Mr. McDonald stated where there is a property owner or tenant that's being displaced, the right-of-way team will also provide relocation benefits, and such benefits may include advisory services, moving and related expenses and replacement housing payments. He noted a right-of-way agent will provide detailed relocation information specific to the situation.

Mr. McDonald stated for anyone interested, he has copies of their relocation assistance brochure, which explains the relocation program in general terms, as well as their property acquisition

brochure. He noted he will be here after the presentation to answer any questions regarding the right-of-way process.

COMMENTS AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS

Ms. Bhardwaj invited comments from Town and State officials.

Town Council member, Robert Cressotti

Stated he's present this evening to support the residents of District #2 regarding these two projects, which will be affecting everyone. He wants to be sure that all necessary services are going to be provided to the residents. He noted he's here to listen to the residents to learn what their thoughts are on these projects. He stated he is looking forward to these projects because they're talking about projects for Thompsonville and for the good of Enfield. He noted when one project starts, another one starts, and it's a chain reaction to the ultimate goal of the transit station. He stated this has been talked about for a number of years, and hopefully it does become a reality. He noted a lot of good people in Development Services worked very hard on these projects. He noted the most important aspect is being transparent to the residents.

Ms. Bhardwaj then invited comments from the public.

Steven Cogtella, 2 South River Street

Stated his understanding the bridge is deficient and needs to be replaced, however, as far as the project itself goes, he cannot support it whatsoever. He noted it talks about a total acquisition of a property that his family owns as well as a partial acquisition of another piece of property that he owns. He stated this street has existed for the last 140 years, and suddenly there's a problem with the railroad right-of-way. He noted he finds that very suspect.

Mr. Cogtella stated when the bridge work was done around 1970, there was acquisition of the property that the Town wishes to get now, but the Town never completed it. He noted the Town could have made the roadway entering that bridge 22 feet, and he believes 22 feet is adequate for this street. He pointed out over the last century, this area has been shared with pedestrians, bicycles, wheelchairs, and vehicles, and there have been no issues.

He stated he's unclear about the railroad right-of-way, and no one has fully explained this to him. He noted he cannot believe the railroad even has an issue with that. He stated an FOI request went out to the State, and they responded today, and he saw absolutely nothing that involves the railroad having an issue with the existing roadway.

As concerns installing a sidewalk, Mr. Cogtella stated this area has been shared with pedestrians. Referring to the access from Freshwater Pond down to the overlook on the west end of Main Street, he pointed out this walkway can come straight down Main Street.

Mr. Cogtella stated his belief a sidewalk isn't necessary with a 22-foot bridge. He went on to state his understanding the realignment is strictly because of some encroachment on the railroad

property. He referred to Section 8 on the railroad right-of-way, and noted it can be seen that Main Street also encroaches on that property as well. He stated the deed does not match up to the right-of-way. He stated his belief there are two separate issues that he would like more fully explained.

Mr. Cogtella stated his belief this whole project can be redesigned. He stated he does have an issue with acquiring people's private property. He noted every meeting he ever went to for the past ten or twelve years, whenever any situation was presented with regards to improvements along the waterfront, he always asked about eminent domain, and he was told the Town would never do that, and that's on record. He feels he has been lied to. He asked this project be redesigned without the taking of any private property from anybody.

Caroline Cogtella, 5 Main Street

Stated the design team, GM2, recommends widening the corner of South River and Main Street and demolishing a family home and adjacent property that has existed over 100 years, housed five generations, is well-maintained and is owned by disabled Enfield taxpaying seniors. She noted this street, according to maps, has existed for over a century and served its purposes without any issues. She stated to use South River Street construction as a reason to widen the street and destroy her family property is not reasonable, and she's requesting the project be redesigned so she can keep her property.

She stated her belief the Connecticut DOT is collaborating with the Town of Enfield to use the South River Street bridge construction as an excuse to expand Enfield's anticipated riverfront access project at a significant cost for a bike/pedestrian trail and a rail stop that has no funding and may never exist. She noted the Connecticut DOT budget of 2019 identifies two projects – Project 48-198-South River Street Bridge Replacement at \$3,375,000 and the Connecticut River Access Project-Project 48-190 at \$3,250,570.

Ms. Cogtella stated she read the entire 674-page Connecticut Bridge Manual and the Code of Federal Regulations, and she has a lot of questions, i.e., what was touchdown point on the bridge; what are connecting roadways, interchanges, ramps and other roadway work not necessitated by the bridge project. She stated her belief a lot of this is not necessary, especially taking her home. She feels the touchdown point is a very important thing, and she did not see this on one thing.

She referred to railroad protective coverage and stated she does not know who will pay that. She pointed out she worked for railroads for over 15 years, and it is a \$25-million minimum from Amtrak.

She stated the manual talks about any cost generally not recognized as reasonable and necessary for the project. She questioned whether the eminent domain is reasonable and necessary to construct the bridge and/or the bike path.

Ms. Cogtella stated she was unable to find this bridge in the National Bridge Inventory, nor could she find it in the Highway Bridge Program from the Federal Highway Administration. She noted to get the 80% of the eligible costs and the other 20%, they must be in the National Bridge

Inventory, and this is one of the questions she had. She stated there was a record of 1,016 crossings at the bridge. She questioned who came up with that number because there aren't many people living on this street. She questioned whether this bridge is considered rural because every highway administration book she read was nine to eleven feet and the extra six feet wasn't needed. She noted she's unaware of any accident that happened on that bridge in the last 40 years. She stated she wants the Town to get the money, and she acknowledged the bridge needs to be fixed, and she is not against a bike path.

Ms. Cogtella stated she anticipates budget issues for the Town of Enfield. She noted the Town will have to budget enough funding to cover several months of project costs before getting reimbursed, and the Town may have to wait several years to receive that funding.

She concluded stating she has worked for railroads, New York City and the City of Chicago, and she knows this can be redesigned and done a different way.

Attorney Matthew Willis – representing the Cogtella Family

Stated South River Street has been in this location since the early 1900's. He provided for the record copies of maps he was able to find through a private collector. He noted this road was accepted by the Town in the 1920's, and it was accepted as is. He stated the Town should not be giving up its property rights in order to take his clients' property, and the Town should utilize what it has, and this project should be redesigned. He stated when the Town accepted this road, this is the way it was, and the railroad company knew that, and so the Town has a right to pass and re-pass under the statutes, so there's no reason to give up property rights to take his client's house. He feels that's just unbelievable. He stated his clients are seeking that the Town reconsider the design of the road and sidewalks, so they don't lose their house on the corner of Main Street and South River Street and so that Mr. Cogtella does not lose his front yard. He stated his belief this can be done, and he has faith in planning, and he has faith in design. He stated he looks forward to another public hearing so they can see a new design. He is asking this of the representatives of Enfield on behalf of his clients.

Patrick Gaskell, 94 South River Street

Stated he would like the Town to reconsider and redesign these two projects. He stated the downtown area is unique, and hard work went into new zoning for this area. He noted the Town is now going to take this person's property, and this individual could have used that property to begin a great business with a train station coming in, and now that ability to being taken away.

Mr. Gaskell stated he has a problem with the river access project because he still envisions people coming down Main Street because they won't take that corner to go under the Asnuntuck underpass. He questioned the logic of spending \$850,000 for a bridge when people will be going straight anyways. He pointed out the real goal is to go straight ahead to the overlook on the river. He noted the boat launch is for boats. He stated he has a lot of questions, which he will ask later.

Gretchen Pfeifer-Hall, 4 Somers Road (a member of the Enfield Conservation Commission)

Stated one concern that she has as part of this project is that the drainage system be improved. She noted anything that can be done to improve runoff into the river would be good.

Robert Lamontagne, 64 South River Street

Stated his impression only about 20 people per day use the bridge. He cannot see the justification for this project.

Erline Provencher, 94 South River Street

Stated she would like to see a redesign, and she does not believe that the Cogtella family home must be taken. She referred to the claim that the railroad owns part of the street, and she questioned if they own part of the street in front of her home, does this mean when the road is repaved, her home will be taken. She stated she does not believe the railroad is going to be concerned while residents have been using this street for a hundred years. She stated she does not believe in taking anyone's house.

Joe Saxton, 76 South River Street

Stated there's a big tank in that area, and he questioned how much longer is that serviceable. He questioned if they could redesign a new cistern in that area.

He suggested making Asnuntuck a one-way street in a circle around Cottage Green, and then a bridge over the brook wouldn't necessary. He stated his belief the project need not be that big.

Caroline Cogtella, 5 Main Street

Stated she lived in Chicago for 45 years, and they have many bike lanes, and there were five deaths recently, and it's getting worse. She stated her belief Main Street could have a bike path. She stated she is not against a bike path, but she does not believe taking a home is necessary.

Erline Provencher, 94 South River Street

As concerns a bike path helping to revitalize Thompsonville, Ms. Provencher stated it's necessary to first clean up the area before doing any planning or developing in this area.

Steve Cogtella, 2 South River Street

Stated 33 North River Street was supposed to be some type of addition to the proposed train station that doesn't appear to be coming. He noted this property has become blighted by the Town's own definition of blight. He pointed out the Town acquired 28 South River Street, and that is a blighted property. He stated 32 Church Street is a burned out building that the Town acquired, and it's still standing after years. He noted the Strand Theater has air quality issues. He stated he would like to see the Town do something with what it already has in its possession.

Mr. Cogtella stated the bridge needs to be replaced, but he doesn't believe to the extent that is being proposed, and he would like to see a redesign. As concerns the money for waterfront access, he feels the Town just wants to use up that money for this project. He stated he doesn't know of

anyone having problems getting down to the boat launch, whether it's walking or by bicycle. He noted he doesn't believe this will encourage businesses to come down to this area.

Joanne Suzor, 86 South River Street

She questioned whether the Town has checked the safety of using the Asnuntuck underpass. She pointed out the cement ceiling is dropping in pieces. She noted she talked to employees who work for the railroad, and they indicated the railroad is not going to fix this underpass. She stated this is putting people at risk by telling them it's okay to walk under this underpass, and she feels this isn't smart. She urged the Town to look at the underpass.

Steve Cogtella, 2 South River Street

Stated he hasn't heard anything on the status of the Eversource property, and he believes a lot of the development in this area is dependent upon that property. He noted the Town has been negotiating for ten years, and the Town Manager, Chris Bromson, mentioned about a year ago that he was optimistic about negotiations.

Mr. Cogtella stated the realignment of South River Street will put it way out of alignment with North River Street. He stated the obvious goal would be to realign North River Street at some future date, but if the Eversource property isn't acquired, they won't be able to realign North River Street.

There were no further comments from the public.

Ms. Bhardwaj stated the public has until May 1, 2019 to submit any written comments to the Town of Enfield.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeannette Lamontagne
Recording Secretary