

**NORWALK HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION  
SPECIAL MEETING  
APPLICATION REVIEW COMMITTEE  
MONDAY, OCTOBER 24TH, 2016**

**ATTENDANCE:** Dr. John Pinto, Chair; William Gardella; Tony Mobilia; John Romano

**STAFF:** Geoff Steadman, Consultant

**OTHERS:** Brett Stark, BL Companies (DOT); Kimberly Lesay, BL Companies (DOT); Andy Fesenmeyer, DOT Consultant Design; Adam Fox, DOT Environmental Compliance; Tony Morelli, BL Companies (DOT); Joe Scalise, AECOM; Jeff Keefe, AECOM; Dave Cutler, CT DOT; Amanda Saul, CT DOT; Chris Samorgczyh; CT DOT OEP; Dick Harris, Bloom Brothers; Cathy Walsh, Westport Planning & Zoning; Mike Yeosick; Jim Mayse, Westport First Selectman; Toni Boucher, State Senator; Randy Higgins, Westport Shellfish Commission; State Representative Johnathon Steinberg

**CALL TO ORDER**

Dr. Pinto called the meeting to order 6:00 p. m., and introduced the officials and staff that were in attendance.

**OVERVIEW AND MEETING FORMAT – JOHN PINTO, CHAIRMAN APPLICATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Dr. Pinto reviewed the agenda, and the format of the meeting. He stated that the concerns the commission has with the Yankee Doodle Bridge are dredging, disposal, identifying the contaminants, and how to properly handle the contaminants.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON DREDGING AND STORMWATER MANAGEMENT IN NORWALK HARBOR – GEOFF STEADMAN, NHMC STAFF**

Mr. Steadman stated that this presentation is for a pre-application that the Harbor Management Commission evaluates before the application is put in to the DEEP. The commission evaluates the pre-application in the context of the Harbor Management Plan, which was established in 1990. The main goals are to maintain and improve the water quality of the water in Norwalk Harbor, which has some of the most valuable shellfish resources in all of Connecticut.

He stated that he has concerns about the amount of pollution coming off of the Yankee Doodle Bridge as 150,000 vehicles cross over it on a daily basis. There are about 20 different types of pollutants that are created by each vehicle. It adds up to more than 50 million vehicles travelling over the bridge each year. He stated that the potential hydrocarbon pollution entering Norwalk Harbor in stormwater runoff through the bridge drains is at an almost astronomical level. He stated that the DOT has acknowledged to the

NHMC that highway traffic volume and roadway drainage may contribute to waterway pollution, but, I-95 is not the only culprit. Local roadways also contribute to the problem.

He stated that In 2007, the Mayor of Norwalk and members of the NHMC met with DOT officials to discuss the bridge's impact on water quality in Norwalk Harbor, and specifically the approximately 90 drains carrying stormwater from the bridge deck directly into the harbor. The meeting followed completion of the dredging project by the Army Corps of Engineers to maintain proper depth of the harbor's federal navigation channel, which passes under the bridge. Thirty one thousand cubic yards of sediment centered directly under the bridge were found to contain excessive amounts of PAHs from oil, grease, and automobile and truck emissions.

He stated that at the time, DOT officials informed the NHMC that any measures to improve stormwater management would be considered at such time as the bridge is replace or rehabilitated. The stated that the NHMC is interested in what measures the DOT will take to prevent direct stormwater discharge into Norwalk Harbor, and what guidance and authority the DEEP will assert to assist in these matters.

**APPLICATION PRESENTATION: STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF  
TRANSPORTATION PROJECT NO. 102-295, MEDIAN RECONSTRUCTION AND  
RESURFACING OF I-95, NORWALK AND WESTPORT –BRETT STARK, PROJECT  
MANAGER AND KIMBERLY LESAY, DL COMPANIES.**

**Synopsis of application: Wetland remediation under I95 Yankee Doodle Bridge.** The proposed project involves management of existing stormwater outfall and mitigation of impacts on tidal wetlands located directly below the I95 Yankee Doodle Bridge. The remediation proposal entails removal and treatment of approximately 1,697 sq. ft. of common reed in the vicinity of an existing culvert. Phragmites removal and alterations of surface elevations within wetlands are planned. The goal is to increase salt water inundation of the phragmites area and allow colonization of native spartina vegetation. In addition, invasive plant species will be removed and area revegetated with native coastal plantings. Other Considerations: The existing roadway drainage system will be designed to help alleviate flooding issues in this section of I-95. There will also be an additional water quality swale installed to treat stormwater prior to entering Norwalk Harbor.

Mr. Brett Stark and Ms. Kimberly Lesay came forward to give a review of the application. Mr. Stark stated that project 102-295 and 102-348 were both awarded to BL Companies due to the close proximity of the projects. Project 102-348 makes improvements to I-95. He stated that the priorities for 102-295 are driver safety, upgrade of the concrete barrier in the median, repaving the roadway, drainage improvement, and bridge rehabilitation. He stated that the project does not add capacity to the bridge.

He stated that priorities for project 102-348 address deterioration of the superstructure, painting, miscellaneous steel repairs, minor deck patching, parapet safety improvements, and in kind drainage replacement.

He stated that permits required for 102-295 include Structures and Dredging/401 WQC, Inland Wetland General, Flood Management General, US ACOE Section 404, USCG Construction Letter, and Stormwater Registration. He stated that design of the project is 90% complete.

Ms. Lesay stated that the scope of the project includes the removal and treatment of approximately 1,697 sq. ft. of common reed in the vicinity of an existing culvert. She reviewed how the alterations of surface elevations will be completed and how the invasive plant species will be removed and revegetated with native coastal plantings.

Mr. Romano asked why the DOT was not required to manage the discharge of storm water from DOT storm drains to the same standard as the City of Norwalk is required to manage storm water through the municipal storm sewer system. Ms. Lesay stated that for the DOT to handle stormwater discharge to that standard would require the taking of private property and, according to their calculations, a piece of land nearing the size of the City of Bridgeport would be necessary. Maintenance and upkeep are also considerations and the use of pumping stations would be outside of the scope of the project.

Dr. Pinto stated that there are a large number of chemicals coming off of the highway. He asked if there was a baseline level of the chemicals that could be worked off of and if remediation is effective. He asked if it is known what percent decrease in pollution will result if the project is completed as planned. Ms. Lesay stated that they do not have a baseline, and that they are working on calculations.

Mr. Gardella asked if using the catch basin had been considered in dealing with the stormwater discharge. Mr. Stark stated that connecting to the catch basin would change the limits of the project.

#### **COMMENTS - STATE AND CITY OFFICIALS**

State Senator Toni Boucher came forward to state that several years ago the fluid used to de-ice highways was changed. There have been many complaints put in about the fluid damaging vehicles. She stated that the shellfish and oysters found in the harbor are consumed and the effect of pollutants on our food system should be taken into consideration.

Mr. Jim Marpe, First Selectman of Westport came forward to state that Westport is dealing with a problem with the Saugatuck River Bridge that is similar to Norwalk's problem with the Yankee Doodle Bridge. He stated that due to the accumulation of petrochemicals, the dredging project in Westport has been pushed back until we understand remediation. He hopes that the Town of Westport, and the City of Norwalk can continue to collaborate and convince the DOT that pollution off of the bridges is a problem that they need to address. He stated that he is curious how the permitting process can affect the outcome of the work on the Yankee Doodle Bridge.

Ms. Randy Higgins, Chair of the Westport Shellfish Commission, came forward to state that the WSC opposed this project due to the DOT not properly addressing the drainage issues. In 2015 sediment analysis indicated a marked increase in hydrocarbon levels downriver from the Saugatuck River Bridge. She stated that this led the WSC to be concerned about the stormwater runoff coming off of the bridge.

Ms. Cathy Walsh, Chair of the Westport Planning & Zoning Committee came forward to state that what will happen with this project in Norwalk will happen in Westport.

State Representative Johnathon Steinberg came forward to commend the commission for asking the right questions of the DOT. He stated that demanding baseline data before moving forward is not an onerous request on the part of the commission. Being presented with a project that is already 90% designed, does not give us a lot of room to figure out how to make it better.

Mr. Michael Yeosick, of the Norwalk Department of Public Works, stated that getting a baseline on the chemicals and the remediation is very important. The DPW will take a look at the project, but its role is limited.

#### **COMMENTS - GENERAL PUBLIC**

Mr. Tony D'Andrea came forward to state that he was at the meeting ten years ago when the DOT assured us that they would look at the issue and get back to us. He asked how the known discharge into the river under the auspice of the Clean Water Act coexist with this project. Ms. Lesay stated that there will be a permit going in to the Army Corps of Engineers in regards to compliance with the Clean Water Act.

Mr. Joseph Schirliner stated that we are experiencing longer periods of droughts and stronger rainfall. Projects should be designed with future weather events in mind.

#### **APPLICANTS CLOSING REMARKS/RESPONSES TO COMMENTS.**

Mr. Steadman asked if there is a requirement for the state to follow environmental best practices in regards to managing stormwater runoff as a condition of receiving funds from the Federal Government. Mr. Stark stated that all projects are subject to the Environmental Policy Act. The projects are screened and an evaluation is made on what requirements are necessary for each project. This project require Full Federal Oversight and sign off is required on all major milestones.

Mr. Steadman asked what we can learn from how neighboring states deal with similar projects to this one. Ms. Lesay stated that the Connecticut DOT regularly gets together with their counterparts from other states to discuss what works, what doesn't work, and what challenges they have in common.

Mr. Mobilia asked why the median grass area is not being expanded. Ms. Lesay stated that having a grass median is a great thing, but space and the right of way comes in to play. The grass median is being eliminated for safety reasons.

Mr. Romano asked how the effects of the new de-icing fluid is being responded to by the DOT. Ms. Lesay stated that the Office of Environmental Planning has information on what is available out there on the subject.

#### **APPLICATION REVIEW COMMITTEE DELIBERATION OF APPLICATION**

Dr. Pinto stated that the commission would discuss the application at the regular NHMC meeting on Wednesday night and arrive at a decision regarding the application.

**MEETING ADJOURNMENT**

- \*\* MR. GARDELLA MOTIONED TO ADJOURN.**
- \*\* MR. ROMANO SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- \*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 p. m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Blaney  
Telesco Secretarial Services