

## **LIBERTY SQUARE PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING SEPTEMBER 12, 2018**

**ATTENDANCE:** Kathryn Hebert, Director Transportation, Parking and Mobility  
Eric Rains, Member Norwalk Parking Authority  
Vanessa Valadares, DPW Senior Civil Engineer  
John Hanifin, State DOT, Project Manager for Facilities and Transit  
Chet Muckenhirn, Cianbro Construction

**OTHERS:** Attached Sign in Sheet

Ms. Hebert started the meeting by introducing herself and said that there has been a lot of confusion regarding the management and the maintenance of the Liberty Square Parking Lot over many years. The need to better manage the lot has been on NPA's radar for years, and there are people who are going to Vets Park, parking all day in Liberty Square, and there are people that leave their car there for weeks or months. She said there are also people in the surrounding areas, in the residences and the condos, who leave their car and park there, and with the Walk Bridge project coming up and Eversource, it's critical that we better manage this parking lot. During the last budget cycle the Parking Authority decided to include Liberty Square under their management. Ms. Hebert said that the City of Norwalk will be partnering with the State of Connecticut DOT on the drainage project for the lot and she introduced Mr. Hanifin

Mr. Hanifin provided an overview of the State DOT drainage project and he said as the Walk Bridge Project progresses there are some activities that were on going this summer and that they are currently focusing on the drainage activities at the Liberty Square Lot and behind Goldstein Place. He said that the work started on September 10<sup>th</sup> on Goldstein Place and are installing a series of catch basins and connecting pipes to bring the water out to the route 136 drainage and they will be using Goldstein Place as a path to run the drainage. The work will take approximately five weeks to complete, and will take place during the day and not during rush hour, and at all times traffic will be maintained an local access will remain open. Ms. Towey asked if businesses there would be provided parking after work is complete. Ms. Hebert said there will be monthly permits that can be purchased. Ms. Towey said that as a business owner and as a resident of Liberty Square, we should have free access to parking. Ms. Hebert said that we still have the problem of managing the parking lot where people are parking there all day, and months on end, and don't move.

Ms. Goldstein asked what the impact will be to parking based on the drainage portion of the project. Ms. Valadares said that the installation of catch basins began this week, and the lot will be repaved and restriped, but ingress and egress will stay the same. Plans include 58 regular parking spaces and three handicapped spaces, an additional light pole, and new landscaping. Two pay stations will be installed. The state will also consider adding a traffic light as part of the Walk Bridge project at a later time, and the Parking Authority improvement project is

expected to begin Sept. 24 and will take approximately three weeks to complete. The Liberty Square lot will be closed during that period, and temporary parking will be available at Veteran's Park across the street, and that signage will be installed. A police officer will be on hand to help people cross the road, and one lane of Fort Point Street will be intermittently closed.

Ms. Lightfield asked what the parking impacts will be while the State is doing their work. Mr. Muckenhirn said they are not taking anymore spaces than they need to work safely. Mr. Blair said that the police are not letting anyone into the east portion of the lot. Ms. Lightfield said that quite a few of the businesses get delivery trucks multiple times a day and there needs to be a mitigation plan that we can all work with. Ms. Valadares said that the trucks will have access to the lot.

The question was asked if it is a definite that the pay stations were going in. Ms. Hebert said "yes" and that the pay stations are going in, but the Parking Authority has to work out the management plan. It was asked if a traffic light will be installed at the main entrance of Liberty Square. Ms. Valadares said not as part of this project. Mr. Hanifin said that is being addressed under the Walk Bridge Project. Ms. Brescia said in the past there were discussions about eliminating the east entrance and change the grading to help with the drainage and asked what the logic for not changing it. Ms. Valadares said there will be no changes to the entrance and that no one from DPW had considered closing that entrance and that it is a DOT road and the city can't make changes without their approval. Ms. Goldstein said closing that entrance will be extremely unfair to the business's there. It was asked when the pay stations will be installed and will there be prior notification. Ms. Hebert said they will be installed as part of the construction project. The Parking Management Plan will be put into place after the project is complete and everyone will be noticed in advance.

Mr. Blair asked if one side of the parking lot can be closed at a time during construction rather than closing the entire lot. Ms. Valadares said no, that the lot will need to be excavated and that there are a lot of utilities in the entire lot. Ms. Towey said that is going to be a hardship to the businesses. Ms. Valadares said that is why they are providing parking in Vet's Park. Ms. Towey said that she teaches classes with a lot of children and she is not comfortable with them crossing the street and requested additional police dedicated to the crosswalks. Ms. Lightfield said that with the construction ending at 3:30PM each day and there are business that are open at night and but are asking people to park and walk across RT 136 to get to the business that are open at night. Ms. Valadares said there are two pedestrian crossings.

Ms. Lightfield asked if for example all the business's closed for one week and there was access to the lot 24/7 if there is anything that can be done to make to paving go faster. Ms. Valadares said that they are trying to be very conservative and that the hardest part is not getting the paving done and the hardest part is getting the conduits underground and once that is done and the weather is good the lot can be paved in three to four days. Ms. Lightfield asked other than the weather is there anything else that can speed it up. Ms. Valadares said "no" put they are going to do the best they can to get it done as soon as possible. Ms. Lightfield asked if there was a plan to provide mitigation to the businesses for loss of revenue during construction. Hebert said "no,"

Ms. Hebert discussed the plan for the management of the parking lot get better control and have regulations and with the Walk Bridge Project underway it is critical that the parking lot be managed better. She said that it will be managed through transient/hourly parking; monthly and 15 minute parking provided through the paystations, Pay by Cell, monthly permits and a shared parking method. The Parking Authority doesn't yet know what the activity is going to be. Ms.

Towey asked as a business owner will they get any parking spaces. Ms. Hebert said “yes” through monthly permits.

Mr. Blair said that some sort of management” is needed for the parking lot, but by adding pay stations will drive businesses, customers and tenants out. It’s working today, but nobody’s paying, and if you’ve got to start paying, where people are going to get fined, the tenants are going to move out of the apartments and the store owners are going to lose because if the customers get a ticket, they’re not coming back. Ms. Brescia said that there are a lot of positives to the plan and that she has owned a building there for over 35 years and people speed through, and that it’s sometimes very scary there as people are hanging out, drinking or taking drugs. It’s also been filthy all these years. Its public property and private people are taking care of public property because nobody has stepped up to the plate to do it. If I were a tenant in there, and I came home in the dark, I would love to have some control so that this kind of people are not there and I can find a parking space. Ms. Lightfield asked if requirement of no overnight parking in a surface lot be waived during snow storms. Ms. Hebert said they will be looking into that issue.

Ms. Goldstein asked how the 15 minute free parking will be enforced. Ms. Hebert said it is difficult to enforce 15 minutes but that signage will be installed and it will be enforced through the Parking Authority Enforcement staff. Ms. Goldstein suggested that there be two hour parking rather the 15 minutes.

Ms. Cece suggested that they do not proceed with any construction based on the comments from tonight’s meeting and there are a lot of unanswered questions. Ms. Hebert said that the construction portion of project has been awarded for the improvements to the lot and is currently in place and the Parking Management Plan will be discussed with the Parking Authority.

In closing, Ms. Hebert said that a parking plan needs to be established that makes sense for all of the different uses and that is what the Parking Authority is going to do.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd