

**TOWN OF ROCKY HILL
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE TOWN COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING OF JUNE 21, 2011**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Larrye deBear called the June 21, 2011 Economic Development Subcommittee of the Town Council special meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of Rocky Hill Town Hall, 761 Old Main Street, Rocky Hill, CT.

Those in attendance: Councilor Barbara Surwilo and David Schweitzer (Alternate). Also present: Ray Carpentino (Economic Development Director), Robert Aloise (CRCOG), Lia Huang (CRCOG), Chris Granatini (Tighe & Bond), Joe Balskus (Tighe & Bond), Marcy Miller (Fitzgerald & Halliday), Susan Moses (SJM & Associates), Town Manager Barbara Gilbert, Jim Sollmi (Director of Highways/Engineering), Councilor Nadine Bell, Councilor Phil Sylvestro, and Councilor Cathy Vargas.

Those absent: Councilor Frank Szeps and John Oslund (Alternate).

2. RTE. 3 CORRIDOR STUDY

a. Introduction: Chairman deBear

Chairman Larrye deBear said a team of consultants from Tighe & Bond, which is in Middletown, is in the midst of a study of Rocky Hill's Rte. 3 (also known as Cromwell Avenue) traffic corridor. This is a study that is more than a year long. They have been working in cooperation with this Town, the Capital Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) and the State Department of Transportation (DOT). The first phase of this study has been completed by them. This had to do with the gathering of extensive data on current traffic activity from the Rocky Hill/Cromwell Town line on the south to the intersection with New Britain Avenue (Rte. 160) on the north. The impact on the corridor is also being accessed by major feeder roads which include Brook Street, West Street, France Street and Cold Spring Road. The impact of future economic development on the corridor is also being measured (i.e. Town Center West, Inner Circle Foods, Burris, etc.). The role of Exit 23 on I-91 is also being looked at. He said he didn't know how many hours the team has spent collecting data which is going to be used for further study down the road.

Chairman Larrye deBear said this team tonight was going to outline for everyone the data they have collected which gives a pretty solid picture of where the Rte. 3 traffic corridor is now. This team is going to be taking the data and translating it into some different kinds of scenarios during the summer. These scenarios will be with regards to how to deal with the traffic situation on the Rte. 3 corridor twenty years out from now. Rocky Hill is not pioneering anything here because this has been done in the past. There have

been studies that have been done which have used a lot of specific formulas that have been developed which specifically deal with traffic. He had asked the team at one of the Steering Committee meetings if they have any experience as to how twenty year projections have previously worked. He said the answer that he received was pretty close to accurate. The process and the formulas they use have been pretty successful in looking twenty years into the future.

Chairman Larrye deBear introduced the people who would be making this evening's presentation. He introduced Rob Aloise, (Project Manager from CRCOG), Lia Huang (CRCOG), Jim Sollmi (Town Engineer), Ray Carpentino (Economic Development Coordinator), Chris Granatini (Senior Transportation Engineer – Tighe & Bond), Joe Balskus (Director of Traffic and Parking – Tighe & Bond), Marcy Miller (Fitzgerald & Halliday) and Susan Jones Moses (SJM & Associates).

Chairman Larrye deBear referred to the ground rules for this evening. He knew people were present who were probably going to want to ask questions and probably offer some comments to the consultants after they had seen the presentation. He said this meeting will be opened up to the floor after the presentation is over. He told people to please pose their questions if they have any specific ones and he told people if they just have comments about their views on this to please keep these comments at a maximum of three to five minutes if they could.

b. Presentation: Tighe & Bond & Consultant Team CRCOG

Chairman Larrye deBear turned this meeting over to Rob Aloise at this point. Rob Aloise said CRCOG is the regional planning agency for the Hartford metro area. Rocky Hill is one of the thirty member Towns that they have. He explained that they were present this evening to address the Rte. 3 traffic and development study. This would be the second public meeting of four. The kickoff meeting had been held in December 2010. Significant progress has been made since then and he said they were here to report on that.

Rob Aloise started the PowerPoint presentation at this point. (Please see the attachment). He said he would start with the study overview and then he would turn this meeting over to Chris Granatini so he could let everyone know what the consultant team has been up to since the kickoff meeting. Chris Granatini would let them know what is going to be done in the future also. The meeting would then be opened for questions and answers.

Rob Aloise introduced Chris Granatini after he was done with his part of the PowerPoint presentation. Chris Granatini said he is the Project Manager for the Rte. 3 study. He mentioned that he had worked in Rocky Hill for ten years and he had lived in three different places in this Town for ten years so he has a good sense of this community. He explained that Marcy Miller was present from Fitzgerald & Halliday. They are helping out and they are looking at some of the alternative modes of travel (i.e. bicycle and pedestrian). Chris Granatini explained that Susan Jones Moses is the real estate consultant. She took an in-depth and thorough look at the existing market conditions in

this Town as to where it stands economically and regionally. She also looked to see what they can expect to see over the twenty year horizon they are looking at for this study. She was able to help them look to see what type of potential development Rocky Hill can expect to see through her analyses and studies, as well as what type of traffic Rocky Hill can expect to see over the twenty year horizon. Chris Granatini did his part of the PowerPoint presentation at this point.

Chris Granatini then asked Marcy Miller to talk about some of the multi-modal transportation and he said Susan Jones Moses was then going to talk about some of the land use. Chris Granatini said he would then come back and finish the presentation.

Marcy Miller said they did a quick review of the existing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and facilities. She did her part of the PowerPoint presentation at this point.

Marcy Miller turned this meeting over to Susan Jones Moses after she was done with her PowerPoint presentation. Susan Jones Moses said she was going to talk about what they did in terms of looking at current economic and development conditions in the study area. She said she would then go into talking about what they have forecasted as potential future development. She did her PowerPoint presentation at this point.

Chris Granatini said that he was going to talk about what all of the analysis meant that Susan Jones Moses had just gone through. This included what the traffic is going to be as well as what the impacts of the future development will be. He was also going to talk about how the roadways will be affected by the regional growth in the study area. He continued with his part of the PowerPoint presentation at this point.

Chris Granatini said they are going to be publishing the existing conditions memorandum which is a sixty to seventy page document. This will be published in July 2011. This will be available on CRCOG's website. They will be publishing the future conditions memo for the Steering Committee and for CRCOG to review in July 2011. This will document the future analyses. In the summer and early fall, Tighe & Bond and the team, along with CRCOG and the Steering Committee, are going to start to identifying a series of alternatives. They are going to look at solutions to these capacity issues and they are going to find ways to mitigate the effects of the future traffic they are seeing in the study area. They are expecting in the Fall to have a meeting like this evening's. They will be back with improvement alternatives. That will be a great opportunity for the public and the Town to give them specific input as to how good their ideas are. In the winter, they will be back with the final set of recommendations. The study will be wrapped up with a final document in early 2012.

Chris Granatini said the presentation was now over and he said the members of the study team were present to answer any questions the public might have. He thanked everyone for their time and patience in sitting through the presentation.

Chairman Larrye deBear thanked Rob Aloise and members of the team for their presentation. Chairman deBear also acknowledged Councilor Barbara Surwilo who is

one of the members of the Economic Development Subcommittee. Councilor Frank Szeps couldn't be present because of another commitment. Chairman Larrye deBear also introduced Town Manager Barbara Gilbert, Councilor Nadine Bell, Councilor Phil Sylvestro and Councilor Cathy Vargas who were present this evening.

c. Questions & Answers

Chairman Larrye deBear told the public if they had any comments or questions to please come to the microphone and give their name, as well as address. He told everyone once again if they have general suggestions or comments to try to keep those to three to five minutes so everybody would have a chance to talk.

John Bedlack, 7 Murphy Drive, R.H., said he had one question and then he had a couple of comments to make. He asked if this evening's presentation is available on the website presently. Chris Granatini said they will be giving this PowerPoint presentation to CRCOG so that they can post it. John Bedlack said they had designated that the time they did this study was when there had been high traffic volume. He said he lives in that area that was being referred to and he is not quite sure if they got all of the hours. He referred to the speed numbers that showed there wasn't a lot of speeding and he asked if that had been done during heavy travel time or he asked if this was done throughout the day. Chris Granatini said the speed data had been done through an automatic traffic recorder. Machines had been set out at three different locations in the study area. These machines sat there recording traffic twenty-four hours a day for seven days. They collected volume which was categorized every fifteen minutes. There had been 130,000 different observations on Cromwell Avenue. The average speeds for this were around forty miles per hour just south of Rhodes Road. John Bedlack confirmed that this was done for twenty-four hours and Chris Granatini said it was for twenty-four hours for approximately seven days in early December 2010. John Bedlack referred to the ramp for I-91 South where a right is taken onto West Street. He said they had said this needs to be looked at because it is an area of concern. He thinks a little law enforcement would help there. He explained that he is on that ramp a lot and most people get in the extreme right hand lane when they aren't supposed to so then they jump over three lanes. It wouldn't be such a dangerous intersection there if that was enforced maybe.

Jim Zagroba, 263 Meadow Road, R.H., said he was very impressed with the presentation on the Silas Deane Highway west. He said Susan Jones Moses, under land use, had indicated that she had spoken to business developers and realtors. Jim Zagroba said for the future that a few participants who might be helpful would be an open space land trust individual and a natural resource specialist. There are goals by the State with regards to open space and this State's goal is twenty percent. He asked what portion of this land here is going to be dedicated to open space in order to meet the State goal. Towns, such as Farmington, have thirty-six percent open space. Rocky Hill has something like 7.4 percent. It is even less when the cemeteries are taken out. He said hopefully they will see a study in the future that will continue and include the other important contributors. He hopes this study will focus more on the natural resources and open space, as well as greenways and trails which will link that part of Town up with the eastern part.

Chairman Larrye deBear told Jim Zagroba that his suggestion was a very good one but the consultant team really wasn't charged with doing an open space study. The consultant team had been charged with doing a traffic volume study, as well as the factors that contribute to that. Chairman Larrye deBear told Jim Zagroba that the area he was raising was really more of an area that the Town Council will have to take responsibility for. The Town Council will have to decide how much of an area they will want to dedicate to open space. He didn't think the consultant team was in a position to answer this. He said that Councilor Barbara Surwilo is the Chairperson of the Town Council's Open Space Land Acquisition and Farmland Preservation Committee and he told Jim Zagroba that he thinks Councilor Barbara Surwilo shares the same concerns that he does.

Jim Zagroba said Susan Jones Moses had talked about land uses and he thinks that is what had given him the impression that they are looking at all land uses which would include the use of open space, etc. when they look at land uses. Jim Zagroba said his personal feeling is that this should include those considerations. Susan Jones Moses said they weren't saying that this is what should happen. They are looking at what would happen if the land developed as it is zoned currently. She thinks it would be a great idea if this Town was to put open space considerations into place then the traffic volumes would be something less.

Chris Granatini said as part of the transportation planning study that if this does happen and the land develops as it could then they are looking at what types of improvements this Town needs to have in a plan so they can make the modifications they need to in order to accommodate it. He explained when they write a final report that this isn't a document that is going to go out to go into design and get built. As traffic grows, this is something that is going to evolve over the next twenty years. Improvements will get built accordingly as needs arise. He said they aren't making any commentary on what this Town should do as far as development is concerned. He referred to what Susan Jones Moses had said and he said they are looking at what could happen based on the zoning. Jim Zagroba said this is without a goal of twenty percent of open space in that area. Chris Granatini said this is without consideration of any type of changes in zoning or land use. He said this is purely what could be built under the current zoning. Jim Zagroba said this is land use as it relates to development and not open space. Chris Granatini said yes.

Christa Mariner, 58 Farms Village Road, R.H., asked Susan Jones Moses to please define the development constraints of the Cromwell northern tier. Christa Mariner also asked if the final report will offer alternatives to the redesigning of Exit 23 if money isn't available. She then said she had an observation. She referred to the current zoning map and she said a large parcel of land in the shape of "L", south of Brook Street and east of Henkel Way is being shown as being zoned as Business Park but she said that parcel is still zoned as R-20.

Susan Jones Moses said she had spoken to the people in Cromwell about the constraints. They had talked about endangered species, soils and wetlands. She didn't get a full

listing of everything but these people were the ones who were telling her that there are constraints there which will prevent it from developing at a density that it could develop at under the zoning. She said these people also had mentioned archaeological resources. There is a very large amount of undeveloped land there.

Rob Aloise told Christa Mariner that he thought she had a question about funding and money for the interchange area. Rob Aloise said they are going to look at a short term alternative that would address any existing problems and more of a long range alternative that will address the traffic volumes they had projected out. They aren't looking at money as there being a limit of funding or they aren't determining how this would or wouldn't be able to be funded.

Chairman Larrye deBear asked if there was any one else who had questions. He told everyone that a lot of data had been thrown at them this evening and he knew it was a lot to absorb. He referred to what Chris Granatini and Rob Aloise had said to people about if they were really interested in where this project is going and if they want to take a closer look at this data then all of the slides from this presentation were also going to be on the CRCOG website. Chairman Larrye deBear told the public that they can come to the Economic Development Subcommittee meetings if they have any questions and they will be happy to relay these to the team or they can contact the team directly through CRCOG. He also believed that they could pose comments on the Town's website. Jim Sollmi said there is a link to CRCOG on the Town's website. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert told the public that they can e-mail her if they have any questions for the team. Chris Granatini mentioned again that their existing conditions report will be on CRCOG's website shortly. This PowerPoint presentation will also be on CRCOG's website and the future report will be on it over the summer.

Councilor Barbara Surwilo said the traffic growth slide in the PowerPoint presentation was the interesting slide to her. She said this slide had shown this flat lining out and she asked if this is for twenty years. Chris Granatini said they had looked at historical data for some of the roadways starting back in 1990 and this data was through 2010. Councilor Barbara Surwilo suggested that this historic range be pushed back to 1988 so that it matches Susan Jones Moses' projections. Councilor Barbara Surwilo said this would be so that they have the same timeframe. One of the issues that surprised her is that this flat lined out pretty quickly. She thinks the time period of 1988 to 2008, prior to the recession, would give a very clear comparison that would eliminate the recession issue. Chris Granatini said they are only able to get what is available to them with regards to the historical data. This is the earliest data they were able to get their hands on from the Department of Transportation for the study roadways. The Department of Transportation counts the Town's roads every three years and they record this data. He said this is where they took the 1990 information from. Councilor Barbara Surwilo referred to the comparing of the two sets of graphs and trying to project the next twenty years into the future. It is very difficult to do and it is a "could" scenario and a guesstimate. She said the thirty percent increase in the traffic growth doesn't jive with their period of the most intense development in traffic growth on their roadways and she asked why. Chris Granatini said they can look and see what the data tells them from

looking back to see what has happened in the past. The method they have with regards to looking forward is through CRCOG's regional traffic growth model. Councilor Barbara Surwilo said these are assumptions. Chris Granatini explained more about what this model looks at. It is the industry practice for a twenty year time horizon to be looked at. This model is the only way they can predict what is going to happen on the study roadways with any degree of regional accuracy. It would put their analyses into doubt for them to not use a standardized method to do this. They really need to rely on CRCOG's model. This is how this process is conducted across the Nation and across the State. He wishes he had a better way but he said this is how the process goes.

Susan Jones Moses said if they look at the twenty years that she looked at then there were 3.1 million square feet of development within the corridor. She had projected 1.2 million square feet which is just over thirty percent so a thirty percent increase in traffic sounds to her to be right on. Councilor Barbara Surwilo said this is a "could" and not a "will".

Councilor Barbara Surwilo made a suggestion to the team. She asked them before they hold the next public hearing to have something for everyone to look at with regards to the data. There were a lot of graphs and data presented today. Much of this she couldn't see. She would have liked to be able to be looking at something she could read while they were talking. She asked them to please have a copy of their PowerPoint presentation for the next time around and she said there should be extra copies for people in the audience. This way they can get a public hearing that is generated on what is being said. Chris Granatini said okay.

Chairman Larrye deBear asked how scary their projection is. He asked the team if they are projecting something where there is a reasonable expectation of developing workable solutions or he asked if they are heading for a disaster. Chris Granatini said they haven't started looking at what types of improvements they need to make to address the future volumes. They think there may be some locations that may be some "low hanging fruit" when they look at what the results are. West Street at France Street is a pretty built out location now and they have a lot of travel lanes at this intersection. It is probably not that realistic that they could significantly decrease capacity there. This may involve looking at some additional links in the roadway network to alleviate some of the traffic. They are going to go with an open mind into the process of identifying alternatives and they are going to look at what the specific needs are of each location. They are going to try putting a set of alternatives together that will allow them to manage the growth as the Town continues to grow. He didn't think this is going to be a "field of dreams" in building this with the hopes that traffic comes but they are going to be building to address the needs. In the long run, the intent of this plan is to give them a document that states as this growth and development occurs that here are the recommendations that this Town wants to see implemented to address the issues. The team is looking to give this Town a plan that they formulate with them. He explained more about this. He doesn't think the twenty to thirty percent growth is that scary. This is pretty much what they would expect to see in an area which is fairly built up. They think their projections are reasonable and they are going to try to find solutions.

Chairman Larrye deBear thanked all of the people from the team who came this evening. He thanked all of the people in the audience for taking the time to find out what is going on in their Town. He referred to what Chris Granatini had just said and he told the people in the audience that it is really a challenge to them and to any people in this Town who might get to see this meeting on Channel 16. The challenge is for them not to hesitate contacting the team at Tighe & Bond with their suggestions and comments if they care about the future of this Town. They can contact Tighe & Bond through this Town and they can give comments and suggestions as to where they would like to see Rocky Hill be in twenty years. They can give suggestions and comments as to how much open space this Town should be shooting for. He said they can also give suggestions and comments as to how much economic development this Town needs in order to help take the tax burden off of residential property taxpayers. An issue this Town wrestles with every day is balancing the need for economic growth to build their tax base against the need to preserve some of their natural resources. He said once again that Councilor Barbara Surwilo is Chairperson of the Open Space Land Acquisition and Farmland Preservation Committee and he is Chairman of the Economic Development Subcommittee. They work together trying to come up with reasonable solutions instead of fighting as to who gets the land. This is what the Tighe & Bond team is doing in terms of looking at this Town's traffic volume. Chairman Larrye deBear mentioned the question of how Tighe & Bond can work together with this Town to come up with reasonable solutions. He told the public that they are hoping to hear from them and he thanked everyone for coming out this evening.

Chris Granatini said there was a sign-in sheet in the back of Council Chambers. There was an opportunity for the public to enlist on the mailing list for this study. There were also blank comment sheets if someone felt more comfortable jotting down some comments or ideas. These can be mailed back into CRCOG and they will consolidate them to give to the team and the Steering Committee. He said they are open to hear whatever anyone has to say. He told everyone to reach out to them in any way they felt fit in order to give them their ideas and he thanked everyone.

3. ADJOURN

This special meeting adjourned at 8:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo-Anne Booth
Recording Secretary