

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of January 11, 1994

Present:

G. Daley, chair
J. Robinson
N. Conaway-Raczka

Absent:

S. Shapiro
J. Milardo

Also Present:

T. Stein, Press
W. Kuehn, staff
L. Ozga, staff
C. Wilcox, Staff
3 representatives of

DOT

19 members of the
public, (list attached)

Mr. Daley called the meeting to order at 7:10 in the Council Chamber of the Municipal Building. Upon a motion by N. Conaway Raczka, seconded by J. Robinson, the minutes of special Meetings of November 22 and December 1, 1993 were accepted unanimously.

Chairman Daley opened the first Public Information session and turned the meeting over to John Moore of the DOT, who presented plans to build a salt shed at the site of an unused weigh station on Route 17 in Middletown. The current location is in Durham, but that is no longer suitable. The new facility will include better housekeeping and more space. There will be three levels of protection against release of salt and sand on the site. The first is the large building into which salt will be delivered and stored. Sand will then be brought in, the mixing will be done indoors; and the mixture will then be stored outdoors. The second protection will be use of entirely impervious bituminous surface to prevent infiltration. The Third will be a closed drainage system with gross particle separator which will trap sand and oil. These protections will result in a 95% reduction of salt release into the environment. T. Stein asked how much salt they were talking about and Mr. Moore replied 24 mg per liter.

The Committee members asked the DOT representatives about such considerations as comparable acreage with the Durham site and the future of that land, size and height of the building, trees and buffers, proximity to wetlands, industrial area next door, residential areas and the Coginchaug River watershed. They also asked if the neighbors had been notified.

Mr. Moore replied that the Durham site was not large enough to accommodate the 18-wheel delivery trucks which bring in the salt, and that it would go into the inventory of surplus State property when the new facility opened. The building will be 35 feet high, will be set back 100 feet to protect the existing tree line, and could include a vegetative barrier. They said they tried to stay away from residential areas. The construction will be 40 feet from the nearest wetland, and drainage is designed to flow away from the Coiginchaug River watershed area. The neighbors had not been notified directly by DOT.

J. Robinson asked about the operation of the facility. Mr. Moore replied it would be operational only during winter storms, since it is a satellite from the Randolph Road and Guilford garages.

At other times, it is basically just a sand pile. During a storm, the facility would service about 12 plow trucks per three-hour period. (The 18-wheelers would only be there in the fall to deliver the salt.) This site would improve plowing service to the Westfield/Middlefield area.

Chairman Daley opened the meeting to questions from the floor. Leon Vinci, Health Director asked about sanitary facilities on site, then read remarks from the Water & Sewer Department, written by Richard Dimmock for Michael Guarini, acting director. The Water & Sewer Department was opposed to the location of this project for reasons stated in the letter; and Mr. Vinci, on behalf of public health, also expressed concern for the project's proximity to the road and its needs for on-site sanitary facilities, vegetative buffers near the boundaries, notification of neighbors and public input. He was also concerned that there was some salt intrusion near the wetland. G. Daley asked Mr. Moore to notify the neighbors of their plans.

John Barton remarked that the structure will be out of character with the neighborhood which is currently a light industrial area with a residential subdivision across the street. He asked why they were so worried about drainage when they spread the product all over the streets anyway; and inquired of Mr. Moore who would have a vote on this? Mr. Moore replied the DOT had the authority to go ahead with the project after an internal selection process and some sort of public information session - which this EDC meeting was meant to be. He commented further that the new facility would be "state of the art" for its kind, would cost \$630,000 and would look like a large wooden barn.

Committee members and the public reiterated their concern for buffers on the north, south and especially east; The DOT representatives agreed to plant 6-8 foot arborvitae hedges. DOT restated their need to be within 3-5 miles of their old site in order to retain a high level of service. W. Kuehn urged them to be in contact with Linda Bowers regarding wetlands issues. This public information session adjourned at 7:55.

W. Kuehn passed out maps of the North End.

Chairman Daley called the Public Meeting back to order at 8:00 p.m. and turned the meeting over to W. Kuehn who explained the concept of the North End Industrial Park and the need for better access. He gave the "history" of how the "Alternate E" as depicted on the maps came to be a consensus of many plans, starting with the DOT "bowls of spaghetti" plans for interchanges to replace the lights on RT. 9 (which have currently been put on the shelf). He explained that it was important to bring the public up to date on these planning initiatives, that this was not the formal public hearing which would accompany a finished plan, but rather that the committee was looking for public input based on Alternate E, which

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was just an option at this time. Alternate E tries to solve some of the problems about egress from the area. Traffic can get in to the area, but cannot get out again very easily. Alternate E creates turning efficiencies on Stack, Rome and Spring streets by widening intersections; however, it should be noted that the DOT is not entirely happy with this plan.

Among other things, they do not like the location of the playground being across the street from the school; and when they do have an approvable plan, they (DOT) will hold a formal public hearing.

Members of the public were then invited to speak by the chairman:

Salvatore and Joseph Franco and their sister Barbara Bissonnette of 40-42 Spring street spoke out against the proposal indicating that their property would be badly inconvenienced, and that traffic was currently too heavy and too fast. The trucks actually shake their house. Resident of 21 Rome Ave. commented on current lack of passageway when trucks parked at Gene's TV are unloading. Other residents complained about traffic travelling at excessive speed down Spring and High Streets, regardless of posted signs. Sister Ann Mack of St. John's School was concerned that traffic would use St. John's Street to avoid the lights, and asked about the barrier of the Railroad. The Portland St./ Bridge St. connector is under construction now but it will only be used for emergencies. She also asked if parking would be allowed on North Main Street and reiterated she was concerned about the safety of the schoolchildren. Sister Eileen Dooling, principal of St. John's School, commented on using St. Johns St. for the children. She noted, however, that even if busses lined up on St. Johns St, children being picked up in cars, were on North Main Street. Carol Cosham was interested to know what DOT had in mind regarding the playground. Terrence Cahill of St. John's felt this was a dangerous plan and cited the perils of the Miller St./ Rt 9 intersection area as an example. He felt this puts the children in the same sort of "bottleneck". (Discussion ensued on the DOT "spaghetti bowl" plans.) (J. Robinson leaves at 8:25) G. Daley noted Alternate E to be the least intrusive on the residential areas.

J. Barton asked the committee to rethink the North End Industrial Park from the beginning ... he had three arguments against proceeding which were 1.) that in the State there was already a glut of empty industrial buildings, 2.) that there were large environmental issues involved with these kinds of sites, and 3.) that the access was poor. He questioned the worthiness of the project itself. Margaret Webster of Prospect St. felt the industrial park would be some kind of "cancer" in an area that was well kept now. She felt that industry and trucks would make the properties less saleable, house values would go down, and taxes up.

Chairman Daley explained that the goal of the project was quite the opposite. That by reclaiming the industrial area, property values would go up, taxes on the residents would go down, and jobs would be created. The idea is to expand the tax base and create jobs.

What is there now is a large, environmentally poor area, with current issues of safety which would be addressed in the redevelopment.

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Comments and complaints were made about the notice procedure on behalf of both St. John's and McDonough Schools. W. Kuehn was asked to explain to the public what Alternates A-D for the traffic improvements were, which he did.

Chairman G. Daley commented that all these plans should "go back to the drawing board" with comments from the committee and the Public. He said the Committee felt an obligation to make the North End Industrial Area happen because it was good for the city in the long run.

A comment was made to consider using the Railroad rights-of-way for a road and to incorporate their plans since they (RR) were coming back into use. N. Conaway-Raczka reassured the public that nothing was "carved in stone", that the committee was not insensitive to the to the

concerns of the schools and the residents. G. Daley commented about going over the railroad tracks, using Miller Street, doing it right, or not doing it at all. A final question from the public arose about having the transfer station in the area. The public session was closed at 8:50 p.m.

There was no quorum of the committee; however councilman R. Santangelo (who will be a member of the committee at the next Council meeting) arrived and sat in with the other members to make tentative plans for the next meeting. It was the consensus of those present to keep the regular meetings on the second Mondays of the month at 8:00 p.m., to eliminate the meetings scheduled for the fourth Mondays at 6:00, and to call special meetings as needed. Staff was asked to pursue details of the Berlin St. request and get a value of the property from the tax assessor.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20.

Cynthia G. Wilcox, Project Officer