

**ENFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2021**

A Special Meeting of the Enfield Town Council was called to order by Chairman Ludwick on Tuesday, January 19, 2021. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL-CALL – Present were Councilors Bosco, Cekala, Cressotti, Hemmeler, Ludwick, Mangini, Muller, Riley, Sferrazza, Szewczak and Unghire. Also present were Town Manager, Christopher Bromson; Assistant Town Manager, Kasia Purciello; Suzanne Olechnicki; Town Attorney, James Tallberg; Director of Public Works, Donald Nunes; Director of Finance, John Wilcox; Deputy Director of Economic & Community Development, Nelson Tereso; Chief of Police, Alaric Fox; Director of Development Services, Laurie Whitten

MOTION #5652 by Councilor Mangini seconded by Councilor Muller to go into Executive Session to discuss Real Estate Negotiations and Pending Litigation.

Upon a **SHOW-OF-HANDS** vote being taken, the Chair declared **MOTION #5652** adopted 11-0-0.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Executive Session of the Enfield Town Council was called to order by Chairman Ludwick at 5:31 p.m.

ROLL-CALL - Present were Councilors Bosco, Cekala, Cressotti, Hemmeler, Ludwick, Mangini, Muller, Riley, Sferrazza, Szewczak and Unghire. Also present were Town Manager, Christopher Bromson; Assistant Town Manager, Kasia Purciello; Suzanne Olechnicki; Town Attorney, James Tallberg

Chairman Ludwick reconvened the Special Meeting at 6:00 p.m. and stated during Executive Session the Council discussed Real Estate Negotiations and Pending Litigation with no action or votes being taken.

TOWN MANAGER PRESENTATION ON THE STATUS OF ENFIELD TRAIN STATION

Present for this item were Congressman Joe Courtney, Senator John Kissel, State Representative, Tom Arnone and State Representative Carol Hall.

Mr. Bromson stated the Town lobbied the State to change from a \$50 million dollar train station to a platform, something which is more workable and fiscally responsible. He noted this plan would be about half the cost of the initial station and it will accomplish everything and more with all of the amenities that will be explained. He thanked Governor Lamont, who personally endorsed this project. He noted this has been a collaborative partnership, which involved local, state, and

federal employees. He stated they are also working with corporate partners, who want this platform for their employees, so they can commute from Enfield and other places. He noted they are also interested in housing in the area of the train platform.

Mr. Bromson stated Enfield had a train station for about 100 years, and the station was taken down in 1971, and platform service continued until 1986.

Mr. Nunes shared a conceptual design of the train platform and surrounding area. He noted this would be an intermodal system, which offers riders multiple options to use the train. He highlighted some features:

- Abundant parking on the west side of Commerce Street with a total of 107 parking spaces and four van accessible spaces. Town staff will engage Bigelow Commons for additional parking if there is a need.
- There will be walkways from the parking lots to the main walkways heading toward the train platform.
- There will be a bus drop-off area to the south
- The platform, which is located on the east side of the track, will be 200 feet long, be fully accessible, and a canopy will run the entire length.
- A mechanical building will be located somewhere between the parking lot on the west side of Commerce Street and the main walkway.
- The turnaround located at the northerly end of Commerce Street will be able to handle all commercial passenger buses, Magic Carpet buses, school buses, and any other multi-passenger vehicle. Those vehicles will travel on Commerce Street, use the turnaround, and drop off and pick up passengers.
- The intersection of Main Street and Commerce Street will be realigned to the greatest extent possible to make it safer to enter and exit.
- The proposed design includes raising the bridge over Main Street to 13 feet, six inches and by doing so will allow flexibility for expansion on the west side of the tracks across from the casket building to accommodate any commercial vehicles, including buses and tractor trailer trucks.
- A utility building will house all mechanicals required to operate the station and have a weather-proof area for riders to wait for the train. Amenities included will be ATM's, ticket dispensers, lighting, trash receptacles, variable message boards and security cameras.

Mr. Tereso stated the Enfield Train Station will assist in spurring the revitalization of neighborhood properties that are considered by the town as prime locations for economic redevelopment. He noted one of the reasons behind locating the train station to the east side of the Hartford line was to allow for the proposed riverfront development. He stated there are currently some redevelopment locations on the west side of the Hartford line. He noted 33 North River Street is a property the Town acquired in 2017 with the vision of ultimately seeking a private developer to rehabilitate this property. Eversource Energy owns three acres across from 33 North River Street. The Town has completed the necessary environmental investigation of this property and is working on acquiring this property from Eversource this year. Adjacent to the Eversource property is a 3.24-acre privately-owned parcel.

Mr. Tereso stated the Town is currently working with the Connecticut Department of Transportation on the reconstruction of the South River Street Bridge. He provided illustrative slides of the proposed reconstructed bridge. He noted the proposed bridge design will provide residents with a safer, wider, and more pedestrian-friendly bridge. He stated the existing bridge is 22 feet wide and does not have a sidewalk.

He provided a slide of 33 North River Street along with a rendering for its potential future rehabilitation and re-use. He noted his office has been working with the State Historic Preservation Office to get this property nominated on the National Register of Historic Places due to this property's historic architectural significance. He noted getting this property on this register provides developers opportunities to pursue federal preservation grants for the actual rehabilitation as well as a federal tax break. He stated the Town has evaluated redevelopment options and based on that assessment, this property could consist of mixed uses, i.e., office space, retail, restaurant and residential. He noted based on this plan, the Thompsonville District zoning regulations would require approximately 60 parking spaces to support this type of development. He pointed out the developers who looked at this property all had the same concern about the lack of parking available. He noted by acquiring the Eversource properties, the Town will not only have additional room for assets, but also provide necessary parking to support 33 North River Street development. He noted a rendering shows approximately 50 parking spaces and a bus drop-off area.

Mr. Tereso showed a rendering of a riverfront housing development along the Connecticut River. He noted this involves a 3.24-acre former industrial property that was previously used for a power plant for the former Bigelow Carpet Company manufacturing facility. He stated this site remained since the 1970's and is ripe for redevelopment opportunities. He noted the Levitz family, who is the current owner, is actively seeking the redevelopment of this property.

He stated Bigelow Commons is home to over 700 residents, who would benefit greatly from having a train stop nearby.

Ms. Whitten stated Enfield's population is approximately 44,400, and of that 20,600 were employed in 2020 per the Department of Labor statistics. She noted of that figure, 3,900 were employed within Enfield, 6,700 commuted out of town, 1,600 commuted to Hartford, 1,400 commuted to Windsor and just over 1,000 commuted to Springfield, Massachusetts. She noted only 167 of those commuters use public transportation and the rest drive to work.

She stated by 2030, it is estimated that 1.15 million car trips will have been eliminated annually in the 52-mile train corridor because of the trains.

Ms. Whitten stated the Enfield station is not just a stop, but a hub from Connecticut, Boston, New York, and the Northeast corridor. She noted they will be promoting multi-modal opportunities with trains, planes, automobiles and pedestrian ways. She stated ultimately, people will be able to take the train to the plane when access to Bradley International Airport is finalized.

Ms. Purciello stated the Town has been in touch with the Build America Bureau, which has a particular loan that helps finance transit-oriented projects within walking distance of a train station.

She noted before this plan, the Town could not qualify for any of this very attractive financing. She then spoke about the Higgins Park, which will be behind the Town Hall, and it is envisioned there will be walking paths, a playground, band shell, lawn seating and a pool.

She noted this evening, the Town Council will be voting on a building consolidation plan, which will begin by investing in the Enfield Express. She stated the Enfield Express is located at 800 Enfield Street and has 1.7 acres, which will be available for parking to support the new use of the Higgins Park and the annual Farmers Market.

Ms. Purciello stated the St. Adalbert's gymnasium is adjacent to the Higgins Park, Town Hall and Enfield Express. She noted the Council will also vote this evening to set aside funding to begin the process of restoring this beautiful gymnasium and stage, which will support tournaments and cultural events.

She stated the Council will also be voting to fund the demolition of the Strand Theater and the Lamagna Center. She noted the vision for that location is to become mixed use, commercial and residential development, which will be in walking distance to the Enfield Train Station, the Higgins Park, the St. Adalbert's gymnasium, downtown Thompsonville, and Freshwater Pond. She noted in 2020 the Town funded the dredging of the Pond; a walkway was completed in 2015 and streetscape improvements were done in 2011. She stated most recently, the Council has acted to repair the spillway, which is planned for the Spring of 2021. She noted in November 2020, the Council voted to add paddleboats to the pond. She stated these paddleboats will be arriving in the Spring of 2021.

Ms. Purciello stated the community garden on Main Street has 35 plots, and this garden has been so successful that in the past year, the Town Council added 30 plots on Chapel Street and another 140 plots spread across Enfield. She noted they expect these plots to be completely filled in the upcoming season.

Mr. Bromson noted there are many other things to talk about, and this presentation did not include the plans for the Alcorn campus with outside basketball courts, garden plots, and parking.

He stated the Town would like to rebuild a walking bridge where the old bridge used to be across the Connecticut River to Suffield, and they want to include an Eagle Watch at the boat launch. He pointed out people from across the northeast come to this location to take pictures of the winter eagles. He pointed out Enfield has an asset that no one else has, which is the pristine, beautiful Connecticut River. He stated the Town will access it and use it to the Town's benefit.

Mr. Bromson stated due to the demand for building permits, even during the pandemic, the Council voted to hire an additional full-time Assistant Building Inspector to keep up with the permits because so many people are expanding their homes, businesses, and companies in Enfield.

Mr. Bromson stated the Department of Transportation will be at a Town Council meeting in March, and they will present the final design and take questions from the Council. He added they will also be having public hearings, so the public will have full input as to the new design. He noted

DOT has made it clear to him that they have funding for the design and engineering in the next year.

Chairman Ludwick invited comments.

Congressman Courtney referred to the federal funding and noted it took real local leadership to come up with a design and proposal, which showed Enfield's seriousness by proposing a modified and affordable plan and a plan where the Town is willing to invest its money. He stated intermodal is the magic word when dealing with the federal DOT in terms of getting federal funds released. He believes that infrastructure being a catalyst is absolutely true. He noted adjoining properties will benefit from this project. He noted millennials are not as invested in cars, and they want walkability and other options. He stated mass transit and rail fits in perfectly with the emerging demographics. He noted he cannot say enough about Mr. Bromson and his leadership in Enfield. He stated his belief all the pieces have been put together very intelligently.

Congressman Courtney stated his belief the direction Enfield is heading is totally in tandem where Hartford and Washington are heading. He noted it would not be happening if the leadership had not come together and grabbed the bull by the horns, and that is what Enfield did. He commended everyone.

Senator Kissel stated one of the first things he did when elected 28 years ago was to secure \$300,000 to fix the roof on the Strand Theater. He noted he has never been inside that theater, and before it is torn down, he would like to tour the inside. He stated he does not disagree with the plan to tear down the theater. Mr. Bromson stated people cannot enter that building due to the hazardous materials. He noted he understands the sentimentality.

Senator Kissel stated he was lucky to serve with Congressman Courtney in his first term, and he has been a pleasure to work with. He stated whatever happened at the Capitol, it is his opinion that was a disgrace, and he respects Congressman Courtney for serving the country, and they cannot let that ever happen again.

Senator Kissel stated he serves on Transportation, and he will do whatever he can to expedite this. He noted the federal funding will be very helpful. He stated his belief this will be a game changer for Thompsonville. He expressed his appreciation for the leadership of Mr. Bromson, Mayor Ludwick, and other Council members for leading this charge.

Rep. Carol Hall stated this has been a long-awaited project. She stated her belief it has gotten to this point because they have had a Council, Town Manager, and a state and federal delegation that have worked well collectively to make this happen. She feels Mr. Bromson's persistence and belief in this project has been the driving force and the fact that he has a government that supports him is amazing. She thanked everyone for their work in this endeavor. She noted Enfield's state delegation will push very hard to get this over the finish line.

Mr. Bromson thanked Rep. Carol Hall for her tireless efforts and advocacy.

Rep. Tom Arnone stated this has been a huge priority of his since he started at the Capitol. He noted he is looking forward to boarding the train in Enfield.

Mr. Bromson stated Rep. Arnone pushed and assisted in getting a meeting set with DOT before he was even sworn in. He noted when everyone works together united and collaboratively, great things get accomplished.

Councilor Sferrazza agreed this was a collaborative effort. He thanked Congressman Courtney, Senator Kissel, Reps Arnone and Hall and Town staff for all their work. He added it takes someone of Mr. Bromson's caliber to push the ball over the line. He stated he has never been prouder of Enfield as a resident.

Councilor Mangini thanked everyone for their work. She stated with Mr. Bromson's leadership, this Council and state and federal supporters, this is going to happen. She thanked Congressman Courtney for his time, diligence, and dedication to Enfield.

Councilor Cressotti thanked Congressman Courtney, Senator Kissel and Reps Hall and Arnone for their hard work in helping promote this huge project that will come to fruition. He commended Town staff for putting this presentation together.

Rep. Kissel congratulated Councilor Cressotti for his recent appointment to the Town Council.

Councilor Bosco stated in the past he did not want a train station, but over the years it became apparent that a train station would revitalize the area, and he changed his mind. He thanked everyone who worked hard on this.

Chairman Ludwick thanked Congressman Courtney, Senator Kissel, Reps. Arnone and Hall for their support, and he thanked Town staff for doing a great presentation.

Congressman Courtney stated Mr. Bromson is a special person, and he has known him for many years before they were in public office. He noted he is a very dynamic person with charisma and imagination, and the Town is lucky to have him. He noted he is looking forward to the groundbreaking.

Mr. Bromson stated lots can get done when working together, and it makes it a lot easier when surrounded with the best and brightest people. He noted that is what they have done with the Town staff and that is what they have in place in the legislative delegation and with this Town Council. He noted there's still hard work left ahead, but they are committed to it. He stated everyone is welcome to hear DOT's presentation of the final design in March, and they can answer any questions people may have.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION #5653 by Councilor Mangini, seconded by Councilor Muller to adjourn.

Upon a **SHOW-OF-HANDS** vote being taken, the Chair declared **MOTION #5653** adopted. 11-0-0, and the meeting stood adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenzy Lee
Acting Town Clerk
Clerk of the Council

Jeannette Lamontagne
Secretary to the Town Council