

CITY OF NORWALK
TRAFFIC AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING
BY VIDEO CONFERENCE AND TELECONFERENCE
SEPTEMBER 16, 2024

Members of the public can call in and listen to a meeting. They will not be able to speak or see any of the meeting participants. Each meeting will use a unique Meeting/Webinar ID. Please find the information using the link above.

Members of the public who wish to provide “live comments” will need to register in advance and use the Zoom meeting platform. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, click the “raise your hand indicator” and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section. Please find the information using the link above.

Members of the public who wish to view the meeting, but are not participating, can view a live stream on the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. This stream is delayed by approximately 20 seconds. Please find the information using the link above. The meeting recording and minutes will be posted on the City of Norwalk website within seven (7) days after the meeting.

Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via e-mail in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be read into the record, they should be submitted at least three hours in advance of the meeting start time. Please email Garrett Bolella at gbolella@norwalkct.gov to provide written comment prior to the meeting.

ATTENDANCE: Mayor Rilling; Commissioner Fran Collier-Clemmons; Commissioner Tony Lopez, Commissioner Ronald Paladino; Commissioner Nate Sumpter

STAFF: Kyle Benjamin, Traffic Analyst, TMP; Chief James Walsh, Deputy Chief Terry Blake; Deputy Chief Joseph Dinho; Deputy Chief Melissa Lepore; Paul Sotnik, Senior Engineer, DPW; Drew Berndlmaier, Senior Engineer, DPW; Anna Breault, Special Events Coordinator, Economic and Community Development

OTHERS: Timothy Petee; Diane CeCe; Alex DiBella, Asst. Construction Manager; Burns & McDonnell; Mr. Flores; Frontier Communications; Jeffery Bird; Asst. Vice President; WSP

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rilling called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. CeCe said she is speaking on behalf of the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association, and they continue to have concerns with the direct impact on East Norwalk from the Walk Bridge project in terms of road closures and detours. She requested the commission consider tabling the two road closures until the October meeting except the closure for South Smith Street that is scheduled for November 3rd, so the ENNA has a chance to speak to the Walk Bridge team. She pointed out the closure from Fort Point Street to Winfield Street and asked how many times East Avenue will be opened for utility work as Frontier Communications has had plenty of opportunities to finish whatever they needed to get done. Mayor Rilling said this is the biggest project that the CTDOT and Metro-North have ever been involved in and is unfortunately necessary due to the age of the bridge, but he understands Ms. CeCe's concerns.

1. APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AUGUST 19, 2024

**** COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AUGUST 19, 2024, AS SUBMITTED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF AUGUST 26, 2024

**** COMMISSIONER LOPEZ MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF AUGUST 26, 2024, AS SUBMITTED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH (4) FOUR AND FAVOR AND (1) ONE ABSTENTION-COMMISSIONER SUMPTER.**

3. APPROVE THE FULL ROAD CLOSURES FOR THE ANNUAL RCA TURKEY TROT EVENT ON NOVEMBER 28, 2024, FROM 8:00 AM TO 11:30 AM

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons moved the item for discussion

Mr. Benjamin said this event has taken place in the last few years. Mayor Rilling asked if anything had changed from last year. Mr. Petee said this event and the Light up Rowayton event are recurring events that have taken place for several years and there are no changes from the prior years. Chief Walsh said he has no questions regarding the traffic plan but there were some RollKall issues regarding invoicing. Mayor Rilling asked if there were outstanding invoices. Chief Walsh said "yes". Mayor Rilling said that Mr. Petee will need to work with the police department and requested that the approval be based on them satisfying the outstanding invoices.

**** COMMISSIONER SUMPTER MOVED TO APPROVE THE FULL ROAD CLOSURES FOR THE ANNUAL RCA TURKEY TROT EVENT ON NOVEMBER 28, 2024, FROM 8:00 AM TO 11:30 AM BASED ON THE OUTSTANDING INVOICES TO ROLLKALL BEING SATISFIED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. APPROVE THE FULL CLOSURE FOR THE ANNUAL LIGHT-UP ROWAYTON EVENT ON DECEMBER 1, 2024, FROM 3:00 PM TO 9:00 PM

Commissioner Paladino moved the item for discussion

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons asked if the invoices are outstanding from last year. Chief Walsh said the information that he has is not broken down by event and only has it in totality and is a collection of invoices that occurred throughout the year.

**** COMMISSIONER SUMPTER MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM BASED ON THE OUTSTANDING INVOICES TO ROLLKALL BEING SATISFIED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

5. APPROVE THE FULL & PARTIAL CLOSURES FOR THE ANNUAL HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA FROM DECEMBER 6, 2024, AT 6:00 PM TO DECEMBER 7, 2024, AT 11:55 PM.

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons moved the item for discussion.

Ms. Breault said there was an error on the agenda and the event will only be held on Saturday, December 7, 2024, this year and will be held from 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM. but are requesting the closure of Washington Street from 2:00 PM to 9:00 PM. as well as for Madison Street except for local traffic. She said this is the third year the event will be held and most of the event will take place inside 50 Washington Street and on the lawn. Mayor Rilling said he recalls last year that the commission had requested that the roadway be open past the entrance to the 50 Washington Street parking lot as well as Madison Street for the post office. Ms. Breault said that Madison Street will be open for local traffic only, but she believes the post office will be closed before the start of the event. Commissioner Lopez asked how those who need to enter 50 Washington Street from Washington Street would be able to do so. Ms. Breault said the entrance is open on Dr. Martin Luther King Drive. Commissioner Collier-Clemmons asked where the detour signs would be so that people know where to go. Ms. Breault said at the end of Washington Street and Madison Street. Chief Walsh said last year there was an officer posted at the intersection of Dr. Martin Luther King Drive and Washington Street and can also place a VMS sign at that corner directing people to take a left onto Monroe Street.

****COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO AMEND THE MOTION AND TO APPROVE THE FULL & PARTIAL CLOSURES FOR THE ANNUAL HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA FROM DECEMBER 7, 2024, AT 2:00 PM TO 9:00 PM.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

6. APPROVE THE FULL CLOSURE FOR THE ANNUAL WALL STREET WONDERLAND ON DECEMBER 14, 2024, FROM 8:00 AM TO 10:00 PM

Ms. Breault said the closure will be the same as last year and the event will be held from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM but are requesting the closure from 8:00 AM to 10:00 PM for the setup of the stage and to also prevent cars from entering the parking lot on River Street.

**** COMMISSIONER PALADINO MOVED TO APPROVE THE FULL CLOSURE FOR THE ANNUAL WALL STREET WONDERLAND ON DECEMBER 14, 2024, FROM 8:00 AM TO 10:00 PM.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7. APPROVE THE FULL CLOSURE FOR EVERSOURCE ENERGY UTILITY WORK AS PART OF THE WALKBRIDGE PROJECT FROM NOVEMBER 3, 2024, TO NOVEMBER 27, 2024, DURING THE HOURS OF 7:00 PM TO 7:00 AM

Mr. DiBella said that Eversource in support of the Walk Bridge project will be installing structures near the Metro North railroad tracks to convert to underground and have discussed this project previously. He said they understand the challenges of closing Fort Point Street and how critical it is particularly to South Norwalk and spent a good amount of time looking at alternatives and any means and methods they could find to avoid a full closure but unfortunately, when they are working it will not be possible due to the size of the equipment that will be required to get this structure in place. He said in working with the city and the state they have elected to shift the proposed work hours to nighttime and during the day will have the large equipment removed from the work area and return it to one lane from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM to reduce the traffic burden. He said during that time truck traffic would be detoured to Triangle Street vehicular traffic heading north would utilize East Avenue, and vehicular traffic heading south would use South Smith Street. He said the work is intended to begin on November 3rd. and are approximately four weeks to complete the work.

Commissioner Lopez asked if the start time could be pushed from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM. Mr. DiBella said that would not be impossible but pointed out that the more they are limited in the night work hours they will lose productivity and could add days onto the schedule. He said they will also be in constant contact with city staff and if they find the 7:00 PM start time is causing too much of an interference to local traffic they could elect to start later.

Commissioner Lopez asked about the noise to the residents and how that will be dealt with. Mr. DiBella said that he has the information on the number of decibels that would be generated from all of these pieces of equipment and has had conversations with DPW and are not going to be the only ones in this area working at night and have a robust outreach plan that includes sending letters and will do everything they possibly can to limit the amount of noise but do not anticipate it being a major concern but if they receive complaints they will do everything they can to make those right and react accordingly. Commissioner Collier-Clemmons asked if there will be a contact person listed on the letters that will go out as part of the outreach plan. Mr. DiBella said "yes" and there will be folks that will be going door-to-door so if they are home, they will be meeting that person but there is also a general Eversource hotline that will direct them to an appropriate member. Commissioner Lopez asked if this is approved tonight if they would be willing to meet with the community organizations/associations as a proactive measure. Mr.

DiBella said he has absolutely no issue doing that but will need to speak with his community outreach team members on how to coordinate and organize one of those meetings.

Commissioner Paladino asked if there is any concern about the truck traffic through the local residential neighborhoods as the trucks are being diverted. Mr. DiBella said the advantage of reverting those trucks through the night is that there should be a lot fewer of them and did not initially include the expanded area of Winfield Street and Strawberry Hill Avenue in the outreach plan but can certainly look at including the folks that are along the direct route to receiving the letters.

Mayor Rilling requested that Mr. DiBella work closely with the police department to be sure the areas are properly staffed. He also said the City of Norwalk has a noise ordinance and to get a waiver if needed on the noise ordinance they will need to speak with the health department.

****COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE FULL CLOSURE FOR EVERSOURCE ENERGY UTILITY WORK AS PART OF THE WALKBRIDGE PROJECT FROM NOVEMBER 3, 2024, TO NOVEMBER 27, 2024, DURING THE HOURS OF 7:00 PM TO 7:00 AM**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

8. APPROVE THE FULL CLOSURE FOR FRONTIER UTILITY WORK AS PART OF THE WALKBRIDGE PROJECT FROM DECEMBER 2, 2024, TO DECEMBER 12, 2024

Mayor Rilling said there has been a request by the public to table the next two items and he does not have a problem with that and may be a response to the community that we may wish to consider.

Mr. Flores said he understands Ms. CeCe's concerns but pointed out that this is a massive project with many moving parts, and he thinks one of the best ways to serve the community is to hear the concerns and have time to react to them and implement the changes that the commission wishes. He said if these items are tabled until October, they will be right up against construction activities so any change request would be very difficult for them to implement. He said all of Ms. CeCe's concerns make sense but are part of the pain of having a major project in town which will have a tremendous benefit when it is completed and asked that the commission to reconsider tabling these items and hear Frontiers proposal sooner rather than later so that any of the changes the commissioners or the officers may have can be considered and planned for.

Mr. Flores said that he understands the perception that the road is continually being opened but all of the bridges that they are working on are very old along that corridor and very delicate and have already had a few emergency procedures that had to be put in place, so when the contractors and utilities are working next to these bridges large areas cannot be opened and undermine the structure of the bridge so they have to open up small areas and does make people feel that they are not making progress. He said there is a welcome center for any members of the public or any community organizations who would like to come in to get information or provide feedback. Commissioner Sumpter asked if there was a way of letting people know about the welcome center. Mr. Flores "yes" and that they have a robust public outreach team and before they do any of the operations or closures, they go door-to-door as well as an email list that they work with. Commissioner Collier-Clemmons asked if the address and hours of operation of the welcome center could be distributed to the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association. Mr. Flores said absolutely, and he believes they have hosted them at the welcome center and Ms. CeCe has been in touch with Ms. Pelletier who is the primary point of contact for the welcome center. Commissioner Collier-Clemmons asked if there were also some public hearings held on item 8. Mr. Flores said he believes so but can't speak to that with certainty but if there hasn't been he will be sure that it does happen.

Mayor Rilling said after hearing from Mr. Flores any delay may disrupt aligning the vendors and thinks with the amount of time between now and the time for the closures listed in items eight and nine, they can reach out to the East Norwalk community to discuss any problems that they foresee. Mr. Flores said he guarantees that they will reach out to Ms. Cece and the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association to hear their concerns and do everything they can to address them.

Commissioner Sumpter agreed with Mayor Rilling to not delay the closures and continue to stay on or ahead of schedule.

Commissioner Lopez said the engagement and communication with the community and the business community is the most important thing.

Chief Walsh pointed out that the closure for Fort Point Street has a beginning date of the end of November and a finishing at the end of November and this closure is scheduled to begin on December 2nd and in previous Walkbridge projects they have run into delays so may need to consider there could be a closure of Fort Point Street and South Smith Street at the same time as the East Avenue and Fort Point Street closure which could cause some gridlock. Mayor Rilling said the police department will need to work with Eversource and monitor that project and make sure everything is done that can be to reroute traffic if there is any delay. Chief Walsh said he would contact Mr. DiBella.

**** COMMISSIONER SUMPTER MOVED TO APPROVE THE FULL CLOSURE FOR FRONTIER UTILITY WORK AS PART OF THE WALKBRIDGE PROJECT FROM DECEMBER 2, 2024, TO DECEMBER 12, 2024.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

9. APPROVE THE FULL CLOSURE FOR THE CTDOT WALKBRIDGE PROJECT FROM JANUARY TO JULY 2025 AND AUGUST 202 TO MAY 2027

Mr. Bird presented a request to close Strawberry Hill Avenue from Fitch Street to Winfield Street in support of the overall Walk Bridge project and this particular scope was added just after the original scope because there is such an intricate and thought-out phasing approach to the railroad operations it made sense to add this one additional closure. He said the first phase will be from January to July of 2025 and the goal will be to close Strawberry Hill Avenue on January 2, 2025, and the detour will be primarily to East Avenue, and detour routes and schedules have been coordinated with adjacent project detours. He said the primary detour will be to East Avenue, and in August 2026, they will go into the second closure at this point Osborne Avenue will be closed and will again be using East Avenue as the detour until Osborne Avenue is reopened and will then be using that for the duration of the closure. He said there was a public meeting held on July 25, 2023, and all residents and community leaders were invited to attend and approximately 40 people attended the meeting and at the meeting, there were no concerns raised and following the meeting, there was a two-week open comment period which resulted in no comments being received. He said there is also a project webpage that includes links to the public information meeting and provides resources for all of the information related to the project and as mentioned earlier there is a welcome center which is located at 24 Marshall Street and is staffed Tuesday through Thursday from 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM. Mayor Rilling requested that they reach out to the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association to see if they would like to express any concerns they may have. Mr. Bird said they did host a meeting with the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association in February 2024 but would certainly be willing to do something similar again.

**** COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE FULL CLOSURE FOR THE CTDOT WALKBRIDGE PROJECT FROM JANUARY TO JULY 2025 AND AUGUST 202 TO MAY 2027.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

10. APPROVE THE FULL CLOSURE FOR THE NORWALK DPW WEST CEDAR STREET BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT FROM APRIL 1, 2025, TO NOVEMBER 30, 2025.

Mr. Sotnik said that DPW has received federal and state funding for the replacement of the existing bridge and the bridge has been rated as being structurally deficient and susceptible to scour during a bridge inspection that was conducted by the CTDOT. He said the demolition and replacement of the existing bridge structure will require the closure of West Cedar Street at both ends of the bridge and shared the detour map with the commission and said no residential or commercial driveways will be within the closed or barricaded portion of the roadway, and based on the construction schedule it is anticipated the closure will be from April 1, 2025, to November 30, 2025, but only as long as necessary. He also said there will be signs indicating the detour route. Commissioner Paladino asked if there were any environmental issues with the Five Mile River. Mr. Sotnik said any issues will be taken care of with the project itself, and there will be items set up to control any debris from getting into the river and all the appropriate measures will be taken. Mayor Rilling asked if some point a sign would be installed stating the residents only. Mr. Sotnik said “yes”. Commissioner Sumpter asked if there would be a police presence for traffic control. Mr. Sotnik said “yes” and there will be police officers on site anytime there is construction being done outside the barricades.

**** COMMISSIONER SUMPTER MOVED TO APPROVE THE FULL CLOSURE FOR THE NORWALK DPW WEST CEDAR STREET BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT FROM APRIL 1, 2025, TO NOVEMBER 30, 2025.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

11. APPROVE THE FULL CLOSURE FOR THE NORWALK DPW WITCH LANE PAVING PROJECT FROM OCTOBER 1, 2024, TO OCTOBER 31, 2024

Mr. Berndlmaier said this portion of Witch Lane between Highland Avenue and Hunt Street is extremely narrow and are looking to reclaim and repave the road and establish new curbing and a newer sidewalk to be wider than it currently is. He said due to the narrow roadway they don’t anticipate being able to do alternating traffic so anticipate closing the road to through traffic during those phases of construction but will always be accommodating any local traffic and will hand out notices to all the residents on the street that will be impacted and will provide them with the customer service number. He said the contractor will be contacting the police department to set up police officers on either end of the closure and will also have additional flaggers onsite to help the residents navigate through the construction site. Commissioner Lopez asked when the project would be completed. Mr. Berndlmaier said he is hoping to have the paving of the road completed within three weeks. Commissioner Collier-Clemmons said the sidewalk project in that area will be a major improvement to the neighborhood. Mr. Berndlmaier said that DPW and TMP have been working closely together to improve the conveyance for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles. Commissioner Sumpter said as he rides around the city you can see the city is growing and becoming more modern and are doing a good job.

****COMMISSIONER LOPEZ MOVED TO APPROVE THE FULL CLOSURE FOR THE NORWALK DPW WITCH LANE PAVING PROJECT FROM OCTOBER 1, 2024, TO OCTOBER 31, 2024.
THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

**** COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:33PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd