

CITY OF NORWALK
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REGULAR MEETING
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MAY 19, 2025

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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 Ben Yeung at byeung@norwalkct.gov to provide written comments prior to the meeting.

ATTENDANCE: Commissioner Tony Lopez; Commissioner Ronald Paladino;
Commissioner Fran Collier-Clemmons

STAFF: Chief James Walsh; Deputy Chief Joseph Dinho; Garret Bolella, Asst.
Director, TMP Ben Yeung, Senior Engineer, TMP; Nathan Fankhanel,
Junior Engineer, TMP

OTHERS: Rachel Simon; Jeff Ortolano; Sue Brown Gordon

I. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons called the roll, and all those listed in the attendance were present.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A. Submission of a Letter from the public.

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons read a letter from Ms. Diane Cece of the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association, which has been attached to the minutes.

IV. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES- APRIL 21, 2025

**** COMMISSIONER LOPEZ MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. PRIDE IN THE PARK

Mr. Yeung provided a brief overview of the event and said it is one of Connecticut's largest and best-attended LGBTQ+ pride events, hosting over 10,000 people. The event is planned for June 14, 2025, and will be held at Veterans Park. The traffic impacts will be minimal, and no road closures are necessary. However, police control will be necessary at the entrances and exits to Veterans' Park. Advanced warning signs will also be placed near the event to alert motorists ahead of time.

Ms. Simon said they have an agreement with the police to control the traffic, and the traffic plan is the same as last year.

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons asked Chief Walsh if there were any issues last year. Chief Walsh said “no,” and the traffic plan from last year is fine.

**** COMMISSIONER PALADINO MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM.**

**** THE ITEM PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

B. ROWAYTON FIREWORKS

Mr. Ortolano said that July 4th is a historic event that the Rowayton Civic Association hosts in concert with the 6th Taxing District at Bayley Beach. They have addressed significant gaps in how the event has traditionally been supported over the past years. This year’s plan has been built, and diligent collaboration has been made with the Rowayton Fire Department, the Norwalk Police Department, and the 6th Taxing District. The plan will maintain and manage public safety, so the Bayley Beach parking lot will be closed at 4:00 PM, which has not been done in the past. He said they are working in concert with the Norwalk Police and met with Chief Walsh and his team last week to review the plan. He said the plan will help alleviate the congestion they faced last year while exiting the fireworks. A third-party security team will also be hired to help maintain crowd control inside Bayley Beach. They will work with Norwalk Police to ensure the external perimeters follow the traffic patterns. He said a third-party cleaning service will also be hired that evening to clean up the surrounding communities and the beach.

Commissioner Lopez asked Chief Walsh if he was satisfied with the changes that had been made. Chief Walsh said this is the first year the changes will be implemented and expects much better results. Part of what was stressed when they met last week was to minimize or eliminate the comingling of pedestrians with vehicular traffic exiting the fireworks, and he thinks this is a solid plan for this year. He said the plan can be evaluated after the event to see if changes will be needed for next year, but he thinks this is an improvement from previous years.

Commissioner Collier- Clemmons asked if there would be an issue with the third-party security as to who has the authority, if it will be understood that the police have the final authority, if that is how it should be. The 6th Taxing District was the governing body that recommended the third-party security company they used had used a past. Chief Walsh said he believes they will be used as a force multiplier, but having a police presence was discussed just in case something does happen, there is a point of communication inside the fireworks area. Commissioner Collier-Clemmons asked Chief Walsh if he was satisfied with the plan as it had been presented. Chief Walsh said “yes”.

Mr. Ortolano presented a map of the proposed road closures and said it would be uploaded to the special event permit. It was also shared with the Norwalk Police Department last week.

Commissioner Lopez asked if there would be sufficient detour signage regarding the closures.

Mr. Ortolano said “yes” and worked closely with the Norwalk Police to ensure they complied

with what that should look like. Commissioner Paladino asked if the road closures would usually be presented to the Traffic Authority or if this would be the final approval. Mr. Yeung said that TMP has not yet reviewed the proposed road closures and, as the event is not until July 4th, there is a potential to bring the road closures to the Traffic Authority for approval.

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons asked if the neighborhood residents would be apprised of the changes. Mr. Ortolano said, "Yes," they are already actively communicating with all three homeowner associations and the local residents in each community regarding potential road closures and alternative driving areas. Commissioner Collier-Clemmons said before that communication, if formally disseminated, is approved by TMP to be sure the necessary detour signs will be available and there are no issues.

**** COMMISSIONER LOPEZ MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AND COORDINATION WITH BOTH THE TMP AND THE POLICE DEPARTMENT ON THE PROPOSED EXIT ROUTE FOR THE ROWAYTON FIREWORKS.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

C. SONO ARTS FEST

Ms. Gordon provided an overview of the event and said no significant changes will be made from last year's road closures. She will meet with the Police Department to ensure they concur with the plan and will happily comply with any of their recommendations. While it is a big event, it has been successful all these years.

**** COMMISSIONER PALADINO MOVED TO APPROVE THE SONO ARTS FEST.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

D. HIGH & KNIGHT STREET ONE-WAY CONVERSIONS

Mr. Bolella provided an overview of the changes in traffic patterns. He emphasized that both of these roadways today are already one-way. Staff are just recommending converting High Street to one-way northbound between East Wall Street and Route 1, which is currently one-way going southbound, and also converting Knight Street, which is currently one-way northbound, to one-way southbound between 32 Knight Street and East Wall Street. The project originated to address historical operation and safety challenges that there are on Wall Street, East Wall Street and is a crucial time when nearly 30 million dollars is being invested into the entire Wall Street neighborhood to make these changes to accommodate future neighborhood plans which had a tremendous amount of input and feedback from the community.

Mr. Bolella presented a map that showed the issues at hand and said the operational and safety concerns that he is speaking about largely consist of the roadways at High and Knight Street, which essentially intersect at a point at a very sharp angle. There is a counterclockwise circulation between High Street and Knight Street, which exacerbates the issue of drivers making illegal contraflow maneuvers from High Street to Knight Street. Additionally, the roadways are aligned today in a way not designed to accommodate this movement. These illegal turns have been happening for some time, and now we have an opportunity to fix them. This is based on several observations at this location, and the Wall Street/East Wall Street improvement project has been designed, which is currently under construction and will transform this block of roadways. Significant traffic counting programs were also done to quantify the frequency of this movement. On a typical weekday, it occurs 117 times, and we finally have an opportunity to address this. Before this meeting, the entire neighborhood was canvassed. Flyers were dropped off at businesses and residences that detailed this proposed change and informed all business owners and residents of a public meeting held on Monday, May 5, 2025. Those in attendance were largely supportive of the project. They also recognize the tremendous changes happening in the neighborhood and the benefits of the larger, broader Wall Street coordinator improvement project. The future streetscape is under construction and will include a plaza between the two intersections. We want to be ahead of the issue of traffic potentially coming down High Street and trying to make this complex movement that exists today by having to enter an opposing travel Lane. That is why this project must be done in concert with these improvements. This project will also provide great traffic calming, including a raised crosswalk and multiple curb extensions.

Commissioner Lopez suggested future plans to mitigate traffic blocking, especially with the proposed changes. Mr. Bolella said that it will be part of the larger project, investments will be made in all of the signals, and they are looking to bring technology successfully employed in other parts of the city.

Commissioner Paladino said he looked at the project in depth and that it needs to be done. He asked if any of the businesses did not favor the project. Mr. Bolella had some concerns regarding Knight Street. Generally, there is support for the project, but change is always hard, and the change in direction will take time to get used to. Still, the primary concerns were related to the ability on Knight Street to turn onto Wall Street and what this infrastructure project will bring the curb lines further into the street, bringing drivers further away from Knight Street, and creating sight lines that don't exist today because of the building. This area will be a low-speed environment, and speeds will be lower coming down the hill, so not only are there better sight lines now, but the speed of traffic will be much lower, so they believe they have addressed those concerns. The other concern they heard from the businesses was to make sure the curb corners and any parking modifications on the street are made to accommodate their vehicles heading southbound on the street, which they believe has been addressed with this design. Should any minor parking limitations need to occur for a vehicle to pull out south into the street as opposed

to where it used to go north, staff are available to implement those parking restrictions in the future.

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons said that with the change in direction on Knight Street, the driver would now be exiting their cars with the door opening into the southbound traffic and would not have the protection of the sidewalk. Mr. Bolella said while the street will be one way northbound today, it will be one way southbound in the future, so we will only have to look north to validate and verify that there is no vehicle coming down the street, and will be sure there is clear and adequate sight lines, and should any vehicles need additional turning radius that is something that will be looked at as they look at this implementation which would coincide with the end of the project.

Mr. Bolella said they anticipate implementing the project by the end of the year as they finalize the plans.

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons asked Chief Walsh if he had any concerns with the proposed change in the direction of the streets. Chief Walsh said, “No,” and that these changes would be good improvements for that area and are needed.

**** COMMISSIONER LOPEZ MOVED TO APPROVE THE HIGH & KNIGHT STREET ONE-WAY CONVERSIONS.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

E. DO NOT BLOCK BOX HIGH STREET & NORTH AVENUE

Mr. Bolella said that, in doing their due diligence and looking at this in great detail, their proposal for High Street as it approaches Route 1 in the future would be to do a separate left and right turn lane. This is very similar to what exists on Knight Street today and will remain in the future, but also wanted to be proactive and look at how people travel through the area. While there is a much smaller percentage of left turns here, they wanted to ensure a lane where they could comfortably wait and turn onto Route 1 during peak hours while allowing the right turn movement to flow freely. He said they will also be proactively looking at the do not block the box intersection markings. However, they will need to go through the Ordinance Committee to add the intersection to the list of intersections in the city that get this treatment. He will also have to work with the CTDOT, but he thinks this is an added value, and they want to ensure they are doing everything in advance to make this project as successful as possible.

Commissioner Lopez asked if there would be additional signage or lighting besides the do not block the box. Mr. Bolella said that at this location, the improvements will be limited to pavement markings and signage, for which they have an approved capital budget for the Wall Street corridor to fund items such as these.

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons asked Chief Walsh if he had any concerns about the proposed change. Chief Walsh said, “No.”

Commissioner Lopez said, relating to the eastbound lane, where there will not be a do not block the box because there is another intersection, but won't impede the traffic from potentially turning left from High Street. Mr. Bolella said the traffic still needs to clear that lane and the reason why the pavement markings are not being proposed on that eastbound travel lane is because there is over 1000' to the intersection of Park Street, which is the next signal that queues traffic, and vehicles don't regularly stop in front of High Street so traffic will still flow there. The do not block the box is not intended to stop traffic; it is for traffic to stop in advance of a signal when they are queuing. Also, CTDOT will review the request once it is submitted, and if they suggest the markings need to cover the eastbound travel lane, they will put them as is on their roadway.

**** COMMISSIONER LOPEZ MOVED TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED TRAFFIC PATTERN CHANGES AT HIGH STREET AND NORTH AVENUE.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

F. PORCH JAM 2025

Mr. Ortolano provided a brief overview of the event. He said there is a music charity event that the Rowayton Civic Association is taking over in concert with Jam Studio, and 90% of the proceeds go to inter-city schools and organizations to help with enrichment, especially around music and arts. The Porch Jam event will be held on June 7, 2025, and 35 residential homes will host a band to play music on their porch for approximately 45 minutes. The event lasts from 11:00 AM to 6:00 PM, and we are requesting road closures by zones in specific egress areas across parts of Rowayton. Mr. Ortolano presented a map of the proposed zones and road closure times. This year's sales tickets will be limited to approximately 2,000, and there will be various infrastructure activities to ensure this is a safe event.

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons asked Chief Walsh if he had any concerns with this application and road closures. Chief Walsh said, "No." This event was discussed at length last week, and this plan is much better than the one that had been in place in previous years.

**** COMMISSIONER LOPEZ MOVED TO APPROVE THE PORCH JAM 2025.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

G. 467 WEST AVENUE "PIPER" PARKING APPROVAL

Mr. Fankhanel said a new apartment is going up on the corner of West Avenue, Butler Street, and Orchard Street. Upon completion of the construction, normal metered parking spots will be

installed on those streets. However, they are proposing timed parking on Quincy Street, so it will be unmetered.

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons asked Chief Walsh if he had any concerns about this request. Chief Walsh said, "No."

**** COMMISSIONER PALADINO MOVED TO APPROVE THE 467 WEST AVENUE PARKING.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Commissioner Paladino said the letter Ms. Cece submitted was read but not discussed. Commissioner Collier-Clemmons said it was not discussed because it is not on the agenda. However, TMP will address and look at the concerns in that letter and contact her regarding the issues stated in the letter. The Traffic Authority must be made aware of those before speaking with her.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

**** COMMISSIONER LOPEZ MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:14 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd

East Norwalk Neighborhood Association



May 14, 2025

Jim Travers – Transportation, Mobility and Parking
Norwalk Traffic Authority Staff
Via email

REQUEST FOR DISCUSSION ITEM 5-19-25 Traffic Authority & Police Commission Agendas

Good afternoon Jim,

I trust that Transportation/Mobility/Parking and Public Works staff, along with Police Department, are well aware of the traffic issues East Norwalk proper has been experiencing for several years now, and the increased infrastructure activity, congestion, gridlock and aggressive driving this year. Most of this is obviously related to the Walk Bridge Project and related utility work, and some due to an increase in traffic in general post-Covid, but with summer beach and park season fast approaching residents here are frustrated with the situation and obviously concerned it will get worse before it improves.

It seems just as one segment of a local and/or state project reopens, we are faced with the next closure and detours – and lately it appears to many East Norwalk residents (who are thoroughly familiar with our roads) that the signals are poorly timed again, contributing to congestion, grid lock, and an increase in observed traffic violations, including aggressive driving. It is the wild west, and we don't want it to take a tragedy here to see some action on the part of the City.

East Norwalk Neighborhood Association (ENNA) is requesting a discussion item on this topic be added to both the Traffic Authority (NTA) and Police Commission (NPC) agendas for this Monday, May 19th.

We want to request an ad-hoc task force of City officials and stakeholders be formed to examine this issue; identify and assess possible short & long-term remedies; and provide some assurance to residents that their concerns are being heard and addressed.

In particular, it would be helpful for the result to be some actionable and measurable steps to ensure that all operations & enforcement departments are actively:

- working closely with Walk Bridge Project Team to mitigate detours & gridlock
- improving advanced detour signage, including electronic, especially for Strawberry Hill closure
- recommending alternatives that will reduce future traffic issues as projects continue
- preparing NOW for beach and concert traffic and assigning community policing staff to ensure smooth traffic flow to/from beach, especially at Winfield, East and Ft. Point
- remeasuring Level of Service at all major intersections, including St John St.

continued....

- monitoring and adjusting traffic signals to improve volume through-put and flow
 - State DOT needs to assess the number of cars being cleared from Exit 16 NB exit that subsequently create gridlock for East Ave NB traffic, with only 2-3 cars advancing at numerous times of the day. ENNA is happy to speak in detail as to the poor lane design that could have been fixed during the most recent DOT I95 projects...
- assigning additional traffic patrol units to the center of 06855 from Cemetery and Gregory to the highway, and designating specific points that are not only optimal vantage points for observation, but would allow for safely pulling over & ticketing.
- providing enforcement for all infractions: speeding, rolling through stop signs, lane changes without signaling, ignoring don't block the box (especially at exit 16); failure to turn in turn only lanes (though some recent enforcement at East & Winfield proved helpful); distracted driving, etc
- temporarily (or permanently) prohibiting left turns onto East Ave from both Dunkin and the former HoJo lots
- providing ENNA with previously requested post-installation reports on traffic accidents at Olmstead Don't Block the Box area and updated LOS at both lights at Exit 16 (NB and SB)
- providing the required post-occupancy traffic audit for 230 East Ave (Brim and Crown development)
- Installing the planned traffic signal at East & Ft Point as soon as possible, even if it means adjusting or reinstalling following the roadway reconstruction

The above list is by no means comprehensive, and ENNA is not suggesting everything can be done immediately, but we do believe these and other improvements that a task force may suggest are certainly reasonable, feasible and likely at little or no additional costs.

Please confirm that ENNA can have 5-10 minutes at each of the two meetings on Monday. Thanks in advance.

Sincerely,

Diane Cece
Board - President

CC: Mayor Harry Rilling
Police Chief James Walsh
Chief of Operations Vanessa Valadares