

CITY OF NORWALK
TRAFFIC AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING
BY VIDEO CONFERENCE AND TELECONFERENCE
APRIL 21, 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: Mayor Rilling; Commissioner Tony Lopez; Commissioner Ronald Paladino; Commissioner Fran Collier-Clemmons; Commissioner Nate Sumpter

STAFF: Chief James Walsh; Deputy Chief Terry Blake; Deputy Chief Joseph Dinho; Ben Yeung, Senior Engineer, TMP

OTHER: Vincent Neri, Project Manager, Waters Construction; Prashant Chandra, CTDOT

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rilling called the meeting to order at 4:04PM.

II. ROLL CALL

Mayor Rilling called the roll, and all those listed in the attendance were present.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- A. Reading of a letter on sidewalk safety concerns from resident, Patrick Perillo, dated April 17, 2025.

Mayor Rilling said the letter Mr. Perillo submitted would be forwarded to the DPW operations team.

IV. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES- MARCH 17, 2025

**** COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

V. NEW BUSINESS

- A. APPROVED PROPOSED USE OF SIDEWALK ALONG WEST AVENUE FROM BURNELL BLVD. TO WALL STREET, EAST WALL STREET, AND EAST AVENUE, AND EAST WALL STREET TO SUNSET HILL AVENUE FOR NORWALK CONSERVATORY OF THE ARTS GRADUATION.**

Mayor Rilling asked for clarification on whether the road must be closed. Mr. George said there was an error in the application, and only 43 students will be walking from the Norwalk Conservatory to City Hall. Mayor Rilling asked if City Hall would be used for the graduation ceremony. Mr. George said “yes,” and he is not planning on enrolling any more students until after graduation. Most parents will meet at the concert hall, and the sidewalks have enough room to walk the students to City Hall safely. Chief Walsh asked if the band mentioned in the permit will still be there, and if so, how many band members will be there. Mr. George said, “Yes, they

are, and there are six members in the band. Chief Walsh asked if they are included in the 43 participants. Mr. George said 'no". Chief Walsh asked how many additional participants there would be walking from the Conservatory to City Hall because his concern is that other events are going on that day. Crossing people on East Avenue would be problematic and require several police officers. Mr. George said they currently facilitate 150 people in the area daily, so he does not see this as a major concern, and it will not be a huge parade. Chief Walsh asked who would be paying for the police officer. Mr. George said the Conservatory will.

Chief Walsh said the city's problem in regards to public safety and traffic management in totality in addressing this as traffic management plan and public safety is that an exact number of participants has not been provided as it has changed dramatically since the application was submitted to 6 weeks ago, and were unaware this would be on the Traffic Authority agenda until last Friday afternoon, and assumed the event was cancelled since there had been no communication until last Friday. Mr. George said that no one from his team had indicated that, and he received an email just last week from Mr. Yeung requesting that he attend the Traffic Authority meeting. Mr. Yeung said he was also made aware of the event six weeks ago and had reached out to Mr. George and requested that he present the item at the Traffic Authority meeting last month, but they were not ready to do so. He then suggested they attend the April Traffic Authority meeting, and that is when he was made aware that the event would only be a sidewalk march and not a full parade. Still, he knew some questions surrounding the event, so he suggested it come before the Traffic Authority for approval.

Commissioner Collier-Clemmons said she has major concerns with the event. She is not certain about how the number of participants walking from the Conservatory to City Hall to 49 and how that will be controlled, because the number of people moving directly correlates with the number of police officers available. As Chief Walsh mentioned, another event will draw approximately 500 people to the same area at the same time. The commission's concern is safety, and they must walk either one by one or two by two because anything more than that walking on the sidewalk is not safe. She said she thinks there needs to be more guidelines put in place, and she needs to be assured that this number will not swell to 60 or more participants.

Mr. George said this request is to help everyone, and the alternative is that the students, along with their families, will walk over to City Hall on their own and not be regimented and have no police presence, which feels like a very bad idea. Commissioner Sumpter said that, as a Conservatory, there should be some rules and regulations on handling things, but he is unclear. Mr. George said the students will graduate at City Hall on May 3rd and walk to City Hall together or by themselves. His responsibility as the President of the University is not to tell students how to walk to City Hall. Still, the goal is to have them travel together, have the tradition, move as a unit, and keep them safe instead of having to go on their own. Commissioner Sumpter said his concern is safety and there needs to be parameters. Mr. George said it is a major concern to have the students crossing East Avenue, which is why they applied for the first place,

as the alternative is having them walk to City Hall on their own. If not regulated, it will be free for all, and that is a major concern.

Commissioner Paladino asked if a new application could be submitted that represents the current number of participants. Mr. George said, "Yes," they would be happy to submit a revised application. Commissioner Collier-Clemmons said if the time the students will be marching is not in the current application, it needs to be included.

Commissioner Lopez requested that the business owners be notified, making them aware of the march to City Hall.

**** COMMISSIONER PALADINO MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM CONTINGENT UPON COORDINATION WITH THE POLICE DEPARTMENT TO CONFIRM POLICE STAFFING NEEDS, REVISIONS AND RESUBMISSION OF THE SPECIAL EVENT APPLICATION, AND NOTIFICATION FOR BUSINESSES ALONG THE ROUTE IN ADVANCE OF THE EVENT.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

B. APPROVE PROPOSED FULL CLOSURE ON HIGHLAND AVENUE (STATE RT. 136), MCKINLEY STREET (STATE RT. 136), WILSON AVENUE (STATE RT. 136), BLUFF AVENUE, BROWN PLACE, YARMOUTH ROAD, S BEACH DRIVE, CRESCENT BEACH ROAD, ENSIGN ROAD, GULL ROAD, PINE POINT ROAD, AND ROTON AVENUE FOR THE RCA FATHER'S DAY

Mayor Rilling said this parade route has not changed in over 30 years.

**** COMMISSIONER COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

C. APPROVE PROPOSED FULL CLOSURE ON HIGHLAND AVENUE (STATE RT. 136), MCKINLEY STREET (STATE RT. 136), WILSON AVENUE (STATE RT. 136), BLUFF AVENUE, BROWN PLACE, YARMOUTH ROAD, S BEACH DRIVE, CRESCENT BEACH ROAD, ENSIGN ROAD, GULL ROAD, PINE POINT ROAD, AND ROTON AVENUE FOR THE RCA FATHER'S DAY RUN

Mr. Yeung provided an overview of the event and said it is also an annual recurring event that begins at 8:00 AM and ends at 9:30 AM. The event organizers are expecting 150 participants, 50 spectators, and 10 volunteers. The event is run by the RCA, and the route is the same as it has been in previous years. They don't expect any issues.

**** COMMISSIONER LOPEZ MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

D. PROPOSED FULL CLOSURE ON SEAVIEW AVENUE, FORT POINT ST (STATE RT. 136), VAN ZANT ST (STATE RT. 136), EAST AVENUE, AND PARK STREET FOR CITY MEMORIAL DAY PARADE.

Mayor Rilling said the parade has been held for many years and that the state police must be contacted to close the exit 16 ramps in both directions. Chief Walsh said the police department will be contacting them to arrange that.

**** COMMISSIONER SUMPTER MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

E. APPROVE THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO PARTIAL CLOSURES ON WEST AVENUE FOR STATE DOT DRAINAGE PROJECT

Mr. Chandra said this is a state project to rehabilitate the bridge over the on-ramp on West Avenue. The original plan showed three utilities under West Avenue. Still, upon excavation and research, it was found that there were more than three, and nine were found, which interfered with the proposed drainage under West Avenue. This caused them to have to redesign the drainage and caused the contractor to re-evaluate the work and devise a plan to divert traffic. They originally wanted to close West Avenue for two weeks. Still, the city did not approve that plan, so they devised a plan with alternating traffic. Instead of taking two weeks to complete, it will now take approximately one month to complete this operation.

Mr. Neri of Waters Construction believes that 11 additional utilities were found, which caused this section of the work to be completely redesigned and provided an overview of the workflow.

Mr. Yeung said CTDOT and Waters Construction had presented to the Traffic Authority in February and were approved. At the time, Waters Construction was closing three of the six lanes on West Avenue just north of the I-95 on ramp during peak hours, and no more than four lanes during off peak hours which included mid-day and overnight and would maintain a minimum of one lane in each direction. Still, in the ensuing weeks, CTDOT and Waters Construction further looked into it and realized even that there was not enough space during certain phases of this installation, specifically during phase III, which they are calling set up 3. During nighttime installation, this phase calls for a total of five of the six lanes to be closed on West Avenue. That is the phase that CTDOT and Waters Construction propose to have one-way alternating traffic. Commissioner Lopez asked how long that phase is. Mr. Neri estimated it to be one and a half to

two weeks. Mr. Yeung clarified that during nighttime operations would be only from 8:00 PM to 6:00 AM, and that during the day, West Avenue would be partially opened to allow one lane of traffic in each direction. Mayor Rilling said that one lane in each direction will create a significant backup, and there needs to be at least two lanes open in each direction. The commissioners all agreed with Mayor Rilling's comments. Commissioner Lopez asked if there are any other alternatives to mitigate the disruption because this is major. Mr. Neri said, "No," the work cannot be done by leaving two lanes open in each direction. Commissioner Collier-Clemmons asked if the work will be done on the weekends. Due to workforce allocations, Mr. Neri said "no" and will only be done Monday through Friday. Although this project is a priority, there were unforeseen circumstances that were not the fault of the contractor. Chief Walsh asked when the work would begin. Mr. Neri said there is currently no anticipated start date. Mr. Chandra estimated the work to begin next month. Chief Walsh asked if this work would be taking place during Memorial Day. Mr. Chandra said that if needed, the work could take place after Memorial Day or not work on Memorial Day.

Mr. Yeung presented and provided an overview of the workflow and traffic plan.

Mayor Rilling said he understands that the work has to be done, but he is not happy with the traffic plan, as West Avenue is one of the main arteries, and merging three lanes of traffic into one lane will be a nightmare. Commissioner Paladino asked if a full road closure at night would expedite the project. Mr. Neri said that due to all the utilities, there would not be enough time to excavate, install the drainage structures, backfill, and open the road in the morning. Commissioner Lopez asked how long the full closure would be to expedite the project. Mr. Neri said the best-case scenario is approximately two weeks; if not fully complete, it would only need to impact a few lanes of traffic to complete the work. He also said that they could leave a lane open specifically for emergency vehicles during a full road closure. Chief Walsh said that traffic would be hindered no matter the chosen option. Mayor Rilling agreed but said he does not think there is any way to have a full road closure. Mr. Yeung said the TMP, DPW, and Deputy Chief Blake met virtually with Waters Construction and CTDOT, shot down the idea of the full road closure, and requested they figure out a way to keep some lanes open. This is the plan that was presented. Mayor Rilling said that when there is one lane open in each direction, there will need to be someone helping to queue the cars.

Commissioner Lopez hoped Waters Construction would consider bringing another suggestion, but Mr. Neri does not think there are other options. Mr. Neri said it is not the contractor's responsibility to come up with the traffic control plans, and they are simply outlining the sequence and workflow of the drainage installation, showing what workspace is needed, and putting this plan together to assist CTDOT. These are different site conditions that are unfortunate and at no fault of the contractor or owner. However, they have proposed numerous suggestions, which again is not their responsibility.

Mayor Rilling said that when the Traffic Authority approves these kinds of projects, the focus is on mitigating their impact on the public and making them as convenient and safe as possible. He does not think this plan does that, and it seems to be for the convenience of the construction project rather than the convenience of the public. While he recognizes this project needs to be done, he is not so sure this plan provides the most convenience for the public and the safety the commission is trying to accomplish.

Mr. Chandra said the contractor, CTDOT, and the city should all work together to solve the problem. As mentioned, this is an unknown and unfortunate circumstance. They are not trying to make it inconvenient or difficult for the city or traffic; they need to make a balance between cost and inconvenience.

Mayor Rilling said the commission is not concerned about cost but only about public safety and convenience. Commissioner Sumpter is inclined to send the plan back to the drawing board, where CTDOT, the contractor, and TMP could coordinate on a more detailed plan that the commission could approve. Mr. Neri said this drainage system is to divert stormwater and avoid flooding on the roads, which is a safety concern, and no flooding would mean safety and convenience.

Commissioner Paladino agreed with Mayor Rilling that this is not ready to be approved, but asked if adding weekend work would expedite the project. Mr. Chandra said that if Norwalk allowed weekend work, Waters Construction would consider it. Mr. Neri said the work would still take an estimated 30 days to complete.

**** COMMISSIONER SUMPTER MOVED TO REJECT THIS ITEM UNTIL A PLAN IS IN PLACE WHICH INCLUDES THE CHANGES THAT HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED. THIS ENTAILS DETAILS ON DETOURS, TEMPORARY TRAFFIC CONTROL, AND POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVES TO KEEP MORE LANES ON WEST AVENUE OPEN FOR A GREATER DURATION OF TIME.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IV. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:36 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd