

**CITY OF ROCHESTER
Planning Board**

Monday, October 20, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. (workshop)
(These minutes were approved November 3, 2008)

EXCERPT OF MINUTES FOR NORTH MAIN STREET BRIDGE PUBLIC HEARING

Members Present

A. Terese Desjardins, *Chair*
Lance Powers, *Vice Chair*
Tim Fontneau, *Secretary*
Tom Abbott
Alan Dews
Richard Groat
Eugene McCarthy
John David Meader

Members Absent

Rick Healey (Excused)

Alternates Present

Ray Varney

Staff: Michael Behrendt, Chief Planner
Madeleine Carter, Secretary

(These minutes are the legal record of the meeting and are in the format of an overview of the meeting. It is neither represented nor intended to be a true transcription of the meeting. A recording of the meeting will be on file in the City Clerk's office for reference purposes. It may be copied for a fee).

Public Hearing:

Planned Rehabilitation of the North Main Street Bridge over the Cocheco River and reconstruction of approach roadways (scheduled to start Spring 2009).

Ms. Desjardins stated she is open to having more than one public hearing on this if more people are not able to have all their questions answered. She stated the Board may ask any technical questions, and the audience would be able to ask any technical, as well as any other questions, after the presentation. She stated Ron Joy, and Brian Colburn, with the design firm of McFarland Johnson Group out of Concord, New Hampshire would be answering questions as well as Tom Willis, Public Works Department, and City Manager John Scruton.

Tom Willis, City Engineer, stated the North Main Street Bridge is a special, very important bridge that links the north and south end of the City. This crossing dates back to the eighteenth century. The current bridge is a very old bridge that was constructed in the late 1800's. It has been rehabilitated a couple of times and is a historic landmark. The most

recent inspection was done last fall, and this bridge is in worse condition than any other of the City's owned bridges. He stated it is not yet a "red listed" bridge but if we do not do the normal maintenance it would become that. The City has hired the firm of McFarland Johnson who are Transportation and Bridge Engineers; they have many offices throughout the northeast.

Mr. Joy, Project Manager, gave an overview and history of the project. He then gave a PowerPoint presentation that included the reconstruction of the streets in that area. He briefly discussed the bridge when the 100-year flood occurred. He gave the historic background; spoke of the National Registry of historic places, he discussed construction and the structure of the bridge, and other items. He briefly spoke of the list of items for rehabilitation, and showed a view of an old original photo of the bridge. He also discussed different styles and designs for the railings.

Mr. Colburn, Project Engineer, then gave a PowerPoint presentation that included the construction phasing, traffic control, time frames, and estimated cost for closing the bridge completely, closing just one lane, and / or installing a temporary bridge while work is being done. He stated construction would likely start in the spring of 2009. He discussed a detour route for trucks, and other items.

Mr. Joy discussed the options that were spoken of by Mr. Colburn.

Board members, and Mr. Willis, discussed the chart, cost of the project, the time frame, fixing just the bridge only and not the other streets, sequencing of the bridge and the other streets, the temporary bridge option, and the deterioration rate of the bridge. Mr. Willis stated 3 years ago the rating for deterioration was about in the mid 60's, which is degrading, and in need of maintenance. Ms. Desjardins asked if the flooding had speeded up the degrading process. Tom Willis replied that is correct.

Board members and Mr. Willis discussed the impact of emergency vehicles on Bridge Street.

Mr. Willis stated when Public Works institutes the detour they would obtain on a temporary basis some of that property where the parking lot is that supports the apartment building on the corner of Bridge and River Streets to essentially widen the radius on that road so larger and emergency vehicles could make that turn without encroaching the other lane. He stated that would be part of the bridge project.

Board members and Mr. Willis discussed getting a hard copy or a CD with details of the plan. Tom Willis stated information could be available on the City's website. Mr. Willis also stated he would give Mr. Behrendt the information and he could pass it on to the Board. He stated if the Board has questions they could email him and he would try to answer them or forward them along to Mr. Joy or Mr. Colburn.

Mr. Varney stated he would like a copy of the power point presentation.

Board members, and Mr. Willis, discussed closing the bridge completely, different style and structure for the bridge, funding, information and cost of the project, and the longevity of the repairs. Mr. Willis stated the longevity would be about 25 to 30 years.

Ms. Desjardins opened the public hearing.

Robert Bush, Cove Court, stated his concern is how would this affect traffic and parking on his street which is a dead-end street. Mr. Willis replied there would be little effect except for some vehicles turning around, as well as some impact on parking.

Holly Gallagher, Cove Court, asked about signalization, and where the construction equipment would be stored.

Mr. Willis stated it would be up to the contractor to locate a storage area. The City would make available 1/2 of the 103 parking lot. He stated most of the signalization would be an "on temporary demand" basis.

Nancy O'Connor, owner of the Thai Restaurant on North Main Street, stated she is concerned with the financial impact to the business. She asked if there would be subsidies to offset the financial impact.

Mr. Willis stated there might be financial assistance programs available such as talking to Ea Ksander, Community Development Specialist, or Karen Pollard, Economical Development Manager. They could possibly direct someone in the right direction for assistance.

Chip Noon, Director of the Rochester Main Street Program, stated this is a very complicated project. He stated this is a tough time for everyone. He stated what we need to do as the City of Rochester and Rochester Main Street is help our businesses downtown with this confidence factor. He stated he and Kenn Ortmann, Planning Director, have discussed some possible solutions. He stated he has been hearing some conflicting information. He stated everyone should be working together on this plan.

Dr. Anthony Pastelis, Pine Street, read a prepared statement.

Bob Johnson, Stillings Court, stated he has safety, and financial concerns about the project. He stated he is for keeping one lane opened.

Sandra Keans, City Council member and resident of Rochester, stated she voted to send this to the Planning Board. She stated the reason is, she wanted the Board to do what they do best, look at the plans. She briefly discussed other projects that have been done and stated her phone rings off the hook after the project is done. She stated why, because no one has looked at the plans except the bureaucrats. She discussed a couple of problems on South Main Street. She stated it is her firm opinion the taxpayers in Rochester deserve to get what they are paying for. The only way they are going to get that is if City projects come to this Board and this Board looks at them in detail the way it should be done and the way it happens in other communities. She stated she understands the Board has been given orders that the Board can only look at this plan tonight and only discuss this tonight and then it is out of the Boards hands. She stated she believes that is wrong and the Board should go public with that information if it is true. She stated there is a rumor, she does not know if it is true but it certainly is not what the City Council had in mind when they voted to send this here. She stated the Council did not vote to send it here so the Board could hold the public hearing that the Council should appropriately be hearing. She stated it is time this City got back to all of us fulfilling our responsibilities and not letting the bureaucrats push any of us

around. She stated the taxpayers and electors in this City think we are doing our job and we need to convince them that we are.

Ms. Desjardins thanked Ms. Keans for her comments. She stated the City Council gave a wonderful opportunity to the Board because they have opened the door and communications for the Board to start requesting to see some of these projects and looking at them in more details.

Jean Grover, resident, stated she would like to see coordination of business and the City. She also stated she is opposed of closing the bridge completely.

Susan Boutin, Principal of St. Elizabeth School, stated she is concerned with the safety and welfare of the children on Bridge Street, as well as concerns of increased traffic and emergency vehicles.

Jennifer Stimac, owner of Jenny Wren Art Gallery on North Main Street, stated she is concerned that closing the bridge entirely would hurt her business financially. She stated the City and businesses should work together to lessen the impact on businesses. She is also concerned about the safety issues.

Board members and Mr. Willis discussed the load bearing on the temporary bridge, signalized traffic lights, delays, safety factors, incentive for contractors to get the work done, putting off construction for a year, the time frame and funding for the project, and other issues and items.

Mr. Joy and Mr. Willis discussed getting more information for the Board concerning the time frame and funding.

Ms. Desjardins stated after the Board gets this information and has a chance to look everything over she will invite the public to come back and speak on this project.

John Scruton, City Manager, asked, because it cost money, if the engineers needed to come back for another public hearing, or is it more the overview that is being looked at.

Ms. Desjardins stated there would be no need for the engineers to come back; it is just the overview that would be looked at, and the Board just needs more information. If the Board has any technical questions they would forward them to Mr. Willis and he could seek the information from them.

This was continued to the November 17, 2008 workshop meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Madeleine Carter, Secretary

(These minutes were transcribed from notes)