

MINUTES OF THE  
HVCEO  
MEETING OF MARCH 16, 2001  
AT BROOKFIELD, CT TOWN HALL

**MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES**

Bethel.....Absent  
Bridgewater.....Absent  
Brookfield.....First Selectman Martin Foncello, Secretary-Treasurer  
Danbury.....Absent  
New Fairfield.....First Selectman Patricia Gay, Chairman  
New Milford.....Absent  
Newtown.....First Selectman Herbert Rosenthal, Vice Chairman  
Redding.....First Selectman Natalie Ketcham  
Ridgefield.....Alternate Peter Yanity  
Sherman.....First Selectman Donna Tuck

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Nelson "Oz" Griebel of the Transportation Strategy Board, Richard Martinez of Conn DOT, John Morrisroe of the Route 7 Expressway advocacy group CER7 and Larry Hoyt of Brookfield. Also, Eric Bergstraesser, Richard Schreiner and Alan Hachey of the Housatonic Area Regional Transit District, Holly Burbank and another staff person from Metropool, Inc., Cheryl Reedy of Congressman Maloney's Office, and Kathryn Faraci of Conn DOT.

Also Tourism Commission member Mae Schmidle of Newtown, Catherine Brashich of the Housatonic Valley Tourism Commission, Eric Hampton of the Waterbury DECD office, Martin Schneider of the News Times, Scott Benjamin of the Brookfield Journal, Attorney Catherine Thompson, James Bellano and Peg Daley of the Housatonic Valley Economic Development Partnership, Camille Acquanita, David Hannon and Jonathan Chew of the HVCEO staff.

**CALL TO ORDER AND PUBLIC COMMENT**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Patricia Gay at 12:35 P.M. Public comment was offered from John Morrisroe of the Route 7 Expressway advocacy group CER7, who also distributed a letter from the Norwalk Chamber of Commerce supporting Expressway construction.

**MINUTES FROM MEETING OF 2/16/2001**

On a motion made by Martin Foncello and seconded by Herbert Rosenthal, the minutes of the HVCEO meeting of 2/16/2001 were unanimously approved.

**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR 2/2001**

On a motion made by Donna Tuck and seconded by Herbert Rosenthal, the financial statement for 2/2001 was unanimously approved.

**UPDATE ON ROUTE 7 AND I-84 IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS**

Remarks were then made by Richard Martinez, Bureau Chief, Conn DOT Policy and Planning, concerning the status of large transportation projects in the Region, as follows:

**1) Route 7 widening in New Milford from Bridge Street south to Lanesville Road.**

Concerning the additional intersection leg proposed to be opened at the intersection of Routes 7 and 67, the Conn DOT hearing of last evening indicated broad support for its inclusion, and thus the Department will include this new component. This inclusion will not cause a major slowdown in the progress of this project.

This segment, north of the intersection of Route 7 with Lanesville Road to Bridge Street, will see design completed later this year. Advertising for construction will be in 10/2001 or 11/2001, with construction probably starting in the Spring of 2002. Dollars for construction are programmed, Mr. Martinez said.

**2) Route 7 widening in New Milford from Lanesville Road south to Brookfield Bypass.**

From the intersection with Lanesville Road south, the schedule is one year behind the adjacent section to the north. Here the construction will start in the Summer 2003. Unlike the northern section, rights of way have not yet been acquired for this segment to approximately the Brookfield Town Line. As with the northern section dollars for construction are securely programmed.

**3) Route 7 Expressway extension as bypass in Brookfield.**

As for the recent hang up with the feds, we have now gotten thru most of that process, Mr. Martinez said. It is agreed with the feds that the state has the option of building route Alternatives 3 or 4, not just 3 as the feds proposed in mid-2000. The state is fully committed to Alternative 4, on new location and going through a portion of the quarry.

One issue remaining involves impact to a wetland and wildlife moving into that wetland. A proposed field review on this issue of February was delayed due to snow, now coming later in March, with federal and state resource agencies to review issues related to the wildlife movement. A Conn DOT consultant has recently been setting traps and monitoring these wildlife movements.

An additional issue that may require discussion with federal agencies is the relationship of the proposed roadway with Mountain Road, due to other wetland concerns. This could raise costs an additional six to eight million or so. The wetland review process will require about six weeks of data collection, with decisions in three months.

Overall design is continuing as the remaining discussions are being held, but no right of way activities for the entire project will be started until the remaining questions are resolved.

Overall design completion is scheduled for the Fall of 2002, advertising for construction in the Fall or early Winter of 2002 and 2003, with construction then starting later in 2003.

Dollars are still somewhat of an issue with this large project, with Congressman Maloney's obtaining an additional \$25 million a definite help. Total cost is near \$80 million, right of way costs themselves in the range of \$20-\$30 million depending upon impacts to the quarry, then \$50 to \$55 million for construction alone.

**4) Route 7 widening from Ridgefield to Danbury.**

Design and rights of way acquisition are both nearly complete, will completed design anticipated in 5/2001, followed by advertising in July or August of this year. Construction will then be starting probably this Fall. There may be a possible slow down with one DEP permit still needed.

**5) I-84 \$11 million short range improvement program.**

With the major study finished, short, mid and long term improvements and their costs have been identified. Conn DOT was fortunate in getting \$3.5 million included in the Transportation Strategy Board initiative for acceleration and deceleration ramp improvements and minor safety upgrades.

Advertising for a consultant to undertake the preliminary engineering for this work has started. These improvements due to their nature can be constructed relatively quickly. Design and

construction will take about four years, he said.

**6) I-84 \$250 million long range improvements.**

As Conn DOT is undertaking an additional I-84 study from Waterbury to the Housatonic River, and as there will be some similarities, normally the feds require an environmental impact statement process for the entire roadway length involved, he said.

But, that Conn DOT is having discussions with the feds to seek permission for a phased analysis, allowing the Housatonic Valley section of the corridor to move faster. The key is not to undertake the environmental work too early, as federal rules require updating of EIS materials if the improvement is not built in 5 years, and no funds have been assigned to I-84. Best option is a couple of years for the EIS process.

As for what the Conn DOT staff had recommended at the end of the I-84 Study, an \$11 million package of Danbury and Newtown improvements, Mr. Martinez saw this as the next step after the \$3.5 million. Herb Rosenthal commented that the public does not recognize the slow speed of the development of these investments.

Chairman Gay then stated the Region's and the Council's appreciation to Mr. Martinez for his years of effort on behalf of transportation improvements in this Region, and also wished him the best with his impending retirement.

**PROPOSAL FOR A CT TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY BOARD:**

A presentation was then made by Transportation Strategy Board Chair Oz Griebel on the proposal. The goal is a better projection of project value and costs, also ways to raise the additional funds needed. This process and intelligent "strategy" will be needed for public support, he said.

Interregional cooperation will be needed, as the macro issues for the state must be focused on by this new board. Five Transportation Investment Areas (TIA) will be composed of groups of planning regions.

It was commented that HVCEO is concerned about the extent to which HVCEO and its concerns will be represented on the TIA and Strategy Board, also funding for the planning work involved. Mr. Griebel was then thanked for his comments.

**DEFENDING THE BOUNDARY OF THE HOUSATONIC VALLEY TOURISM COMMISSION**

Catherine Brashich, Executive Director of the HVTC, then addressed HVCEO members on this subject. She started with an overview of recent HVTC activities. A draft letter to legislators was approved asking for their defeat of Bill 1302, which would merge Greater Danbury with Greater Waterbury and other areas. Former State Representative Mae Schmidle, an HVTC board member, also spoke to this issue.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL REVIEW OF NEGOTIATIONS AND STRATEGY WITH UNION BARGAINING UNITS**

Attorney Catherine Thompson was then introduced. As her remarks were on the topic of municipal collective bargaining strategies, she advised the HVCEO to move into executive session, as authorized by CT Freedom of Information statutes for this topic. A motion was then made by Natalie Ketcham to this effect, seconded by Marty Foncello, all aye. There were no votes taken during the executive session.