

MINUTES
STATE-CAPITAL-REGION PLANNING COMMISSION
March 20, 2015

Attendees: Michael Connor (Director, NH Dept. of Administrative Services), Nancy Larson City Planner, Matt Walsh City of Concord, Ed Roberge City Engineer, Tom Aspell, City Manager, Carlos Baia, Deputy City Manager – Development, Brian Lebrun Deputy City Manager – Finance, Meredith Hatfield NH Office of Energy and Planning (NHOEP), Bill Watson NHDOT, Don Lyford NHDOT, Mark Ciborowski.

The meeting came to order at 8:30 A.M.

1. Introductions

Tom Aspell, City Manager, welcomed those in attendance and attendees briefly introduced themselves.

2. Approval of Previous Minutes

Minutes of June 21, 2013 were adopted as presented.

3. NHDOT Funding Issues & City Projects: Bill Watson discussed the current fiscal pressures which the NHDOT is facing. Discussion regarding the current State budget process and the \$88 million cut also occurred. Mr. Watson indicated that, despite the State's fiscal situation, Concord's federally funded projects should be able to proceed on, or close to, schedule provided that the US Congress passes required budgetary legislation for program.

4. NHDOT Stickney Avenue Update: Don Lyford reported that the State is in the process of securing permits to demolish 3 – 4 small structures at the northerly end of the former Highway Department property on Stickney Avenue in order to construct a new parking lot to support park and ride operations, as well as the Stickney Avenue bus station. The new lot will have capacity for approximately 250 vehicles, and will be designed to be temporary in nature (i.e. 10 year useful life) due to the impending future widening of I-93 through Concord and the anticipation that the widening project will affect the proposed parking lot.

5. NHDOT Properties at Storrs Street / Sexton Ave: Matt Walsh provided a brief update concerning the sale of City property to the Gloria A. Alosa Revocable Trust (GAART) on Sexton Avenue, as well as the Buyer's interest in State property located at the corner of Storrs and Sexton Avenue. GAART is interested in the State property in order to package it with their holdings and the City property as a redevelopment opportunity which it plans to market to prospective buyers / developers. The NHDOT representatives advised that the City contact Phil Miles to discuss potential divestiture of the property.

6. Tsunis Property & Storrs Street North Ext: Matt Walsh reported that the City had acquired the former Tsunis property last fall with the goal of using the property as right-of-way to extend Storrs Street north to Horseshoe Pond. He provided preliminary details for layout of the potential street. It was noted that cooperation from NHDOT will be required for railroad realignments, at grade crossings, and transfer of escheated rights to the City. The State reiterated their request that the City attempt to work with Pan Am to formalize current practice concerning use of Pan Am sidings by the Southern NH Railroad for their freight operations.

7. **Parking Study Update:** Matt Walsh provided a brief update about the City's Parking Strategic Plan. He noted that the plan recommends the City and State work together to create a valet program to serve the Legislature. Discussion about the current State Shuttle program ensued. Mike Connor noted that the State currently contracts with Easter Seals of NH for their shuttle service. The shuttle generally serves state employees from January through June to ferry them between the state house and a parking lot on Stickney Avenue owned by the NHDOT; however a very small number of legislators also occasionally use the shuttle. During July through December, those employees would normally park in the Legislative Garage over Storrs Street.

The shuttle only runs from 6:30AM – 8:45AM and 3:30PM – 5:30PM, Monday – Friday during the 6 month season. The annual cost is \$35,000. Easter Seals provides the bus and driver.

8. **Women's Prison:** Mike Connor provided a brief overview and provided a history of the project. He discussed recent newspaper articles regarding the budgetary overages, and noted that the Governor's budget includes supplemental funding for the project. He also noted that the Design Team is redesigning portions of the project to help reduce cost. If funding is approved, the project will be approximately 1 year behind schedule.
9. **Downtown Complete Streets Project:** Ed Roberge provided a brief update about the project. Construction is set to begin on March 23, 2015. Major construction is set to commence around mid-April.
10. **Concord Steam Update:** Carlos Baia provided a brief update concerning the Concord Steam Project. It was reported that with the prospect of a new steam plant and reduced steam rates now defunct, the City and State will be looking to convert their properties to natural gas. The State represents approximately 40% of Concord Steam's book of business, with the City at approximately 5-6%.

Mike Connor reported that the State is in the middle of an RFP process to select a vendor to implement a comprehensive energy and utility efficiency project for all state properties on Concord Steam. The conversion to natural gas is expected to save the State more than \$1 million in year one.

City officials noted they too are looking to convert their facilities to natural gas. While the project could cost approximately \$600,000, the estimated payback on the investment will be approximately 4 - 5 years.

State and City officials noted that Concord Steam will likely go out of business within the next few years. It was also noted that the PUC was becoming involved given this potential.

Mark Ciborowski noted that the likely closure of Concord Steam will have impacts on private property owners. City officials noted that they have worked with the natural gas company as part of the Complete Streets Project to ensure that gas is available to private buildings in the project area.

Discussion of potential strategies to convert buildings also occurred. Mike Connor noted that steam distribution systems in buildings can be maintained with new gas fired boiler technologies. He added that the State would likely use such technologies in most of their buildings.

11. Other Business: Mike Connor provided an update about the project to re-gild the State House Dome. He noted that previously unknown structural issues which prevented scaffolding to be erected on the State House Roof. He noted that structural retrofits to the roof will be completed this year, with the re-gilding process to occur during the summer of 2016.

Having no other business, the meeting adjourned at 9:20AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Matthew R. Walsh
Director of Redevelopment, Downtown Services, and Assistant for Special Projects
City of Concord