

DRAFT – pending approval

Meeting of: Public Works Committee (PWC) of the Darien Representative Town Meeting
Meeting type: Special Meeting
Date & time: Tuesday, September 15, 2020, 7:30pm
Location: Online videoconference call
Members attending: Monica McNally (chair), Frank Adelman, Elizabeth Bacon, Werner Domittner, Terry Duffy, Eric Golus, Patrick Keane, Lindsay Kelly, Rolf Obin, Cecil Wade (10)
Members absent: Sarah Haverstick, Richard Poli (2)
Others attending: Ed Gentile, Public Works Director, and Jeremy Ginsberg, Planning & Zoning Director
Media / public access: No media or members of the public attended.
The meeting was recorded on Vimeo for channel 79. Link: <https://vimeo.com/458403968>

Published Agenda: http://www.darienct.gov/filestorage/28565/29473/34575/35072/35074/62360/RTM_PW_Agenda_09-15-20.pdf

1. Call to Order
2. Discuss and vote on Ox Ridge Drainage Easement
3. Discuss and vote on lease of parking area to MNR near Noroton Heights train station
4. Other business
5. Approval of May 27, 2020 meeting minutes
6. Adjournment

Call to order via videoconference at 7:41 pm.

Agenda Item 2: Ox Ridge drainage easement:

Key documents: (available online in “Backup” folder for committee meeting date)

- Aug. 25 memo from Seth Morton to Kate Buch summarizing key issues
- Ox Ridge Drainage Easement map
- Proposed Ox Ridge Easement to Drain document
- Proposed RTM Resolution authorizing Easement to Drain

Jeremy Ginsberg Planning & Zoning Director, presented to the Committee. The issue is management of storm water that drains from Mansfield Ave. (a State Road) onto the Ox Ridge school property. Note that storm water has been flowing in this way for at least 50 years, so this proposal simply formalizes the current state of affairs while allowing for improvements on the Ox Ridge School property.

The Ox Ridge School Building Committee has been working through its planning and permitting process. The project requires a permit from the CT Office of the State Traffic Administration (OSTA), both due to the size of the project and to add an additional drain catchbasin on Mansfield Ave. OSTA is requiring a formal easement for the storm water runoff in order to grant the required permit.

Besides adding a catchbasin on Mansfield Ave., the project: 1) maintains surface drains along the driveway in the same spots as at present (the location of the driveway would be largely unchanged even under the new school configuration), 2) installs new drainage pipes to better manage storm water, and 3) includes new underground CULTEC storm water management systems. Overall the storm water management on site should be improved, with no expectation of any greater flows than at present.

Committee members discussed the details of the plan, the location of drains and other details of the plan. Cecil Wade moved to approve the proposal and to recommend the proposed resolution to the full RTM. Rolf Obin seconded. Motion passed unanimously (10-0).

Agenda Item 3: lease of parking lot space at Noroton Heights train station to Metro-North:

Key documents: (available online in "Backup" folder for committee meeting date)

- Aug. 25 memo from Seth Morton to Kate Buch summarizing key issues
- Aug. 13, 2020 Proposed Term Sheet sent from John Wayne Fox to MNRR
- Sep. 14, 2020 email from Ms. McNally to the PW Committee with Vimeo link of P&Z Commission (link: <https://vimeo.com/456215460> ; key segment is from timestamp 00:01:57 through 00:23:53)

Monica McNally introduced the topic and Ed Gentile elaborated. Metro North Railroad is in need of additional temporary space in the region. This will be for personnel (some construction, some administrative) who are currently housed in their major office on Viaduct Rd. in Springdale, Stamford. The need for more space arises principally due to COVID social distancing requirements.

MNRR wants approx. 30,000 sq. ft. to house temporary office construction trailers, ~15 work trucks, 4 container boxes, and parking for MNRR staff. Requested term is 2 years. (See: Proposed Term Sheet.) They are requesting this space to be carved out of the existing commuter parking lot: North of the RR tracks, South of Heights Rd., and just East of the existing station on the NY-bound side. The requested space would occupy approx. 69 parking spaces out of the total of 215 parking spots in that parking lot.

It was noted that Darien leases the parking lot from the State of CT, so this would be a partial sub-lease of this space to MNRR. However, we do not have a current lease document; we are operating under the terms of the prior lease which expired in 2012. Notably, MNRR has not considered commercial options for this need; they are only considering municipal/ governmental sites where MNRR already has a footprint.

The Committee discussed: MNRR's proposed hours of operation (currently 7am – 3pm, with maximum traffic in the windows from 6:30-7:30am and 2:30-3:30pm), our rights in the absence of a current lease, the current needs (low) and future needs (unknown) of the commuting population both under COVID and (hopefully) post-COVID, the advisability of relinquishing so many spaces, the risk that the timeline of this project may not match the timeline of a rebound in commuting behavior, the risk that MNRR may want to retain the space beyond the 2-year term, and the impact on the neighborhood including the joint impact with the Federal Realty construction project.

Patrick Keane moved to table consideration of this item until such time as we have an actual lease document to consider. Frank Adelman seconded. Motion passed unanimously (10-0).

Agenda Item 4: Other business: None permissible since this is a Special Meeting.

Committee members noted that the next RTM meeting is Mon. Sep. 21, and the next PW Committee meeting is scheduled for Tue. Oct. 6.

Agenda item 5: Approval of May 27, 2020 minutes:

Committee briefly discussed the votes taken at the May 27 meeting.

Lindsay Kelly moved to approve minutes, seconded by Patrick Keane. Motion passed unanimously (10-0).

Agenda item 6: Adjournment: at 8:40pm

Respectfully submitted,
Frank Adelman, Clerk
September 20, 2020