

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
WESTCHESTER COUNTY PLANNING BOARD**

Cassella Conference Room  
Michaelian Office Building  
White Plains, New York  
Tuesday, March 3, 2009

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Cheryl Winter Lewy, Chair (Village)  
Dwight Douglas, Vice Chair (City)  
Marcus Griffith (City)  
David Menken (Town)  
Clinton Smith (Town)  
Neil Sullivan (City)  
Bernard Thombs (Town)  
Ralph Butler, Commissioner, Department of Public Works  
Joseph Stout, Commissioner, Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation  
Michael Coley for Thomas Lauro, Commissioner, Department of Environmental Facilities

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Jerry Mulligan, Commissioner  
Ed Buroughs, Deputy Commissioner  
Robert Doscher, Principal Planner  
Bill Brady, Associate Planner  
Susan Darling, Associate Environmental Planner  
Chris Gomez, Associate Planner  
Lukas Herbert, Associate Planner  
Meghan Miller, Planner  
Brian Connolly, Assistant Planner  
Peter Feroe, Intern  
Michael Vernon, Intern  
Christina Anderson, Environmental Planner

**GUESTS:**

Lawrence Salley, Commissioner, Department of Transportation  
Naomi Klein, Department of Transportation  
Andrew Neuman, Senior Assistant to the County Executive  
Barbara Dodds, Board of Legislators  
Charles Khoury, PhD, Superintendent of the Ardsley School District  
Joanne Sold, Legislator Abinanti's Office  
Srikanth Gorugantula, Water Resources Specialist, HDR, Inc.  
David Slotnick, NYU student

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I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. by the Chair, Cheryl Winter Lewy.

II. Meeting Dates and Announcements

The next Planning Board meetings are:

- Tuesday, April 7, 8 a.m.
- Tuesday, May 5, 8 a.m.
- Tuesday, June 2, 8 a.m.

III. Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of February 3, 2009 were adopted on a motion by on a motion of Mr. Douglas, seconded by Mr. Menken and approved by the Board.

IV. Referrals

Ratification of Actions Taken by Staff in Response to Planning and Zoning Actions Referred to the County Planning Board

- January 16, 2009 through February 15, 2009

A motion to accept the referrals report was made by Mr. Douglas, seconded by Mr. Thombs and approved by the Board. Mr. Smith noted his abstention from the Briarcliff Manor section of the referrals reports.

V. Matters for Board Action

A. Planning Board Report on Westchester Community College 2009/2010 Capital Budget Request

Ms. Lewy noted that WCC President Dr. John Hankin and his staff made a presentation on the college's capital budget program at the February Planning Board meeting. She asked if any one had any follow-up questions. No one did.

A motion to adopt the Planning Board report supporting the 2009/2010 capital budget request was made by Mr. Sullivan, seconded by Mr. Smith and approved by the Board.

B. RARD1 Ardsley Infrastructure Recreational Improvements – 2009 Capital Budget Amendment

Ms. Lewy noted that the draft resolution has been revised to incorporate comments made by Board members at the February meeting and after circulation of revised documentation.

A motion to adopt a resolution approving the Planning Board report supporting the 2009 capital budget amendment was made by Mr. Stout, seconded by Mr. Sullivan and approved by the Board.

C. RKL01 Tarrytown Lighthouse Restoration – 2009 Capital Budget Amendment

Ms. Lewy noted that the draft resolution has been revised since the February meeting to reflect the source of non-county funds to be combined with county funds for this project.

A motion to adopt a resolution approving the Planning Board report supporting the 2009 capital budget amendment was made by Mr. Douglas, seconded by Mr. Smith and approved by the Board.

D. BPL26 Flood Mitigation – 2009 Capital Budget Amendment

Ms. Lewy noted that the projects proposed for funding have been screened and recommended by the County Executive's Flood Action Task Force.

A motion to adopt a resolution approving the Planning Board report supporting the 2009 capital budget amendment was made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Sullivan and approved by the Board.

E. RB147 The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 – 2009 Capital Budget Amendment

Mr. Brady presented one power point slide with sample images of four infrastructure projects proposed along the Bronx River Parkway: street light poles designed to replicate the original style poles at several intersections; new equipment within existing traffic signal boxes at several intersections; installation of sensors to better monitor traffic flow; and replacement of rustic corten steel guide rails with galvanized steel guide rails. Mr. Smith asked if a better appearing guide rail could be used as the traditional guide rail is not popular. Commissioner Stout agreed that there is a concern of what guide rail on the Parkway looks like. Commissioner Butler said that options would be explored but that the currently in place "attractive, rust appearing" guide rail needed to be replaced as may become unsafe.

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Commissioner Butler explained that these projects are being advanced in the capital budget in anticipation of receipt of federal stimulus funds. He noted that they are each “shovel-ready” as required by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. He also said that other projects are being identified for advancement under the same program and that quick action will be needed by the county to make such projects eligible. One promising category of projects, he said, would be those that further energy efficiency such as emission controls on diesels and energy and facility audits,. He stated that the US Department of Energy is still writing the regulations.

Ms. Lewy asked if the potential stimulus projects have been presented previously to the Board. Mr. Butler answered that in most cases they have been included in earlier presentations and that they have not advanced due to limitations on county funding. He added that a few projects may be in the operating budget. Mr. Smith asked if the funding would be considered grant funds with no county share. Mr. Butler responded that some projects will have to include a county share and therefore require Planning Board action.

A motion to adopt a resolution approving the Planning Board report on four infrastructure projects proposed along the Bronx River Parkway as a 2009 capital budget amendment was made by Mr. Douglas, seconded by Mr. Thombs and approved by the Board.

Mrs. Lewy suggested that the Board adopt another resolution that would approve a favorable Planning Board report on capital projects considered for funding through the federal stimulus funding programs when such projects have been previously considered, reviewed and discussed by the Planning Board. She said that such action would allow the county to proceed expeditiously to process the paperwork to obtain federal funding.

A motion to adopt a resolution approving Planning Board reports supporting 2009 capital budget amendments for previously reviewed capital projects so as to provide for federal stimulus funding was made by Mr. Douglas, seconded by Mr. Smith and approved by the Board.

VI. Matters for Board Discussion

A. Westchester 2025 Planning Initiatives

- Meetings with Greenburgh, Mount Pleasant, Port Chester

Ms. Lewy reported on Westchester 2025 meetings held in Greenburgh, Mount Pleasant and Port Chester and commented on the individual needs of each community. She stated that the Port Chester session focused on the status of the village’s draft master plan and the details of transit planning as part of the TBZ/I-287 Environmental Review. She said that Planning Department staff

would provide the village with preliminary comments on the draft plan. She also said that the small group of village officials seemed excited about the department's work on visioning new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stations and would like to continue the discussion.

She stated that Mount Pleasant has much work ahead as a group of residents is preparing to present the case for initiating a comprehensive plan update to the Town Board. She said the large number of attendees at the evening community meeting at which she and the staff gave presentations seemed very interested in the 2025 resources that are available.

She said that the meeting in Greenburgh focused more directly on transit planning in the I-287 corridor and on the need to include this subject and station planning in the town's comprehensive plan update now underway. Staff gave a presentation on bus rapid transit. Ms. Lewy concluded that by using data available in Westchester 2025, communities can use existing resources towards making decisions and planning rather than collecting more information on their own.

- RFP Preliminary Results

Mr. Brady stated that the deadline for consultants to respond to the RFP for web development had just passed. He received seven responses and soon staff will meet with IT staff to conduct an initial review and develop a rating sheet. The focus will first be on the technical aspects of each response. He suggested that one or more Board members serve on the interview committee. Ms. Lewy suggested interviewing three consultants in order to have a range of experience to help evaluate the proposals.

B. Transportation Planning Initiatives

- Bus Rapid Transit Overview

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Peter Feroe described the proposal for establishing Bus Rapid Transit across the entire I-287 corridor. The BRT would intersect five north-south rail lines, increase mobility and travel options and link major nodes of employment. The BRT route is in the conceptual stage and will be presented in the Tier I Transit Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 draft EIS, which is to be completed by the end of 2009 by the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 study team. Later studies will refine the route and station locations.

Mr. Feroe defined BRT as a service that provides fast, reliable transit service that does not operate in general traffic. He reiterated that while the study team has identified BRT as the preferred transit alternative in Westchester County, there are still many decisions to be made, such as the type of running way, exact

route, station locations, service plan and what organization will operate the new system. Mr. Feroe presented existing examples of running ways, stations and vehicles, used both domestically and internationally, while pointing out their unique features and advantages.

Mr. Feroe concluded that without separation from traffic, the BRT would not hold much value for Westchester County. He noted that to be successful, there must be an integration of local land use planning and regulation and transit system planning. He ended with conceptual examples, prepared by department staff, of how a BRT station could be incorporated in the Elmsford east area.

- Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Study

Mr. Salley stated that two years ago, the county DOT initiated a study on the feasibility of developing BRT along the Central Avenue corridor. He said that Naomi Klein has directed a consulting team to develop recommendations. Last year, they received a grant from the state DOT to begin implementation of the BRT. He said that the county has experienced good cooperation and has described the experience as an interesting exercise in governmental collaboration with the state and various municipalities.

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Ms. Klein gave a summary of the Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Study along Central Avenue. The 14.4 mile long corridor serves Westchester County between White Plains and Yonkers and links Westchester County to New York City. The corridor includes many major destinations. Ms. Klein described the existing bus routes and the challenges they face such as the many traffic signals and merging. She noted that ridership on Routes 20 and 21 increased by 25% with the acceptance of MetroCard, causing DOT to put out additional service. She said that service on Central Avenue generates 10% of the entire system ridership. However, incomplete or narrow sidewalks and wide crossings are challenging for pedestrians.

Ms. Klein outlined the Central Avenue BRT objectives such as reducing travel times, attracting new riders, improving mobility, creating an integrated and consumer friendly transit service and improving operating efficiency. She summarized an analysis of the existing conditions and travel times. She also described the list of proposed BRT concepts and operation solutions for Central Avenue. Ms. Klein focused on the idea of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) for Central Avenue and suggested that a full BRT treatment will have the greatest presence and most potential to create land use changes. She used examples of TOD solutions at the former Barnes & Noble site and former Yonkers Avenue Parking Garage. She concluded that the final report will be completed in spring 2009 and that implementation is already in progress.

Mr. Thombs asked about the projected ridership. Ms. Klein said it is typical of such systems to attract more choice riders with the increase consisting of 1/3 riders who ride more often, 1/3 riders diverted from other routes and 1/3 new riders. Mr. Smith asked if the BRT service would extend to the White Plains TransCenter and Ms. Klein replied that it would. Mr. Mencken asked if there was a general rule about how far people would walk to a bus station; Ms. Klein replied that it is assumed at least 1/4 mile.

Mr. Sullivan asked where people were traveling to if they were using public transportation along the Central Corridor. Ms. Klein responded that a more targeted survey would be necessary to answer that question as a percentage, but that the majority of commuters are from the southern areas, such as the Bronx and Yonkers, and that the raceway and the cross county are both heavy with riders. Mr. Sullivan asked if the BRT would affect the type of service created. Ms. Klein responded that service would grow as they expect more riders from the north to use it.

Mr. Thombs asked if there were any green savings behind the BRT. Ms. Klein responded that there would be more riders and the buses would run on clean diesel fuel. Mr. Feroe added that there is huge green savings potential because as areas become more transit-oriented developed, people will live in more concentrated transportation hubs, thus minimizing the driving culture.

Mr. Smith asked why the average Saturday volumes of traffic at Fort Hill Road were more than the average weekday comparison. Ms. Klein responded that there could have been an anomaly that day.

Mr. Smith asked for more ways to convince people to not use their cars. He pointed out that in order to sell the BRT, one must start with convincing the Planning Board. Mr. Thombs added that that is the reason he asked about the green issue. Ms. Klein pointed out that as a result of the recent rise in gas prices, for example, people were taking the bus more often. Mr. Smith recommended making a consumer model to make it easier for people to know their transportation options. He said the question should be, how to get the bus to me.

Ms. Klein pointed out that there are different methods of branding, and suggested differentiating a logo for the BRT. She explained that not everyone will ride the bus, but that targeting certain audiences, such as the youth, may be practical.

Ms. Lewy asked how to plan for the White Plains hub. She questioned what the planning process looks like, and questioned how to marshal the government agencies that meet to discuss such projects. She suggested getting the agencies together and having a productive session with White Plains and Greenburgh.

Ms. Klein pointed out that people want assurance that if they miss a bus, there is another one on its way and they know when that time is. Ms. Lewy asked if it is possible to go express from hub to hub. Ms. Klein said it is something to think about. Ms. Lewy suggested that IT should meet early on to build this type of capacity.

Mr. Smith stated that there needs to be more options than bicycles, jitneys and sidewalks. Mr. Feroe suggested the benefits of a public education campaign.

Ms. Lewy suggested using the referral letters as means by which to recommend transportation solutions.

In summation, the Board put forward several ideas for consideration:

- Continue work/implementation of BRT on Central Avenue and promotion of transit oriented development.
  - Concentrate on services which could be provided to young people under the driving age of 16 years old.
  - Provide BeeLine bus information on routes and schedules in a cell phone compatible format and advertise that option on buses and in County publications.
  - Consider on-demand, subscription and deviated bus routes.
  - Consider a hub model with express buses leaving the hub for major destinations like WCC or hospitals.
  - Consider express buses between Westchester's cities.
  - Work to enhance the experience of connecting with the New York City subway – can the streetscape between the Yonkers line and the subway station be enhanced with street furniture, landscaping or painting parts of the elevated subway.
  - Provide WIFI on buses.
  - Enhance regional coordination of all transit services.
- NYU Student Capstone Project – Bee-Line Study

Mr. Slotnick gave a presentation using PowerPoint on the examination of the Westchester County Bee-Line bus transit system that he and two other NYU graduate students had undertaken in spring 2008. He outlined current challenges experienced in the county, such as high automobile ownership, differing land use and development types as well as limitations imposed by home rule.

Mr. Slotnick and his team analyzed existing conditions, conducted literature reviews, made a comparative review of BRT systems and provided recommendations. The literature reviews included information on ridership growth strategies, growth strategies for bus transit, transit attitudes and perceptions, rider and non-rider concerns, investment in technologies and bus

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stop locations and design. Recommendations included governance revisions, service and planning, partnerships and coordination and marketing and branding.

C. “Planning Together” Presentation at WMPF Training Institute

Ms. Lewy confirmed that the WMPF “Planning Together” presentation is on March 16. Mr. Buroughs stated that the presentation is not finalized, but that it will be an educational program focused on transit and the need to plan. Ms. Lewy asked if the meeting would involve a panel discussion. Mr. Buroughs explained that he would present a scenario and a panel would respond followed by a staff member presentation on the subject. He said he would ask the panelists how their community would deal with each of the issues. He suggested that this will enable planning and zoning board members to understand why comprehensive planning is beneficial to them in the day-today operations of the boards. Ms. Lewy liked the idea. Mr. Buroughs added that he is looking for volunteers fro the panel.

VII. Other Business

None

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.