

Mayor's Workshop

Benefits of the Proposed Broad Street Parkway

Tuesday, April 12, 2008, 5:00 pm

Minutes

In attendance: D. Lozeau, S. Bolton, B. McCarthy, D. Deane, F. Teeboom, L. Wilshire, M. Cookson, R. LaRose, M. Tamposi, M. Plamondon, M. Tabacsko, P Chasse, Jr., R. Flynn, J. Cox, S. Williams, S. Dookran, D. Zizzi

As the meeting was called to order by the mayor, Steve Bolton, President of the Board of Aldermen, inquired if someone was capturing the attendance from the Board of Alderman and the minutes of the meeting, Mayor Lozeau answered that she had, she was taking notes. She said that they will be available as required, and that she had made the required public posting of the meeting.

Before asking all to identify him/herself, Mayor Lozeau added that she had invited members from the Board of Public Works; however, none were able to attend. She also thought it would be helpful to have the City Engineer, Steve Dookran, and Steve Williams from NRPC attend so that as questions came up, they would be able to discuss any questions.

Mayor Lozeau opened the meeting by mentioning that tonight's purpose was not to debate whether or not we should build the Broad Street Parkway. The purpose of this session was to discuss what is involved in an economic feasibility analysis of this type... what would the steps be, how would this happen, and what would it look like?

Mayor Lozeau also introduced the concept of workshops and forums to give the Mayor and staff the opportunity to have an in-depth and in-formal discussion with the Board of Aldermen and/or members of the public on important and complex issues facing the city. Future sessions would likely include a look at the acquisition of the Pennichuck Water Company, for example, and the upcoming ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) for computerizing city functions. She then described the structure and process for tonight's workshop on the Broad Street Parkway. She then introduced Don Zizzi who is advising on the matters of economic and business development and the interim Economic Development Director until one is hired.

Mr. Zizzi began his presentation (see attached) by reviewing the purpose of this workshop. To describe methods used in benefits analyses and to discuss the inputs, assumptions, metrics and potential benefits. To perform a preliminary economic benefit assessment to help determine whether members of the Board of Aldermen have sufficient information to proceed on R-08-111; and to discuss if the city wants or needs to proceed on a comprehensive economic benefits analysis.

He mentioned that a benefit analysis forecasts and estimates all the public dividends and advantages of a project to the community. The benefits are computed and expressed in terms of dollars of a particular time. For a transportation improvement like the Broad Street Parkway, there is a variety of models available to assess a range of travel, economic and environmental benefits that would result from its construction. Travel benefits like reduced trip times, less congestion and improved access; economic benefits like improved freight movement and sales and workforce efficiencies; environmental benefits like improvement in air quality and reductions in greenhouse gasses.

He then reviewed the variety of cost-benefit models and approaches available today including the Economic Development Research Group's very good system called TREDIS (Transportation Economic

Development Impact System) particularly good for this type of project. In doing so, he emphasized that some benefits will be more difficult to quantify than others will. No matter the model used, the more complicated and detailed the benefit analysis, the more it will cost and the more time it will take, and the scope of the exercise also can be very broad and expansive...the only limiting factor is the client. No matter the approach taken, he said there has to be consensus on the inputs, assumptions, metrics and potential benefits on the part of the client.

Don then went through the exercise of quantifying a few of the various possible benefits of the project starting with the travel related benefits like reduced trip time, reduced traffic congestion, greater fuel economy, reduced vehicle maintenance costs, etc. The purpose was to show how an economist or consulting firm would do it. With the Broad Street Parkway in place, using a formula, the city could save over \$4 million per year in cumulative travel time lost and anywhere from \$1.2 to \$1.6 million per year in reduced fuel consumption.

He reviewed other potential benefits like development of the City's five Millyard parcels, emergency preparedness and improved response times, the Main Street Bridge and the impact on the Downtown business when the bridge is closed for repairs. As well as benefits like reduced medical expenditures from improved air quality, savings on the repavement of core city streets, increased assessments on Millyard area buildings, and the potential for redevelopment in the Pine / Central / West Hollis / west downtown areas.

He also went on to describe certain one-time savings like the Baldwin & Fairmont Street Bridges (\$3.7 m) and the Millyard smokestack (\$1 m) which would have to be addressed with city funds if the Broad Street Parkway is not built. He closed by saying that in his experience with his national economic development project at Northeastern University and his work as a senior fellow at UMass Center for Industrial Competitiveness, private industry rates communities by their willingness to invest in themselves. A national survey of over 9000 businesses on most important factors in investment decisions revealed that after workforce, the next two most important, were adequate infrastructure and a public environment conducive to business expansion.

Mayor Lozeau then opened up the workshop to questions from the aldermen.

Alderman Cookson described the SWOT analysis approach in his experience and asked if similar strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats assessment of the proposed Broad Street Parkway could be included in a benefits analysis. Mr. Zizzi responded that it could and most likely would.

Alderman Plamondon commented that some of the neighbors could contribute what they considered threats or impacts of the project.

Alderman Teeboom asked if there were an economic benefits assessment of projects like Rts 128, 495, or the Big Dig. Mr. Zizzi responded that he was not around prior to the construction of Rts 128, 495, but he is familiar with the work done by an organization of business, construction and civic leaders in Boston known as something like "A Better City." They were very concerned about the impact of the building phase of the project and did a very thorough assessment of its benefits to keep support for the project alive.

Alderman LaRose commented that the planners and builders of Rt 495 had the vision to build it with sufficient future capacity even though it was criticized for being too big and underutilized back then. He expressed his concern about how we may not be looking sufficiently into the future of Nashua as we seek to reduce the size and scope of the Broad Street Parkway.

Alderman McCarthy spoke of his own experience with Rt 495, which was empty when he first started using it, and Rt 3, is almost as congested at peak hours today and will attract even more drivers as the economy improves.

Alderman Teeboom asked Mr. Zizzi about the opportunity for redevelopment and job creation at the former Mohawk Tannery. Mr. Zizzi replied that access to that site directly depends on the construction of the

Broad Street Parkway with access through the former Fimble Door property. While it is a Brownfield Site with potential contamination issues, there have been expressions of interest in a mixed-use development, which could not happen without the Broad Street Parkway.

Alderman Dean then asked if we had made a mistake on Northeastern Boulevard to which the mayor asked for clarification. There was then discussion about that area as an “opportunity district” as identified by the city’s BIDA and the mix of development that has occurred there.

Alderman Teeboom asked Mr. Zizzi if he would recommend that the city pursue a comprehensive economic benefit analysis to which Mr. Zizzi replied that he would not.

The Mayor closed the meeting by reiterating its purpose. She said that Mr. Zizzi’s presentation demonstrated the complexity of such an undertaking, and it was her intent to share that information with members of the Board of Aldermen in a different kind of meeting. Her forums and workshops are not intended to replace the role and process of the Board of Aldermen and its committees, but to enhance the information flow with sessions of this type so everyone could have additional information on issues faced by the city. She said that she hoped that everyone attending found the workshop valuable and informative and she repeated that she looks forward to future public meetings like this. In this case, she felt it was a good opportunity for all of us, since we had an economics professor available to share the benefit of his experience with us.

Please note that these minutes are not verbatim and are meant for the sole purpose to provide the public with a sense of the meeting and discussion.