NEWINGTON TOWN PLAN AND ZONING COMMISSION
NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL
JOINT SPECIAL MEETING

January 4, 2022

Town Planning and Zoning Chairman Domenic Pane called the special meeting of the Newington Town Plan and Zoning Commission and the Newington Town Council to order at 7:00 p.m.

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. ROLL CALL AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES

Commissioners Present
Chairman Domenic Pane
Commissioner Anthony Claffey
Commissioner Michael Fox
Commissioner Bryan Haggerty
Commissioner Garrett Havens
Commissioner David Lenares
Commissioner Stephen Woods
Commissioner Hyman Braverman-A
Commissioner Thomas Gill-A

Councilors Present
Mayor Beth DelBuono
Councilor Sharon Braverman
Councilor Gail Budrejko
Councilor Michael Camillo
Councilor John Donahue
Councilor Tim Manke
Councilor Mitch Page
Councilor Kim Radda

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (For items not listed on the agenda, speakers limited to two minutes.)

Stew Droz, 74 Glenview Drive: I have a question about a petition discussed at the last meeting, specifically December 8th, petition 52-21, accessory use of commercial vehicles, basically the apart of the commercial vehicles at a residence, my question tonight, not seeing anything involving that on tonight’s agenda, since that was four weeks ago, it wasn’t mentioned when this was going to happen, and given that this has been four weeks, obviously there are some holidays in there, has it happened or when is it going to happen. What is the next step and when is it going to happen.

Chairman Pane: We’ll have Renata address your question after the rest of the public participation.

Terri Bjorgensen: I just came from a Democratic Committee meeting because I wanted to see where they were on the railroad station, so I have to tell you, in 2013 we were getting a railroad station. It was contingent upon what we were doing with the bus station. We managed to kill that, it was a democrat, I’m not going to mention here name, but she killed that proposal and Governor Molloy and Jim Reddicker and everybody walked away and said, Newington, no, you’re not going to get one. The bottom line is, we really need a train station, I sit on the Commuter Rail council, I represent the Hartford line, I’m working very closely with Ned Lamont,
I'm working with Commissioner Gillette, and we're starting to work with the Governor of Massachusetts. Our Governor has already talked to Biden a little bit about getting 8 billion dollars to take our rail line to Worcester and then to Boston. It will generate 80 billion dollars in economic development and this town needs it. Right now we do not have a plan for a rail station. They have done Enfield, they are doing Windsor Locks, we can get a rail station. I have been promised it by the Governor, the Department of Transportation people, but the bottom line is, the rail station needs to be on Cedar Street. We have three huge buildings there and Central Connecticut, there is a lot of land there, Central Connecticut is talking about expanding in that area, and I looked at Willard Street at the beginning but there is not enough land there. There are a lot of people who live there and are against it, but if we are going to get a rail station, I'm pretty sure right now, and I can't guarantee one hundred percent, it's going to be on Cedar Street if we do it. So if we move forward for Willard Street, I don't think we are getting a railroad station. Thank you very much.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: I know it is not the time to talk on what the subject of the meeting is for tonight, but I would just like to say I do hope that at some point in time the reason this meeting is being held is to get everybody on board as to where everybody stands and what has been proposed and what they might want to think about changing, but I have attended at least five meetings on the same subject and it seems to me that everybody time parties change the priorities change and I would hope that is there is going to be a decision made that there would be a public hearing of some sort before you go forward with anything to the State of Connecticut as to what the residents of Newington want. I really don't care what the Democratic Town Committee wants, I don't care what the Republican Town Committee wants, I want to hear what the residents of Newington want, and whether they want it on Cedar Street or whether they want it at Newington Junction. Thank you very much.

IV. REMARKS BY COMMISSIONERS/COUNCILORS

None

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion of the Future of the Newington Train Station Location

Renata Bertotti: My approaching this was honestly more trying to get to the bottom of seeking information on this, so just as an introduction to all of this, I started working in Newington in November of last year, and after I started, I started receiving a couple of inquiries here and there from a couple of residents, especially asking as to what is the update on the status of the train station? I never could give them an answer because I didn’t have one. I tried reaching the DOT but I always reached out to the wrong division or the wrong person, never obtained any meaningful information, ended up talking to a person who wasn’t around when any conversations actually happened in regards to Newington.

Recently, in November, CRCOG contacted me, telling me that they were employing a consultant that was going to do a TOD study on, and they were going to do it in each of eight
communicates in their region on the Hartford line, and Newington was one of those, so they asked me to give them a site, to select a site for them for the TOD study. Now also, after I first started working here, one of the first tasks that the Commission had approached me with was to look into a planning project for Newington Junction, and when I started looking at Newington Junction, while I never really did much of a planning study out there, due to Covid, that we couldn’t do a public outreach out there. It became apparent to me that that area was quite interesting as a TOD potential site or potential area for the TOD area. I went to the Commission, we discussed which site we could be looking at as a site for the TOD study for CRCOG, and essentially they agreed that CRCOG should look at the Newington Junction area. I also at the same time had several grant applications going on, one dealing with some historical grant applications, one having to deal with the trail extension for multi-use extension of the trail out to Newington Junction, so all kind of like jibe in that same area. So this TOD study seemed appropriate for this area. I met with the consultant and the CRCOG team out there, we looked at it, and then after we met out there and discussed that area, and they agreed that it was interesting to do an economic study out there. We also said they would look at other sites too, which we did and after that CRCOG held a meeting and at that the meeting there was a person from the DOT, and became at the meeting apparent to me that the DOT somehow was under the impression that Cedar Street site was more interesting to them. So I started collecting more information, I wasn’t sure why that was, I wasn’t aware that there was a study that the DOT made, I wasn’t even aware that there were zoning regulations that were written and adopted by the Planning Commission but was not put into the zoning regulations or posted on the town web site, so this was all kind of discovered after the fact.

As all of this was happening, I also received a phone call from the property owner who owns the property near the Cedar Street station who had asked me to give him some guidance as to, he was asking me how he should market his site. He has a large property that is in the vicinity of where the Cedar Street station will go. Depending on whether or not there will be a train station there, you know, he should, my advice to him will be different. If there will be a train station there, I will advise him to advertise his site for perhaps residential property or a certain type of mixed use commercial property. If there will be no train station there, my advice to him will probably be to look at a different kind of use, perhaps industrial/commercial type of property, so with all of that in mind, I talked to Keith and he said, how about we approach the town planning commission and the council and see if they would be willing to have a meeting and we can talk about all of this, and see if they can give guidance so they we can give the community guidance on how to better plan on all of this.

In all of that, there is also a section of the road, near the Cedar Street station that also at some point was considered for alignment, and that is included in our engineer’s grant for some funding for the road alignment and that also kind of subject to what happens in that area, whether we get a train station or not. There is a significant amount of planning and funds to be allocated depending on where we decide to put this train station, so I think we should kind of decide. We should have a conversation, we don’t have to decide tonight, but we should have a conversation formally, like Ms. Lyons indicated. Perhaps formalize this to some extent and get it to a point where there is some kind of formalized decision so it is clear as the staff changes, as the plan changes, that location won’t necessarily change.
I will also tell you that today I had a meeting with the person at DOT who actually did that presentation some years ago, and they have made findings, you know they estimated costs, so in Newington Junction, it costs less to build a train station, ten million dollars less that on Cedar Street, but Cedar Street, according to their study offers significantly higher level of economic development with is why state and DOT prefer that location which is why the town has preferred before, if that is what happened for that location itself. So he had told me that there is no funding that has been allocated for the Town of Newington and as a matter of fact, there is no funding that has been allocated for any town at this point except for Windsor Locks for any train station. He also told me that from the point where the funding is allocated to a town, to the point where construction actually takes place, it is about ten years. It's about five years to do the design and planning and about five years to go through the permitting. So, no matter what we decide on the location, we are looking about ten years down the road, so I think that is a good point of reference. That is how much I know, and that is what I wanted to share with you, and that is kind of why we called this meeting and I hope this results in a good conversation.

Chairman Pane: I'll open it up for questions from Councilors, Commission members?

Councilor Braverman: Has Central Connecticut University been in consultation with any of these plans, they abut everything we are talking about?

Renata Bertotti: I have not personally had any communication with CCSU. When we met with the consultants from CRCOG, one of the recommendations from that site visit was that somebody from CRCOG or somebody on the consultant site reach out to somebody in the real estate and planning at CCSU and see what plans they had for the eastern campus.

Commissioner Woods: I believe we actually do have a site picked, we have already picked the Cedar Street site, so my question is, in your communication with DOT because it appears early on there was a lot of interest in the Newington Junction site and that waned for whatever reason and moved to Cedar Street, and the town made a commitment, spent some money and was going down that road, and basically adopted the plan that if the train station was going to be put in, it would happen on Cedar Street. I think it is a wonderful thing that we get a train station, and I'm not so sure if I'm the one that knows if it should go on Willard Avenue or Cedar Street, but is DOT open to us now looking at either site, or are they still stuck on Cedar Street. Do you know that answer?

Renata Bertotti: From what I understand from DOT, I think their preference is still pretty strongly for Cedar Street. My understanding relating to this meeting is that they did not actually have a preference. I did not know that there was any kind of commitment, that whole notion about any kind of preference or any kind of pre-commitment occurred at the meeting at CRCOG when DOT spoke. I had no idea prior to that meeting that there were any kind of arrangements like that. From any communication that I had with all of the staff, and by the way, pretty much I spoke with, including the State were people who were not advised of the conversation in 2014, 2015, everybody was like people who came after. So, whoever I spoke with essentially said,
well DOT, I'm sure DOT will pick the site that we choose. I believe that especially because CRCOG asked me to select a site for the study and then in that meeting with DOT they spoke about Cedar Street and then about the economic development and how that site was better suited, and I'm like, wait, what? That was the very first time I heard anything about it.

Commissioner Woods: If I may, I think it is very important for us to get back in touch with DOT and whoever the decision makers are and see if in fact, can we go between the two sites or if not, then it is a simple decision, yes we want to support the site on Cedar Street, or no, we don't, and my guess is that at that point, DOT will abandon it. I think we need to find out DOT's position, because they are making the investment. The site is in our town, and obviously they won't do it if we don't support it, but I think that is what we need to find out first, if we actually do have a choice here in which site gets developed.

Councilor Budrejko: Regardless of the site at this point, I don't think this is premature, but I remember I believe part of the discussion, certainly a lot of the discussion was traffic on both sites, but I do recall a significant amount of discussion or leaded direction from the State, that there had to be parking spaces for at least 300 cars. Now, I just did a little quick research, looking at some of the other stations along the line and what the parking situation is. For example, Berlin has 230 spaces, Hartford actually has 200 parking spaces, Meriden has 178, Wallingford has 221 and Windsor Locks currently has 30, so Renata, I don't, part of the issue with me is the scale of what the state is anticipating in terms of how big this station would be, and I think that was one of the reasons also it went to Cedar Street because there wasn't enough room at Newington Junction, but if in your discussion, personally I would like to see it scaled down a little bit. I think 300 cars is quite a bit, I don't think this station should be a magnet for surrounding towns just to come and park and drive and leave. I think it should be something very attractive, but something reasonable, and in terms of what some of the other station sites are along the line, this does seem to be somewhat out of scale, so I don't know if that is up for discussion or not, but I think that could guide where possibilities are for, at either site, be it Cedar Street or Newington Junction.

Chairman Pane: I think Cedar Street is more of a commuter lot where they wanted to get a lot of parking there because they were anticipating pulling people off of the highways so that they reduce the traffic on the highway. I'm not sure that would benefit Newington, whereas the Newington Junction site, I think is the ridership is already built in with so many people who live over in that area so I like the fact that it is more of a community station, and the busway is right there too, and it's within walking distance to a tremendous amount of people in Newington and the southern area of West Hartford.

Councilor Page: I first want to complement the Mayor and the previous Council prior to my coming on board along with Councilor Radda. I think you have done, and the Town Manager, a good job, a very good job. As I drive by on Fenn Road and come down Cedar Street, I see shovels in the ground, and I see steel going up and I see activity there, and I think we all should be proud of that, we should be happy about that. Congratulations to all of you who worked hard to make that happen. I think it would be foolish if we back away from this now and think small.
While totally get, because I drive it many days like all of you do, Cedar Street and it’s scary, it’s a lot of cars, thousands and thousands of cars, and I respect what Councilor Budrejko and others are going to say I’m sure about traffic, those are legit. I think we need to work closely with the State to look at our concerns around traffic and around the draw from other communities, but I think if we think big, and creatively and innovatively, and through the lens of abundance, we can create a lot of mixed use, we can create retail, we can create different points for housing folks, young people, and create energy and a lot of money coming in to our tax base and stabilizing our tax base. It’s a win, win, win for CCSU, for retail, for a driver an engine, an economic driver that the council previous to me and the Mayor and the Town Manager and everyone else involved have gotten started and I think we need to keep going and we need to be brave and courageous and take next steps forward, and I would like to see hard, concrete data driving all this, not just the enthusiasm, or the caution, which I respect. I would like to see objective studies, we have many of them, so with all due respect to Renata and everyone else, thankfully we have folks who worked more than I ever did at all on this five or ten years ago, and know the history. All we have to do is look at the history and the rational as to why the Cedar Street site made sense then, makes sense now, and that’s all I wanted to say, thank you very much for listening.

Councilor Radda: First of all, I'm going to thank Renata and the powers that be who brought us together tonight to have this joint meeting. Renata, thank you so much for your presentation and taking the deep dive and giving us the history, for me particularly, as a new member of the Council, this is very important information for me, and maybe some of the question I might have are because I was not part of the initial discussion. First of all, we talked a lot about the DOT and their preference, one over the other and what, in terms of the impact of the choice of sites, what is the impact that the DOT has? Will they make the final decision, yea, or nay, in terms of funding and shovels in the ground, and I really like the idea and feel that it quite important for us to reach out to CCSU, they are our neighbors, and I see this as a win-win if we do go with the Cedar Street site. This is a win-win for both of our communities. It benefits, as we say at UConn, town and gown. We have populations of students at Central, and faculty as well who would probably be very happy and very willing and supportive of a train station at Cedar Street, and also any other surrounding developments that might take place there, as well as benefiting our town, and being at a site that has not been used, been underused or poorly used in the past. The third question I have and again, this is my ignorance, not having been part of this discussion over the past several year, if a proposal has been made, which is the Cedar Street site, why are we at this point revisiting this, what is our hope for the outcome of this discussion, which I think is very necessary and I’m very pleased that it is taking place, but what is it at this point in time that is stimulating this discussion? Again, where do we go from here, what are our next steps? Thank you

Mayor DelBuono: I don’t have too many questions other than from a historical perspective I think from my recollection the Council was very split on where the station should be. My recollection is that is was really 5 to 4 at the time. The rationale back then for why it kind of ended up going more toward Cedar Street wasn’t because the Council necessarily as a whole wanted it but because the State was pretty adamant that in terms of its location spacing wise,
between other stations, they thought Cedar Street made more sense. That was the pressure that was put on us back then, just for clarity. If DOT is open to the perspective of us deciding which station makes more sense, that dialogue should continue I think. From my perspective, the Newington Junction area makes a lot of sense, it’s a historical district, it was a train station many years ago, it would draw people into the historic district in town, and give us a lot of opportunities around developing that district and making it more vibrant and more walkable and more able to people to come and visit, so I like the idea of the Newington Junction site from the historical perspective. I will say, I can see why Cedar Street is attractive as well, but I think one of the biggest things we need to find out is would the State consider both of those locations, if we were to decide on versus the other or is it really not up to us, so to speak, and they are only set on one station, and if that is the case, then we should know that up front as well. Thank you.

Keith Chapman: Just from my perspective, I was not here during the study that was done years ago, and have not had discussions with the DOT, but just from my perspective, Central Connecticut State University is certainly critical for us to involve going forward, but I will say that just looking at the logistics of how students and faculty would get to the train, the most logical way would be to jump on the busway, go down one stop to Newington Junction and then get on the train. The other alternative would be to somehow that they are going to be transported up Cedar Street which probably is not in the best interest of anybody at this point. So, again, I’m just looking at it with a fresh set of eyes, looking at what we have out there currently and what is being planned and it would seem to me that Central would favor Newington Junction over Cedar Street, if asked, but that’s my opinion. We’ll see what they say when we do meet with them. I do appreciate the fact that we are talking about this because for the two years that I have been here, it’s not really been a subject that has had much discussion and don’t quite understand what happened with something this important that it sort of died, and the State doesn’t seem to have a full understanding of what took place several year ago as well by having CRCOG involved studying the central stations of Newington if it was already decided, so I don’t know, I see nothing in writing that I have in my office that showed the decision on Cedar Street was final, and the State accepted it, and there was no further discussion to be had with the alternative site of Newington Junction.

Commissioner Fox: TPZ has been wanting, at least some of us, to start discussing Newington Junction. There has been an awful lot of opposition to it, and some of the opposition was from me and one or two others and to put the station there, I agree with a couple of things that were said that there really isn’t that much room for development. The development that we were speaking of, the gas station across the street, but the area behind there, and forgive me Michael, but some of that is on Michael Camillo’s property and that’s about it. If we were to stay with Cedar Street, which I think the DOT for a number of reasons might not doing anything with Newington Junction, say well, we’re not going to do that unless it’s Cedar Street. As far as the DOT thinking about commuter traffic, I think that is all they are interested in, either way. I don’t know if they really care that much, except for any taxes they get from the town, which station they have for commuters because the commuter traffic on Willard Avenue is just as much as you would get on Cedar Street, people will pop in, get a train to Hartford. We could be messing around with a lot of historical homes, doing a lot of deconstruction, doing a lot of demolishing
that we don't want to do. Over at Cedar Street, as has been said, frankly Central Connecticut University there, they would have a lot of interest. Whether students hop the Fastrack and get to the train, first of all I don't know how many students would take advantage of it, and I think there would be a number of students that would take advantage of that train if the extended stay hotel was built there. We got plans a while ago, having their parents staying there. I also think that doing the station right where it is would open up that area to an awful lot of research type development, some industrial stuff, entertainment, and such although I know some people say it would actually be displacing the town center. Fenn Road is already industrial, planned development, etc., TOD developments, and apartments, so I'm inclined to go with Cedar Street, not only for the commuter reasons but making our town possibly an entertainment, research destination.

Chairman Pane: Before I most to the next person, Vice-Chairman Claffey has texted me a few things. He's having a hard time, he's on a call, and he said he supports a train station for the West Hill/Day Street area. He agrees with Gail, why should the state want such a big station over on Cedar Street, and he prefers a smaller station for the community at the Newington Junction compared to a commuter lot on Cedar Street which is just going to draw people off of the highway. He states that there is a commuter lot at the DOT building that barely gets used, and then he states that a new train station will drive small areas of multi-use, not a large scale. Those are his comments, I just wanted to get those out there.

Councilor Budrejko: Keith alluded to, and I just wanted to make a point that either site will be accessible to CCSU and in fact, if nothing changes and the station was at Newington Junction it would be easier for the students. They are on the train, they get off, get on the bus after walking ten feet, and go to CCSU. If it is at Cedar Street, again, there is proximity there, but there would have to be some shuttle put in to service CCSU but I just wanted to make the point that either site, should it be one or the other will not exclude CCSU, both sites would service CCSU. I just wanted to make that clear.

Commissioner Woods: I just want to make it clear, in case people are confused that are on this, that the stations are all the same size. The word station is kind of unique to what DOT is doing now. They are platforms, there is no building. The only thing that is enclosed is the cross over. So there is an elevator, but there is no building there is no bathroom, there is just a concrete platform that covers fifteen cars, I believe that is mandated through Metro North, Amtrack, the agreement that they have. So the stations will all be the same size, no matter where they are, the issue may be parking, and again, I don't think DOT would be interested if we are going to limit the parking to a few cars, I think that is telling them, no, we don't want it. I'm torn here, because I think either site would work, I really do. I think there is probably more potential, from my perspective, how I would look at it, with open land and land that could be redeveloped on the Newington Junction site. But again, that is what I said earlier, it seems to me that the State has lost interest. In 2017, Commissioner Reddicker, from DOT back then, came to the Town and the town needed to make a commitment to create a zoning district which would allow it there, which we did and again, I believe that vote was 9-0. Again, I believe it was, we can check our records and see.......
Chairman Pane: It was 8-1.

Commissioner Woods: Again, this is a moot point. If the State is not interested in Newington Junction, there is no sense in talking about it.

Chairman Pane: Or do we look at it as, should we figure out what is best for the Town of Newington first, and see if the State would put the station there. If Cedar Street is not in the best interest of Newington, then maybe we shouldn't even have one there. If it is just going to encourage high traffic on Cedar Street, it's only drawing people off, the property is highly contaminated, I don't know how it would work for housing. The way that TOD was set up, it was like they were trying to create a whole other town center and we have a have a hard time keeping our existing center developed, so I think all of those things have to be considered.

Councilor Page: Just a couple of points. I just looked at this, the 2030 Plan that some of the folks here were very very, worked very hard to develop for our town, articulated specifically, one of the issues was to develop along Fenn Road, to maximize the public Fastrack and the train station potential, and I think that, at the same time, in that plan it discusses maintaining the quaint New England character of our center, and then the third point is to make sure that any further development, either in the center or any other part of town, doesn't infringe on existing residents and their quality of life. So I think, given all that, I think we need to think about the 2030 Plan, but we also need to think for the next generation. While we may disagree tonight, we will continue to talk and probably disagree some more, but many of us naturally think, how is this going to affect me today? I think we also have a responsibility to think about how will this train station affect our town for the next twenty, thirty or forty years, and in my view, with the limited information I have so far the Cedar Street location makes complete sense, for growth, for development, and for all of the things I said before. That's all I wanted to add to that. Thank you.

Councilor Donahue: I think Newington Junction would be a better place for it, but also there is a, in this whole mix of transit oriented development there is a quarter mile circle from the development, from the station, the platform, whatever, so for the quarter mile radius, that gets included in the TOD zone. I mean, if you put it at Newington Junction, there are a number of houses that would fit in to that quarter mile zone. On Cedar Street there are also houses that fit into that zone, not that the State has immediate plans to do anything with it, but if they didn't have a plan to do something with it, why would they write something like that into the plan?

Chairman Pane: If I'm not mistaken, I think they use that quarter mile and half mile radius basically as a gage to basically see what their ridership would be, and what the potential ridership would be with future development, I believe that is what it is for.

Councilor Donahue: It's not my belief on the documentation and the stuff that I have read that they could use it for part of their development because a quarter of a mile around the Cedar Street station, I just looked at it really quick, there are ten, fifteen houses, so I don't think that has anything to do with ridership.
Renata Bertotti: I'm kind of writing the answers to some questions so if you, I can just wait until everyone is done and answer then.

Councilor Nagel: I had a conversation with Renata, as a matter of fact, she talked to me about this because I am on the policy board for CRCOG that indeed a map was given to the group, and it was about, more about the connection from Hartford and going north, but rail service going south on that map included the proposed station would be on Cedar Street and I hope that helps Renata in further conversations because she said that she knew nothing about it at that particular time. I have now, and at that time some concerns about the Cedar Street area, I know looking at that map there was also accompanying the numbers which may be what Councilor Donahue was alluding to in terms of potential riders. The survey from all the different proposed stops was showing Newington being far less than anywhere else. So in terms of what is supposed to be a large number of people for a bigger parking lot is kind of a moot issue if indeed they don't see that happening. Quite frankly I prefer the west hill area for the reason that were mentioned before although I understand what others have said also including Central Connecticut while it is not in Newington, we still need to prioritize our citizens in Newington and indeed students could more conveniently get on the bus and go to that west hill area and get on the train, more so than some who would like that route, which is a whole other situation in terms of walking not being a viable option, so those are just some comments to add to what has been already mentioned to give you some idea of where I stand at the moment in terms of choice, the Newington Junction area is the best. Thank you.

Commissioner Haggarty: I see the advantages of both sites, but I think Newington Junction is just a little bit better, and somewhere along the line someone thought it was a good idea to put a train station there, and I don't see why it can't go back there. I think it is a better support that supports and supplements the community and something as you said earlier, not something that is just going to off load the highway. I think we as town managers and planners and councilors and zoning officers ultimately can decide what is best for the town and then approach the State. I think echoing Commissioner Woods point, we can talk about this all night, but should find out if the State is receptive to what we think versus them dictating to us where it is going to go.

Commissioner Woods: One more thing for Renata to add to her list. I think that if in fact it looks like you are going to start to promote Newington Junction station again, and I am not necessarily opposed to that, but I think one of the first things that has to be done is some sort of public hearing has to be put in place because the public did not support it at the last go around. They were adamantly opposed to it. We have had trouble every time, as Commissioners that we talk about doing anything over there, there is opposition. Again I think there is potential there, but if there is no support from the members of our community then I'm not sure that we should push it. Again, I think we need to look at that early. It would be a shame if we ended up convincing the state that it would work at Newington Junction and find out that there is no support from the public. Thank you.
Commissioner Gill: As far as infrastructure monies that are being talked about, is there any chance that that would be directed towards any of these projects?

Chairman Pane: I'm not sure, we'll have Renata look into that.

Commissioner Gill: I'm in favor of the northern station, that seems to be a better fit as far as I'm concerned. Cedar Street is very, very congested. Thank you.

Councilor Manke: While Renata is checking with the State, I would like to find out what the ridership of the train, how many are going to use this train that is going to stop in Newington? Whether it is Cedar Street or Newington Junction I would like to know how many people are going to use the train, and where they are going. I drove by the Fastrack stops today and there is nobody using the Fastrack currently so I'm not sure if they would get on a train to go to Hartford or go on to points northern and eventually New York City, but how many people would do that, I'd like to get some kind of idea of that. I'm with Commissioner Woods, I think whatever we decide, there should be a public hearing to decide, to let the public weigh in on this. It is going to affect them in both locations in a sense, and if we do go forward with Cedar Street location I think it's only with the caveat that something be done about the traffic. There is no way we can put more cars on that road and hopefully there is some plan to mitigate some of the traffic and the State would have a big part of making that happen because that is already a really congested area. Thank you.

Commissioner Fox: I agree with Councilor Manke on a number of things, one of them, the main thing, definitely a public hearing. I forget when it was, a few years ago, Any Brecher brought up this very complicated plan developing Cedar Street/Fenn area. What happened I don't know, I think maybe it was too complicated, but I don't know why it got dropped all of a sudden, nor do I know why we haven't been able to get together on TPZ on Newington Junction. I think it might be a while, but we need public hearings on both sites, only after we contact the residents in town, because this will affect all of them, not just those within 500 feet of Newington Junction or Cedar and put together some plans and then go to public hearing.

Chairman Pane: If there are no objections or further questions, I'm going to let Renata start answering some of the questions and see what kind of recommendations she has for moving forward.

Renata Bertotti: I'll start with one that is unrelated to the train station. For the person who asked about the commercial vehicles, that is scheduled for January 26th. There will be a hearing on that petition, scheduled for January 26th.

Now a number of questions, and if I missed something please just come back and ask again, but one of the questions that was early on was whether or not the DOT, or the State was open even to have this discussion again, and whether I knew that and then if that was the case or wasn't the case, then what would stimulate them into having this discussion. So first of all, I don't know whether or not the State is open to having this discussion. From my conversation with David Eldridge today, my understanding is that they are under the impression that the
Town has some kind of commitment to the Cedar Street station from some study that they had made, and to which the town had drafted zoning regulations which to them means, or meant at the time that the town decided for Cedar Street. So, my understanding is that they think that matter has been resolved, so I think if we want to discuss this then we should be contacting them and ask if they would be willing to even talk about.

I appreciate Commissioner Woods comments in regards to perhaps talking amongst ourselves first and then approaching the community before we even go to the State because if we are going to even have the discussion with the State then we should first be assured that our community is even, our residents are open to consider Newington Junction for this.

Now what is stimulating this discussion on my end was again, I wasn't sure, I didn't know whether or not we had a preference and when I was approached by CRCOG with the question of where do we want to have this study, and I indicated Newington Junction and then I heard this other location, and found out that there was a zoning study, you know, I wanted to ask you whether or not the Town Council and the Planning Commission had actually a preference in regards to a location. So that is what triggered us to have this meeting. I'm really glad that we held this meeting, and I'm really grateful for this conversation tonight because as there are differing opinions, on the table tonight, really every statement that was made tonight has reason and logic. There are things that are very reasonable to consider, so I can very much appreciate all of the comments that we have heard.

With regards to the one quarter mile radius, the people who live within the distance of the train station or train stop, this is done, it is very surgical, they literally draw a circle of 1.4 miles, they don't consider topography elements of the earth in that area, so I think all of these studies could be actually done better if people, the study makers would look at the areas a little bit more geographically so with that in mind I think there is a little bit better way of looking at this than just the physical but I think there are many more people living, but within Newington Junction area than currently in the area of the Cedar Street station. However we do have a number, currently approved residential developments that are currently approved near the Cedar Street station. We will have close to 300 units that will be built probably within the next one to two years near the Cedar Street station.

The infrastructure money is really one of the reasons triggering this conversation because frankly if there is any opportunity to get federal/public investment, if we as a community can get public investment money in this town, it's a good thing for us to have. Whether we chose the Newington Junction location or Cedar Street location, public investment generally offers a return of one to three, how do I say this, like one dollar in public investment generally creates three dollars in private investments. So if we can get fifty-five million dollars in federal money, we are going to get three times that perhaps in private investment, so if we can get a train station, public investment that costs fifty-five million dollars, whether it is in one location or the other, we do not want to jeopardize that amount of public investment in this town.

The question of ridership, I think one of the things that the State is using, as far as I understand is this analysis is their preference for the Cedar Street station is accounting for ridership that they see on Cedar Street. They count on highway ridership, and they can count on the new residential developments on the corner and the National Welding site, and then they are a large part of the plan for land that can be developed. I very much agree with Commissioner Woods on Newington Junction, there is a large area of industrial land on each side of the tracks, on the
north side of the Fastrack station, and not to touch the historical homes but the industrial area that offers a range of opportunity for development for some sort of TOD that also, it's a large area that offers opportunities that probably equal what can be done on Cedar Street, but it's not in that circle, the geometric circle, 1.4, one quarter of a mile wasn't included. It may be also you know, that originally that the residents in that area because of the parking lot area and then the presentation that David Elder from DOT showed me today showed an analysis of quite large distance, quite large difference of economic development potential between Newington Junction and Cedar Street, but also did show some difference how traffic was going to be bad on Fenn Road. It is bad now, and it is going to stay bad and get worse. But the Newington Junction issue is that there is really no highway connection. There is no highway connection anywhere near there so that was one of the elements that they used to select the Cedar Street area. So I guess from my person perspective, I without knowing about Cedar Street, I always like Newington Junction. I think it is a creative type area, it is an area for the community type station, I feel that Cedar Street is not very well connected. It is really not connected and requires a large investment to connect it to the Fastrack, to connect it to CCSU and to the community. However, that being said, I'm not sure that we have a choice. I think that the State will allow us to have a choice. I think the community may have already decided on this and I think that given an opportunity to have an investment of this size is an option and we should find out if we have a choice to do this or not, and if we do not, then we should think about that what was chosen already and not lose an opportunity for investments. So that is kind of my take on it. That being said, I'm going to ask you if you would like me to reach out to DOT and see if we could schedule a meeting or if you would like to think about it for a little bit and then maybe schedule another Commission/Council meeting at some point in the future to feel where we are at with this subject, or how you would like to proceed with this.

Chairman Pane: I think Renata that gathering some more information, maybe getting some questions answered by the DOT, then you can present that to us, and we can have another collaborative meeting. If you could also research, there is a station in West Haven that was constructed and it was promised that there was going to be a lot of development around it and nothing ever came, so I don't know if we can count on a public investment of fifty million and that we are definitely going to get development, because that might not be a true statement. Like I said, that property is highly contaminated over there, I don't know even if you could get housing in there, and our industrial properties are very important, but I think it definitely deserves several more meetings and maybe with some additional information that you could provide us, we could have another talk about it, and then I agree with Commissioner Woods that we should schedule a public hearing after that if it is appropriate and then we can maybe move forward and try to come to some sort of solution and what station would be in the best interest of Newington citizens and not necessarily in the best interest of the State of Connecticut.

Mayor DelBuono: Renata, thank you again for putting the meeting together, I appreciate the open dialogue tonight. As with any subject, there are two sides to every issue and I think we did a good job of vetting both sides this evening, and I look forward to getting some answers from DOT. I'm hopeful that we can work with them to get what we feel is best for the Town of Newington, whether that be Cedar Street or the Newington Junction station, I'm glad that this
Chairman Pane: Thank you. Any Councilors or Commissioners have any questions or comments?

Councilor Budrejko: I just wanted to clarify I guess, because there was a discussion between Renata and you Chairman Pane about some more meetings, thinking about whatever. Isn't just the first question for a meeting or phone call just one simple question, is there room for one site or the other? I mean I think that is just a simple yes or no, because why should anybody be spending any time ruminating or additional meetings or getting information until we have that simple yes or no answer.

Chairman Pane: Yes or no if there is room?

Councilor Budrejko: Yes or no if there is a possibility of having a site other than Cedar Street.

Chairman Pane: Okay. Thank you. Any other questions? If there is no objection, the Town Planner has a report on some additional things. Oh, we have a question from Councilor Page.

Councilor Page: Just two more comments, I just want to remind us that it doesn't have to be in the State's interest or the town's interest, it actually can be both of us that win with this. When it comes to development, it's not just that people show up and hand us this development as you and others have worked very hard to do, have to go out and get it, and a draw can be a train station that has vitality and people coming and going, with money to spend, so I think we can make that happen as you and others have demonstrated, we can make that happen. I think it won't happen as well in the northern part of the town. Thank you very much.

VI. TOWN PLANNER REPORT

Renata Bertotti: This is really brief, I won't keep you very, very long. I started a year ago and I just wanted to give a little bit of, this is what I have seen and this is what we have been doing this past year. The Planning Department, together with the Planning Commission has been very busy this past year. My just general sense has been that while we have been very busy, for the most part in a reactionary way, and that reactionary way has been mainly because as we were trying to be active there is a lot of stuff going on, but Covid and virtual stuff and all this, so it keeps on changing so we have really been trying to keep up with everything. I do want everybody to know what is going to be going on. The Commission and my department are working on sort of streamlining several very important documents. Everything is kind of going slow frankly because we have a lot of like normal business that happens, but we have zoning regulations that are in dire need of severe revisions. I have kind of ancient subdivision regulations, and if it were up to me I would pretty much tear them apart and then rewrite them from the beginning to
the end. We have a Plan of Conservation and Development which we recently adopted but the Plan came with like 146 action items, 96 policies and I don’t even remember the implementation but just sort of a lot of things that are sort of educational in nature, so we kind of like drilled them down and all of this will be coming to you as well. You will see this through some of the actions that the Planning Commission passes down to you, that the Town manager passes down to you through the budget procedure, so anyway, you will see a lot of stuff coming down through Planning and through TPZ just on a sense on the policy end and development. So that is kind of a big broad stroke of what I wanted to tell you. This is a beautiful community, we have lot going on, and from my year, one year and a month.

VII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (For items not listed on the agenda; speakers limited to two minutes.

Terry Bjorgensen: I have to say there are some conflicting things that I have heard tonight and Commissioner Woods, former Mayor Woods, we started together you know back in 2011 and we had an opportunity then to get a train station, and we killed it because we killed all development on Fenn Road. We still have an opportunity to get a train station, and I honestly don’t think that the station on Willard is going to work. I think that the other one is better. I have to say that the Town Planner who has been talking tonight, I don’t agree with her. I was on the Capital Region Council of Governments for ten years, and I’m going to call tomorrow to see if he is going to express what you have said tonight, because I don’t think some of the things that you said were absolutely true. So the quarter mile radius on trans oriented development was that people could get tax breaks for building something within the quarter mile radius. It wasn’t about housing, it wasn’t about anything else, it was about tax breaks. Enfield has a station, Windsor Locks got a station. If Newington really wants to have a station, and the Department of Transportation, I talked to them today, they wouldn’t give me an answer because it is political and they don’t want to get involved in that, but I can tell you, if we go with Willard Street, we aren’t going to get a train station. If we go with Cedar, we’ve got a good shot to get a train station. Central Connecticut is going to develop down there. There is a lot we can do in those buildings, and I understand everybody’s concern but we have to understand, if we want to move Newington forward, for instance, we have a new head of the Board of Education, and she is wonderful. She got a two percent raise, or a two percent increase in money the first year, one percent last year, and this year we tried to not give them any money. The town lost ten employees last year, and we need economic development to keep our taxes down and to increase people who are living in Newington, if we want to do that, we need that train station. Again, I’ve been working with the Governor on this, I’ve been working with the head of DOT and Don Burdick, who was the engineer that did the Hartford station, and he’s doing East/West in Mass., we need to get that station. We will get a tremendous amount of money in economic development which will lower our taxes, but it’s got to be on Cedar Street. Thank you.

Chairman Pane: Just for the record, we have had over two hundred million dollars worth of development in the last year and a half, so we’re heading in a good direction.
Diane Picia, 95 Sterling Drive: I am concerned about the switch into looking at the West hill, Willard Avenue as opposed to Cedar which would have been agree upon years ago and I just don't understand the impetus for that, without consulting DOT who is the one who is going to be making the decision to see where they stood on it, and without you know, inviting the public input into this and it was a lot of timing, I like that you did some research on that and looked at the potential but I really don't understand why the push for this after the Cedar Street had already been researched and studied. Thank you.

Chairman Pane: I think the main reason is the, as the entire leadership between TPZ and Council never really agreed on Cedar Street, I think that is the main reason that we are here.

Neil Ryan, 237 Brockett Street: First I have to say listening to the questions from the TPZ members and the Town Council, I don't expect to see a train station in Newington in my lifetime. I don't care whether it's Cedar Street or Newington Junction or in Garrett Havens back yard, but seriously, the Newington Junction issue, I don't know why this is being pushed so much now, because my understanding is that, going back several years, the residents of Francis Avenue, which is right in the heart of Newington Junction, they are adamantly opposed to a train station there. I don't know why you are pushing this so hard. As far as ConnDot, you are making them out to be the bad guys, they aren't the bad guys, they are going to pay for it, construct this train station assuming that it ever gets done, and yes, they prefer Cedar Street as a location because it is a more viable construction site, for potential development, better access to the highways and Central Connecticut University. If you push forward with this Newington Junction proposal, ConnDot, they might say, no, we don't support that location and the project will be deal. Period. Nothing, and I don't know why, I thought this was resolved several years ago, and I'm just wondering why this is being looked at again after three or four years. It's like out of the blue, and I just want to say, a commuter rail system is designed to get cars off the road. That reduces traffic congestion and air pollution. Those are things that benefit everyone and I don't care if the cars are New Britain, Berlin, Newington, Rocky Hill, Wethersfield, etc., you get cars off the road you reduce air pollution and traffic congestion and I have no problem with the size of the parking lot, and like I said, I don't know why this Newington Junction is being brought up again, it should be dead and I'm afraid if you push forward with this, ConnDot is just going to say, No, we aren't going to go with that project, it would mean no project unless Newington decides to pay for and build a train station itself, but I don't think that is going to happen. Thank you for your time.

Dana Havens: First I want to say Renata, I sent you a link to CRCOG's study on Newington Junction that they proposed to us back in 2014. Now as far as I remember, attending the one at the library with Rose, the main reason that they switched to Cedar Street was we all balked at the study for Newington Junction because it wasn't just for a train station, it was part of this huge housing development and the people who lived in the area were freaked out. As from the comments that I heard from the Councilors, they know it's a win for CCSU, I would say, who cares? They are not part of Newington and we need to worry about Newington and let's face it, whether it is on Willard Avenue, not Willard Street as somebody kept saying, whether it is on Willard Avenue or Cedar Street, traffic will increase. Traffic sucks in this town and it's just going
Gary Turco, 98 Williamstown Court: Hello everyone and Happy New Year. Good to see everyone here tonight. First I want to say that I'm really glad that there is a support for, at least a station here in Newington. I think the station is going to provide numerous benefits, to the residents and be a more attractive place to live, so I'm really glad that we have consensus on having a station, and as Steve Woods pointed out, it's more of a train stop, a platform, not, we're not talking about Union Station and Grand Central Station here. They don't even include bathrooms which I wish they would, but yes, they are not these overwhelming structures of stations that were built in days past. I have heard some things that have given me some concerns today and I did send you all a letter earlier today that you might have had a chance to look at as well, and I have also spoken to the DOT today. The thing I really want to stress is we cannot move forward with having a station here in Newington without an active partnership and close cooperation with the Connecticut Department of Transportation. If we try to direct what is happening on our own, and say, hey State, DOT, take it or leave it, they will say, forget about it. They will walk away. After I was elected, and in early 2019, Mayor Saratian and I sat down and agreed that we need to rebuild our relationship with the DOT. It was really strained. We met bipartisanly, teamed up, and started having conversations with the DOT about this train station and about partnering and working with Newington once again and reinvesting in Newington. They had us on the bottom of the list, they basically wrote Newington off saying this is an uncooperative town, with people who are just going to fight every proposal for progress and we had to show that that no, Newington was open to growth and progress. We believe investments in mass transit will be good for our residents, we believe having a partnership with Central Connecticut State University where so many of our students go, where we have faculty members that live in Newington, by supporting them is helpful too and economic development to create more businesses and jobs for our grand list is good for our town. Because of those conversations, those bipartisan commitments we made, we were able to get back on the list, and that is where we have been up to this point. There have been some funding issues, the Governor's toll bill that had the Newington train station in that bill, if that bill had been passed we would have had tolls and we also would have had funding for the train station, neither of those things happened, but now we have this once in a generation opportunity with the federal dollars, again, a bipartisan infrastructure bill that the Department of Transportation plans on securing money for the Hartford to Springfield and hopefully even to go to Boston, the entire rail line and that includes building stations and includes building one in Newington. At this point in time the DOT has stated that they are still fully committed to a Cedar Street location, not Newington Junction. They have numerous reasons why, I ask that you look at the 2018 study that they presented in Newington that has all of the different points, so you can see. Is there a possibility that they could change their mind? Yes, but I ask that we do that cooperatively and not try to shove something on them that they disagree with, if we can get
them to agree that there are reasons to change to Newington Junction instead, that that is the
best thing for the town, okay, but let’s make sure we are having those conversations with them
first, but at this point in time they really like the Cedar Street location and they are also
considering a location in Flatbush Avenue in West Hartford. Here is my fear, that I just want to
make sure that everyone knows, to date West Hartford has been a lot more cooperative, a lot
more aligned, in getting a station built in their town, and in that location of Flatbush. So they are
going to the head of the line because Newington is so divisive over this subject. That has been
proven in this meeting tonight. The DOT is watching this. The problem is, if West Hartford goes
first, and they get their station, they will not build a station in Newington Junction because they
are too close together. Our only opportunity was Cedar Street, but if West Hartford gets the
station first, Newington will be pushed an extra ten or twenty years before we ever see a station.
They would like, I believe to build a Cedar Street station first, that is a better strategic location
for the New Haven to Springfield line, so I don’t want us to jeopardize and blow ever having a
station or not having a station for twenty years from now because we think the Newington
Junction site is better, and then West Hartford goes first, and we don’t ever get one. Just keep
that in mind, it’s not just about which station in Newington is the better location, we are
competing with lots of different towns up and down the whole Springfield to New Haven corridor.
Just things to keep in mind as we are discussing this, but I would like to be an active partner
with you, in bringing this train station to fruition and I am more than happy to set up a meeting
with the Department of Transportation, the Commissioner, their staff, with all of you that want to
attend, and we can discuss that they are partnering and agree with whatever plans we decide to
go forward with. Thank you everybody for all of your work, I think it’s going to be great for the
residents of Newington, let’s make this happen sooner than later, let’s work together
bipartisonly, and let’s work together
bipartisonly, and let’s work tother with partners with the State. Thank you for this time.

Chris Minor, 419 Revere Drive: I appreciate all the effort that Renata put into trying to catch up
on the story as to how the train station came to exist, and I was a little disappointed that the
transit village design study that was done was really not touched upon tonight with the
discussions that occurred. It was a comprehensive plan to develop upward of 65 acres adjacent
to either unutilized or under utilized commercial property directly abutting areas that are
essentially undeveloped and wouldn’t disturb the neighbors that abut. 2019 the efforts were
made with the prior Council, prior Mayor, of trying to reach back out to DOT to say we are
committed, we do want it, and at that time, almost unanimously, not one hundred percent, but
almost unanimously, after numerous public hearings that were held on both the State DOT
holding, as well as the town Council and Town Planning and Zoning Commission, that Cedar
Street was the agreed upon location and we actually made it into written plans in 2025. There
were only two jurisdictions along the New Haven/Springfield line at that point were uncommitted
and that was North Haven and Newington. Every other town along the line had either had
strong commitments and were in planning, or committed that they wanted to move forward. The
West Hartford location ahead of us, it was brought up during those discussions that a location at
West Hill would not be conducive due to the close proximity to the next station. Having Cedar
Street would be more equally aligned with the spacing from New Haven to Springfield.
Properties, as they approached the town pursuant to the National Welding site, specifically
asked about plans for the Cedar Street station construction, and at the time, and at that time,
the Town of Newington committed to them that those plans were active, ongoing, and were expected to come to fruition. If I was a developer I would be strongly concerned about my potential investments as development at National Welding, if the station were to be moved or relocated or abandoned on the Cedar Street site. My value would be completely devalued as a result of that, because that was their interest in that site, was the public records that showed Cedar Street was in line to get a train station. The efforts that were made at the Junction were met by strong opposition from the neighbors in that area. There were actually moratoriums put in place regarding transit design and transit oriented development. The Cedar Street location would have also helped to finally secure the inaccessibility to the busway up to Newington Center because DOT recognized that there was not conducive accessibility for both pedestrian as well as bicycle traffic on Cedar Street, so all of that was to be part of the road reconstruction project for Cedar Street.

My final point is Alumni Road realignment. I’ve been involved in Newington town politics now for upwards of six years, I know for a fact that the Newington realignment for Alumni Road has existed for twenty to twenty five if not even thirty years. That has not been able to be done. This was also addressed by DOT that they would work with realignment of that as part of the road reconstruction project and again, my final point is, we had multiple public hearings held on this, the public overwhelming was in support, was there some opposition to the plans, yes there were, but I think regardless of your siting choice, there is going to be opposition to one of the other. So with that, I appreciate the time and effort, and once again, I would like to be able to see if Renata would be able to pull out the TDD information for the current Council and current TPZ to look over.

Caro Santoro, 93 Francis Avenue: I have lived here for 39 years, just for the record. My question is, everyone keeps saying Newington Junction is a community, and if that is the case, a community does not need a train station. Why all of a sudden is everyone pushing for Newington Junction, while I agree with the people who spoke who said the State wanted Cedar Street, and it appears to me that one of the Councilors owns property over there......

Chairman Pane: Wait a minute, I’m going to interrupt you since when does it matter who owns a piece of property?

Caro Santoro: When you are pushing to get it from one place to another.

Chairman Pane: Nobody is pushing anything.

Caro Santoro: It appears that way.....

Chairman Pane: Excuse me, I’m tired of the politics.....

Caro Santoro: So are the rest of the people in this town.

Chairman Pane: Finish your comments please.
Caro Santoro: Okay. Why are you worried about a congested area on Fenn Road, when we have that wonderful resort apartments going there and no one seemed to think that that was going to affect the traffic. The guy told me he did a traffic study and Fenn Road is never congested and that is because he doesn't live in the state or the town. I have some other issues to touch on but I really push forward, with everyone else before anything happens with this rail station that we meet in person because all these calls on Zoom, even when the Covid hasn't been as bad as it is now, which I have had it myself, we couldn't get meetings in person. I think we need to do that. The other thing I just want to touch on because we seem to be saying, add apartments, this, this and this. Last night on Channel 3 if you saw it, Connecticut is losing population. So why are we pushing for so many apartments in our town? It's a fact I believe that you guys have already approved apartments on the Berlin Turnpike, Fenn Road, and Culver Street, which I want to say, correct me if I'm wrong, which you will, 800 units, so why is the Town Planner making decisions on PD zones when she did say there is no difference from a PD Zone on Fenn Road than on the Berlin Turnpike. I'm not sure that is correct, and does she understand the Newington zoning laws. So, why is Planning and Zoning......

Chairman Pane: Wrap up your comments please?

Caro Santoro: Okay, I'm getting there, everyone else go to speak longer, but you don't like what I'm saying. The development on Connecticut Avenue was decided in one night against the will of the people where there was a petition of 86 signatures that didn't get read, and it wasn't read until the next meeting when I asked if there was one, and that was two weeks later and this development just went on. So the new housing issues, how is this going to affect our police, who are already stressed, what about the pools, social services, and this is why taxes went up this year, I know the mill rate went down whatever, taxes on my house and many of my friends did go up, during the pandemic I would think you would be looking to help people. Lastly I want to know why the Town Manager, Keith Chapman, does not live in Newington. We have the best housing market in years, and why couldn't he sell his house and move to town? Possibly some of this stuff might now have happened had he lived here. When Tanya Lane was the Town Manager she had a limited amount of time to do that, and this didn't get done. Why are developers specially out of state developers more important than the residents? I'd like to have answers to these questions. I don't think we should just hear them and they go on and they don't ever get answered. Then you people just decide what you want to do, public input it seems to me doesn't do a heck of a lot of good, but I think when it comes to Newington Junction you are going to get a lot of opposition, and all of sudden everyone switched over to Newington Junction, it just seems a little odd to me, and thank you for your time.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: I have been following the train station discussion since former Governor Molloy appeared in front of the Democratic Town Committee and stated that he was in favor of trains versus Connecticut Fastrack, and then when he was elected he switched to Fastrack and as Fastrack discussions were being held, Mr. Saunders from the DOT stated that the train would be coming within five years. As time went on, he changed his position and said, I don't know if the money will be available. I attended multiple meetings along with Gail and Madie and then later on with Dana and others and listened ad nauseum to the discussions of
Cedar Street verses Newington Junction. Having said that, I would suggest that, I find it appalling that the Town Planner was given a file about backyard chickens and we had multiple hearings on that and yet she is not up to date on one of the most important things other than Fastrack in this town. It’s just unbelievable that there is no master file on record, list the Town Planner, the Town Manager, regarding all of the presentations that were held regarding the train station. I’m equally appalled that the people at DOT can’t get it together and speak to us as a group, the Town Council, the residents, the TPZ but maybe now Representative Turco can help us out on that regard. It reminds me of the song and dance of the town taking over Myra Cohen Way. This one is talking to that one, that one is talking to this one, but nobody is talking to everybody together in one room. I think I hear Renata mention that there was a grant submitted for Alumni Road realignment. I’m shaking my head over that one too, back in the 1990’s I listened to discussions about that. I’d like to know more details on that at some time whether, not tonight but some other meeting, if I had the slightest clue that Renata was meeting with CRCOG to do a study based on the train station being built at Newington Junction I certainly would have spoken up about it, and offered up my notes from all of the meetings. I thought it was just a DOT, a study from DOT on development and, rather TOD and not based on the station being built there. It boggles my mind that veteran TPZ members did not make her aware of the Cedar Street station. This is not her fault, it is our fault for not getting her up to speed from day one when she entered into the office of Town Planner. Maybe we can get everybody together and figure out who wants want and who doesn’t want what and put this to rest. This town just makes plans, changes plans and then nothing gets done. Thank you very much.

John Trister, 81 Woodland Street: Thank you so much Renata for the presentation. I think what Ms. Santoro had to say was pretty much everything, so I’ll be pretty brief. The reality is that a train stop in Newington is part of a line that serves the whole state, so common sense dictates that it makes sense to work with the State on this issue. I agree with what Commissioner Woods has said in regards to reaching out to the State about this and finding out if there is any interest in putting a stop over by West Hill or if they just prefer Cedar because if the State isn’t on board for West Hill, then there really isn’t much point for discussion. We need just to rely on the facts and the data on this to really determine which is best and not just opinions and no evidence. Thank you.

Stan Gustowski: Hello, Happy New Year. I’m not in favor of a train station in Newington. We’ve got a train station just eight miles away in Berlin that nobody uses. You go there and there is no more than fifteen, twenty cars parked there, and it’s just like our Fastrack stations, nobody uses it. It’s a waste of money, and especially considering that they want to build one in West Hartford which is just four miles away, this is supposed to be rapid train service. How is it rapid when it is stopping every three minutes at a station. I’m against the idea, Cedar Street is just bad for the traffic, and Newington Junction, it would be nice to have a train station there, but realistically who is going to drive over there to take the train? The Fastrack station over there is empty during weekdays as well. People keep on saying, this is what the people of Newington want, and we have had a couple of elections in the past years and people have voted the opposite way of what these people are saying, so I wish people would pay attention and listen to
the voices of the people of Newington. Thanks, that’s my take, thank you and again Happy New Year.

Chairman Pane: The public is all set, there is nobody new I believe so I just want to say I am not going to tolerate the political nonsense. I can’t have people making accusations about things being pushed because somebody owns property, that is absolutely nonsense. Renata brought this to our attention because she was confused and she wanted to have some direction on where to bring this and so just want to state that for the record. We are not going to tolerate these political comments if we are going to move forward.

VIII. REMARKS BY COMMISSIONERS/COUNCILERS

Chairman Pane: Commissioner Claffey had one comment, and he would just like to remind residents that Newington had a train station to begin with over at Newington Junction.

Councillor Donahue: My concern is, it seems like we have seven or eight different people into the State asking questions. Who represents Newington in these discussions? It’s like someone coming to me at work until they get the opinion that they want. Who is representing Newington and who is the point person that should be talking to the DOT and whoever else is involved because it seems like there are multiple people talking from different angles and that is probably one of the reasons that nothing ever happens.

Councillor Radda: I agree that we don’t want to go off willy-nilly and have several people from several departments going off in various directions and gathering multiple types of information. My suggestion would be to work with Representative Turco and pull together a group of folks who could be, who are representative of the Town of Newington to meet with the DOT, including Renata who again, thank you very much for taking this deep dive and really providing the information and the response to our questions. A working group that is representative to meet and discuss and then bring back and present in a public hearing, if in fact that is what we are choosing to do, it’s mind boggling to hear what the history has been and it appears that a proposal was made and now we’re, I don’t want to say, back stepping, but we’re reviewing that. I think Renata....I’m a little befuddled why we are now looking at this two pronged approach when over the past several years, or several years ago, there were public hearing and public participation and discussion and decisions had been made.

Mayor Del Buono: I think there is a reason why we are revisiting that, and what people are hearing here is that it has been years. It’s been years since there has been any dialogue with the State, it’s been years since this discussion happened, and it’s been years since there has been any mention of it and whether or not it was really going to come to fruition. So, I think this is a case of where we are damned if we do, and damned if we don’t, we’re going to get backlash because we are discussing it, we’re going to get backlash if we don’t discuss it. So personally I’m thankful that we are discussing, that there is a dialogue. I appreciate that Representative Turco is reaching out and willing to work with us on this as he always has been, and that being said, it is up to this body to decide, years later, was the vision that was right years ago still the
vision today for Newington and our residents. In my estimation, we are doing what is right, we are doing our due diligence, to make sure the dialogue is continuing with the State and with these two bodies to make sure we are moving forward in a way that makes sense for our town and for our residents as well as for the State of Connecticut and their vision and plans for Newington. I'm thankful, I look forward to hearing the answers from DOT to see where we stand moving forward and I look forward to the future of this discussion.

Commissioner Lenares: I purposely didn't speak earlier because I didn't think I had enough information to put some thoughts out there and I don't think I have all the information now to clearly put some opinions out there. I thought it would be good to listen to some of the comments from people who had a lot more experience than I do, where as the Mayor has pointed out, two years ago, and she kind of took the words out of my mouth when she said I think it would be a negative thing if we didn't revisit it. Just like she said, it was something that happened years ago, that was or was not right fit for the town as someone mentioned, some of the development plans years ago had focused on some big housing development in that area in Newington Junction and now we might now have that aspect to it, so I think listening to everyone kind of gave me a more visual aspect of what maybe the Town might want going forward but also there are some questions that haven't been answered that were brought up tonight by many people that need to be answered so a better decision can be made going forward and not necessarily going with what was done years ago, but what is beneficial for the Town today, but either way, it would have to be pretty excited but being proud of what this board has come together with the Council, with the leadership of the Chairman of the TPZ, the Mayor, the Town Planner, the Town Manager, I think it's a good thing. A lot of things on the table, and a lot of things to look forward to discuss later when more information is provided back to us and kudos to the Planner to looking deep into this so we get as much information as possible.

Commissioner Fox: After listening to Mayor DelBuono, she made me think, at first when I saw the agenda, I was thinking to myself, this is coming to a head, we've been trying to get Newington Junction on the TPZ agenda so we can talk about it, get some community reaction to it, and I know I for one was also worried what are we going to do about Ceder Street. What kind of development? As it turns out, I too am glad that we did have this discussion and we have a number of people and some of us are still undecided as to what to do, and so I think the general consensus is that maybe Renata or some body, maybe in combination with Representative Turco get some serious conversations started with the DOT, but before that, I think she and the TPZ members get the community reaction and this should not be the last collaborative meeting that we have on this, and I think, like Gary said, like Terry said, we could lose it. I wouldn't want to lose it, I would rather see it at Cedar Street, and there are reasons why that is no good and reasons why the Willard Avenue station is good, but either way, I think we should have a station. Thank you all citizens for your input, and thank you Mayor Beth and the Town Council.

Chairman Pane: Renata, do you have anything?

Renata Bertotti: No, I think at this point I will talk to the Town Manager and with him and Representative Turco we will discuss and see who would be the best to talk to and try and
schedule a meeting or a phone call with the State and start with the simple question of, can we talk? After that we will talk to you Chairman, you Mayor and decide who should be in the room when we do. Start from there. I do thank you all, I think this way very valuable for me.

IX. CLOSING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN/MAYOR

Mayor DelBuono: I'm all set thank you.

Chairman Pane: I think this was a valuable meeting and I'm looking forward to Renata getting some additional information so that we can possibly have another meeting and make some decisions on what is best for the Town of Newington.

X. ADJOURN

Commissioner Woods moved to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nortine Addis,
Recording Secretary