

**Public Information Session**

**August 10, 2009**

**7:00 p.m.**

**Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail Between Devil's Hole  
And the Village of Lewiston**

Present: Sup. Newlin; Council Members Bax, Edwards, Johnson & Palmer; Tn. Atty. Leone; Deputy Tn. Atty. Koryl; Eng. Lannon; Adm./Op. Lockhart; Finance Officer DiRamio; Bldg. Insp. Masters; Deputy Sup. Elgin; Grant Writer Rotella; Rec. Dir. Dashineau & Town Clerk Brandon. 2 press reps & 20 residents.

Also Present: James Walsh from Hatch Mott & MacDonald and Dan Sundell from Peter J. Smith & Co.

The Supervisor opened the Public Information Session at 7:10 p.m. The Supervisor asked that the Clerk read the notice.

**Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail Between  
Devil's Hole and the Village of Lewiston  
Public Information Session**

**The Town of Lewiston has announced that a Public Information Session regarding a proposal to design and construct a mult-use trail from the existing trail at Devil's Hole State Park to Center Street in Lewiston has been scheduled for Monday, August 10, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. The session will be held in the Lewiston Town Hall as part of the Town Board Meeting.**

**Project consultants will be on hand to make a brief presentation about the proposed project and to receive public comments. The scope of the project to be addressed at this session is for a trail that would connect to existing trails at Devil's Hole State Park and in the Village of Lewiston. The trail would provide connections to Niagara University, the Power Vista and Art Park.**

**All persons interested in this project are urged to attend; those who cannot may submit written comments by August 31, 2009 to: Lewiston Pathway Project Comments, Town of Lewiston, 1375 Ridge Road, Lewiston, NY 14092. For additional information regarding this meeting, please contact Fred Newlin at 754-8213.**

Newlin: Ten years ago my introduction to public life was working with the late Sen. John Daly on the path that went down River Road that connected the Village of Lewiston and the Village of Youngstown. It wasn't the easiest project to get off and running. It has been a boon to this area ever since. Now, to make the connection up the hill is challenging for geographical and other reasons but we are fortunate from 2 different funding sources that the monies will not come from the taxpayers of Lewiston. We have gotten a grant from Congresswoman Louise Slaughter in the Omnibus Transportation Bill that amount to about 1.8M. The Town has to come up with a matching fund of about \$200,000 which we applied for successfully from the Greenway Commission and the Niagara County Standing Committee. Combined that is about a 2M investment in some much needed infrastructure in my opinion in this Town and finally realizing this dream of having a land line that people can bike, walk, roller blade all the way from Youngstown up thru to Niagara Falls and now that path even goes Grand Island. It is also a considerable economic advantage to the Village of Lewiston as we compete more and more with the tourist traffic on the Canadian side of the bridge where they have been very successful over the last 10-15 years. I will introduce Mr. James Walsh who represents the firm of Hatch Mott MacDonald who have been contracted by the Town after a public bid process to come up with some ideas for design. We will not be making any decisions tonight. This is the listening portion of the project. Also, Mr. Dan Sundell who is the subcontractor with Peter J. Smith & Co.

Mr. Walsh gave an over view of the project followed by Mr. Sundell with two alternatives for the projects.

Mr. Walsh said that HMM an international firm has done projects in both the U.S. and Canada primarily involved with public work, transportation projects, highway bridges and have done a number of bike trails in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and West Va. Also, we did the project between Niagara Falls and the Grand Island Bridge.

Newlin stated that the NYS OPR spoke very highly of the firm. A consultant from NYC who looked at trails in both the U.S. etc said he thought this had the potential of being one of the most beautiful striking trails in the world.

**RESIDENTS:**

Michele Vanstrom of 400 Glengrove Dr. Youngstown. I have been involved in the Greenway process since its inception and have followed it quite closely. I have some questions that you (Mr. Sundell) can answer. You have two alternatives west vs. east but we didn't see any dollar as to which one would be more. We also didn't see a third alternative which to me would be the least expensive which is taking the

Robert Moses Parkway completely out. It is an issue that Mr. Newlin has pointed out several times...it should be the greatest ??? and you are correct in all the things that you said about the gorge. You have an opportunity to make this not such a wonderful thing but an exceptional thing something that we can look back on with pride and really know that we have done something. There is a photo out there for 12 years that Mr. Newlin has made you aware of.

What I would like to see you do include that as an objective organization so that it is from here and can do that. A lot of emotions have gotten tied up into the removal of the Robert Moses Parkway. I have done extensive research and I know that removing it as Mr. Newlin pointed out does bring an economic revival and it does revive an area and we certainly need that in Niagara County let alone WNY. That is what I would like to see. I know that Mr. Newlin is in favor of keeping the road and I can understand where he is coming from as a politician but I would like to see you take that out of it. I would like to see you look at this in all honesty from the aspect of what that can bring. I would be more than happy to share with everyone here the figures that I have and you are aware as I have written about them in the newspaper. I wanted to come and be confrontational because they are saying that what I saw happen in the process and I wasn't happy about it especially after the May meeting of Greenway Commission. I would like to see you put the Robert Moses Parkway removal in there. That is something great, terrific It is something I know would be proud if you could look at all of the numbers and I have looked at the numbers and looked at the jobs, the security and what we really could have. Thank you.

Newlin said I'd ask the question and we come at this at different sides. If I was not in politics I would still be in favor of keeping the Robert Moses Parkway there for a lot of reasons. But we don't have to turn this tonight into that debate. I would like to know how much it would cost to remove the Robert Moses Parkway. I can only imagine a concrete highway of that size and length would be a considerable expenditure. I hope the other side just takes in reason as I listen to you with reason is that these trails are wonderful for people who have the ability to walk or take bike rides but we have to remember that in this community where we have an aging population and not everybody can walk, bike etc. and it is unfortunate but it is true.

Palmer said he did not think this was the right forum for you to respond.

Newlin said he would take his comments under advisement. You were asking to enter into a reasonable dialogue which I think was productive but that is something that I would ask you to consider too that everybody regardless of age or ability should be able to enjoy this scenic pathway. I think leaving it open to some car traffic is a good idea.

Michele Vanstrom said she was not asking you to turn it into a dirt trail. It is best to have some type of use that the disabled could use as you said all of the other things. I am thinking that you can get that simply by removing the traffic, keeping a lane but everything else is gone. Making so that the aging population...yes we should all benefit. This should be something and I think we can have it all. That is what I advocate for. I have always advocated for not to do with any population because age, physical infirmities etc. To say that is twisting what I have said.

Newlin said I didn't try to character your remarks. That is one of the issues that I have with the parkway removal.

Michele Vanstrom: I would like to see the road removed basically from traffic, shorten up and we have to have people do this is the way that you said but I would still like to see the alternative so that there is a third one.

Bob Baxter of 2709 Brayley Road, Ransomville. I have to compliment the team and the Town...you are very ultraistic to hope for this trail and the team operated with the constraints that they were presented with and therefore you had to have Michele Vanstrom coming up here saying where is the alternative. I endorse and underline her request for a third alternative. Back when Rep. Slaughter first obtained the DOT money for this project 1.8M I foresaw it happening. I wrote her a letter and told her what the problem was that the trail would be put along the existing parkway which would limit further plans and I asked her to intervene and put some type of stipulation on it. She declined to meet with us or with representative from the Greenway Commission. That letter is posted on her web site...Niagara Heritage.org. When the team here was going along the trail you have an area here....you have a challenge here and here...a challenge everywhere because you are designing a walking trail along an existing parkway. What we mentioned to Rep. Slaughter was that the slope of the hill (we went over that rather quickly in the planning here trail down) is so steep that a bicycle trail there would be almost unthinkable for a family to use and that with the parkway gone comes a series of graceful switch backs...little stop

over places like picnic area etc. that can't be done under the present condition. That is what we urge one of the facets of the plan ...we urge to be considered. Niagara University deal....how are we going to get them there? If you are working with the ...up there now you are working with NYPA...have them put an elevator in. If somebody is walking down below on a trail which is now a parkway and if they want to go to N.U. or the Power Vista to look there should be an elevator there anyway so that handicapped people are capable with a wheelchair or not can get down to the trail expecting to use it. There are a lot of other things that I could talk to somebody about sometime and we re probably going to try to use the Greenway Commission to do that.

Margaret Wooster 135 Woodward Avenue, Buffalo. I am with the Buffalo Niagara River Keepers and we are currently chairing a group called the Niagara Re-Licensing Environmental Coalition Group that is 11 groups are part of funding a larger group called the Greenway Ecological Standing Commission that has jurisdiction over such groups as the Power Authority funds for projects on the Niagara River. In this group called the Niagara Re-licensing Environmental Coalition are the Adirondack Mt. Club, Audubon NY, the Buffalo Niagara River Keepers, Citizens Campaign for the Environment; League of Women Voters, Niagara Frontier Wildlife Habitat Council, Niagara Muskie Assoc., Presbyterian of WNY; Quality Plants of Grand Island, Sierra Club and Town of Grand Island. Those are the 11 groups. The reason I am saying all of this is a quote of a letter that we wrote to the Greenway Commission objecting to their granting consistency for this plan which in fact at that point when it was presented and as Michelle Vanstrom mentioned was really very sketching. It was just a concept plan only and there were no details. From the letter we wrote objecting to the fact that #1 they voted consistency on the plan not really a proposal and also on this most controversial section of the Niagara Parkway or the Niagara experience as you drive north on all of those roads. We noted that the segment in question was the removal of that segment of the Robert Moses Parkway has been endorsed by local, state and international groups. These same groups that have endorsed parkway removal have advocated the transportation study for this segment now pending to assess the potential greenway ecological and economic benefits of removing a section of the parkway from the gorge rim. Spending over 2 M on a trail designed around the existing parkway with unnecessary constraints both on the trail and potentially on the future disposition of the parkway. I think it is important that these 11 groups that have signed on to this letter and spent a lot of time dealing with the concept plan and we did not want to fault the Greenway Commission as we consider them our friends but this is just the devil in the details.

One of the things that I saw in the slide presentation is the redundancy of roads that we have along the segment which makes what is the premier landscape in the greenway almost impossible to look at and or enjoy because you are either ripping a lot of the Robert Moses Parkway or Route 104 or the 190. Beside the redundancy of roads and kind of squeezing in this trail and you are talking about on ramps, underpasses and calling them secluded is one way to call them but dangerous might be another. We have such trails. We have a trail in Buffalo built around the Scajaquada Expressway and it is dangerous and there are sections that look just like the concept on the east trail version where people are sort of squeezed in and going under highways etc. It is just not pleasant. To take 2M and spend it on a trail that has to be designed around all of this infrastructure does not make sense I don't think. I think our groups don't think it protects their dollars or the Greenway Commission dollars. We would really like to see this study take into account the possibility of removing the Robert Moses Parkway. Not removing it but closing it to traffic and using that as the primary route for this trail.

Newlin: I don't pretend understand completely the Greenway Commission's rules and regulations for how they present or reject plans and they did support unanimously and I don't believe they are revisiting the issue. My understanding has been that they just look at a concept to see whether it fits into the broader greenway proposal. Secondly, we are working on the details now and that is why we are having this hearing and we have not picked a path now. Tonight is when we hear from the public and maybe improve our current ideas.

Paul Gromosiak of 5819 Grauer Road, Town of Niagara. We have to understand the Niagara River's history in order to treat it properly. From Lewiston to Youngstown, colonial history is the most important thing to most people. Culminating in Old Fort Niagara the jewel of below the Escarpment. From the Escarpment to the Falls the main focus should be the natural history of that Falls because it was that Falls that made the gorge and there is such a great story to tell. People should not be distracted from that story as they venture along the gorge. The scene should be as natural as possible. Then we go from the Falls to the Grand Island bridges and once again the history is mostly human. Mostly industrial. Some colonial history too. So there you wouldn't think as much of focusing on the natural. So whatever you do around the gorge has to focus on the most important thing that happen there and that was the making of the Falls, the movement of the Falls and the wonderful things that happen along the way. How do you appreciate a natural thing? As a boy scout leader we told our scouts to understand and appreciate nature. You have to

immerse yourself in it. You have to see it. Smell it. Hear it and if possible taste it. That is how you really understand nature. So the experience thru Lewiston from the Escarpment to the Falls should be that focus. A highway is abomination in the place celebrating nature. The environment there should be as natural as possible. People are starting to appreciate nature again. They understand the mistakes that we have made in treating this planet, so let's make Niagara the place where they can see nature. It is one of its' finest works. Don't distract it by human progress. Let's take it as well as we can back in time to when the Falls began, moved and got to where we are today.

Robert Borgati of 477 Morgan Drive. I would like to reiterate some of the things that were mentioned. First thing is that I would like to point out is I came here tonight not knowing all that much about the proposal but it only took a few minutes before it dawned on me that this proposal is only 2 alternatives and they both stink. It is obvious that both alternatives have serious problems. If we are looking to actually create a trail that is going to be world class that is going to have some impact economically and environmental you are going to attract tourists. Neither one of these proposals will do that. As Mr. Gromosiak pointed out it is the nature of the gorge and the scenery of the gorge is the important thing. It should be highlighted. Putting this trail in and I am all for trails, all for hiking and biking trails.....definitely need to connect Niagara Falls to Lewiston. There is no problem with that. We should come up with a really good proposal befitting of the natural environment. I don't think either one of these do. There are so many problems and they are so cumbersome to deal with that I have to oppose both alternatives.

Robert Gallucci of 365 Glengrove Drive, Youngstown. I want to make just a couple of real specific comments. I think it is real positive the connection to Niagara University. I think it would compliment the consultants looking in re-using the old Hojack bridge at the Power Authority. I think it is a real positive option to look at. The only thing that I would point out is there is an older one half way up the Escarpment. It was part of the original design for the parkway. It was identified very strongly in the Sasocki report that was done back in the early 90's that described the whole chain of curls up the river. That overlook is a real important feature looking down the river (north & west) and that overlook if used correctly is a real strong location for an at grade crossing. It is a difficult thing to do but you should look at that early on in the project. That is the only real strong technical recommendation that I would have to look at.

Bob Baxter: I just had answers to a couple of questions that you asked earlier. I appreciate your concern about the handicapped and wheelchair folks and I want to take note that some of the 80 groups that supports total parkway removal fall into that category. One of them is the Injured Workers of WNY Inc. You said you can't get an answer to how much would cost to remove the parkway. It is \$50,000 to a lane mile. That is low. The high would be \$75,000 with the bridges extra. You could remover all of the 5 miles of it for what this trail is going to cost.

Newlin: I would ask if the engineers would make some public comment.

Dan Sundell: Thanks for your comments. I want to invite you to the workshop where we will look at maps and at alternatives. What we have shown you tonight is not much. Just lines on the map etc. We haven't shown you anything that would excite you. As far as the costs, we were comfortable with either of the alternatives that would come in within costs. There are different ways to do it. You can spend the full 1.8M on the short sections if you want and there are a lot options there.

Jim Walsh said we are very early in the process so all of the comments were very appropriate and the 2 alternatives that we showed you are rather broad. We will be looking at other options throughout the process.

Newlin said we look forward to participating in the public workshop. Again, the parkway issue is the place where reasonable people can disagree but for example if all five of us were against the parkway and were for it's removal we couldn't even make that decision if we wanted to because that is a State issue. I suppose that you are as anxious as us for the State to make a decision on it but I don't see it coming any time soon for better or for worse. Whatever anger or disappointment you may have in the parkway, please remember to keep it at the State level. We were not involved in it's' existence.

The meeting was closed at 8:06 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted and Transcribed by:  
Carol J. Brandon, Town Clerk

