

TOWN OF CLARKSTOWN  
PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING

Town Hall

2/27/85

8:10 P.M.

Present: Supervisor Dusanenko  
Councilmen Carey, Holbrook, Lettre  
Councilman Maloney was absent  
John Costa, Town Attorney  
Patricia Sheridan, Town Clerk

Also present was Bill Hotaling who was representing Mr. Al Dixon of the State Department of Transportation

RE: CLOSING OF OLD MILL ROAD FOR REPLACEMENT OF BRIDGE AT SNAKE HILL ROAD AND OLD MILL ROAD

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Supervisor Dusanenko gave an explanation of why this hearing had been called. He said the Town would like to have the A Bridge rebuilt as soon as possible. It has been two years since it has been closed and it has been substandard for many years. He said they would give an update on delays but first wanted to speak on behalf of the Board. He said they do not want Old Mill Road or Snake Hill Road closed for any extended period of time. The Town Board members all agreed with this statement. Supervisor also said if it means extra cost or inconvenience for residents to have temporary work done on Old Mill Road and/or Snake Hill Road we expect that the State do that without closing the roads for any length of time and take that into consideration when redesigning or phasing its plans. The major reason is that Route 59 has been flooded two, three, four times per year and the Thruway has been near flooded during some of the last storms. Route 59 happens to be the major east-west artery through this Town other than the Thruway which is not a local road. This is the only east-west corridor during flood times for all emergency vehicles using the southern half of the Town of Clarkstown. Supervisor said the Board stood united in making the request of the State Department of Transportation.

Supervisor said this bridge was ready for design several months ago and then it was submitted to the various federal and other state approval agencies. Conrail objected to the plan because the bridge was too low as it was designed.

Mr. Hotaling said that they had changed the standards. Conrail originally submitted the standards and then revised them upwards. Supervisor said the bridge had to be elevated for clearance over the railroad track which meant redesign and it is still not finalized. Mr. Hotaling said they have finally finalized the railroad clearance requirements. This necessitates some redesign of the bridge because the bridge was about 75% designed when they came up with the design change. They want to piggy-back the containers rather than one high on the flatbeds. That would require 20-1/2 foot clearance. The bridge out there now only has 18 foot of clearance. Therefore the bridge had to be raised two feet in order to get the clearance. Now we have to raise it another foot. This involved constructing embankments at the intersection of Old Mill Road and Snake Hill Road to improve sight distance. This made it difficult to maintain traffic in that location because of the embankment construction. Normally in those areas we prefer traffic be rerouted around the area for efficiency of construction operations. It gives the contractor full access to the area and he can complete his work more effectively and economically and at a faster rate.

If the Town feels that it is necessary that this road remain open it is going to involve additional cost. We have not studied this option fully but it seems as though we could maintain two lanes of traffic. This will involve staging the project at a more involved level.

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Supervisor said the New York State Thruway Bridge will have between \$32,000,000.00 and \$40,000,000.00 expended and they are not going to close the Tappan Zee Bridge for nine months. In fact, extra money is going to be spent for commuter parking lots. Similarly, if Route 59 or the Parkway had a problem or I95 there would be some emergency relief if not a detour.

Mr. Hotaling said they were always open to suggestions and recommendations. He said that the residents know their areas better than the DOT does. This is a local highway and not a state highway with which they would be more familiar. He said the DOT is coordinating the design activities both for the County and the Town. He said they see that the design standards are adhered to for the Federal Government which is paying 80% of the cost of the project. The Town pays 5% and the State pays 15%. Supervisor said the County of Rockland is paying 5% not the Town. Mr. Hotaling said every change is going to be reflected in the 5% share. He said they do not mind spending the money as long as it is spent on a worthwhile basis. If there is a cost effective answer to any problem the DOT is willing to go along with it.

Supervisor said they had a request from the Town Attorney and Ms. Edna Collins to read the following into the record:

" 58 Rockland Lake Road  
Valley Cottage P.O.  
New York, 10989  
Feb. 26, 1985

T. Dusanenko Supervisor  
Town of Clarkstown  
New City, New York

Dear Sir:

As I am not able to be present at the Public Informational Meeting, please read this letter aloud at the hearing Feb. 27, 1985.

My family and I have owned and paid taxes on Lots #13.01 and 11.02 and 90A on a 50' R/OW to Snake Hill Rd. since 1907. It is zoned for manufacturing. This is the remainder of my family farm consisting of four houses which were taken by condemnation by the Spring Valley Water Co. on Old Mill Rd.

I have spoken to you a number of times in reference to the rebuilding the Snake Hill Railroad Bridge which was unsafe for years and closed last year, May 1984.

Until heavy traffic can pass over the new bridge, I am paying taxes on landlocked property that is unsalable and without value.

To continue my business and social life in my own community, I need to travel on Old Mill Road.

Thank you for your attention

Sincerely

/s/ Edna Collins"

Appearance:

Lt. D'Alessandro  
Clarkstown Police Department

Lt. D'Alessandro stated that he was representing the Police Department but also for all emergency services in the Town. He asked if it would be possible, in the event Old Mill Road is completely closed for an extended period of time, to leave an access for emergency vehicles to pass through. He said they run into a major problem with the ambulance corps where the district is split at Strawtown Road but there are times when Nanuet or New City Ambulance is not available and we must rely on Congers Ambulance to respond and their closest response is

through Old Mill Road. If we have to reroute them it would be six to eight miles out of their way. He said there are times when the police patrol units have to be moved from the west side of the causeway to the east side. If they have to use Route 59 they lose maybe four to five minutes. The same thing exists with the West Nyack Fire Department. There are approximately twenty-five homes and business up there.

Mr. Hotaling said he had written to the fire coordinator and to the police department. He was not sure if he had written to the Ambulance Corps. We asked for resolutions in order to get input to discover how responsive the Town would be to the proposals of the DOT. He said he would like to keep it open at least until they study it further. He said if it would be closed they would try to have a passage for emergency vehicles but that may not be for 100% of the time. He described the problems in erecting a temporary road.

Lt. D'Alessandro stated that the major problem would be with ambulances during the daytime.

Councilman Lettre said it was his understanding that at the next Town Board Meeting they were going to rescind the resolution passed giving authority to close the road and they are not going to allow the road to be closed under any circumstances. The onus is going to be on the state to devise a plan to rebuild the bridge without closing what we consider to be a main artery.

Supervisor said that would be done at the next Town Board Meeting. Under the State Highway Law only the Superintendent of Highways of the County (under most circumstances) has the ability to close the road and he has indicated that he is totally unwilling to do so.

Appearance: Ms. Jane Krantz

Mrs. Krantz questioned just what the State was going to do. She felt they would change the atmosphere of that whole area. She asked who would be accommodated by such change in this historic area? She stated that \$1.4 million was an absurd figure to be spending on that road. Mr. Hotaling said they usually design a road to the current state highway standards of safety when they embark upon a project. In this location the terrain is such that it is difficult to put in a safe highway crossing there. He gave a description of the problems associated with the bridge as it currently exists.

Mrs. Krantz said the local people want the bridge built but not for the benefit of Conrail but for the benefit of the local residents. She said Conrail was supposed to fix this but now the State is taking over their job for them.

In answer to a question as to whether this project included the straightening out of Snake Hill Road Supervisor Dusanenko asked Mr. Hotaling to confirm what the maps show-that from the bridge to the existing Snake Hill Road Railroad Bridge about 100 feet beyond where the new approach will be from the bridge there may be some sight work.

Snake Hill Road will have to be moved about 200 feet further to the reservoir. If you are raising the bridge you have to have a larger embankment. Old Mill Road will only be changed in a very small portion. Supervisor asked Mr. Hotaling to what length will Old Mill Road be changed.

Mr. Hotaling said before he gets into that he wanted to give the reason for the improvement of the road at the intersection is because with the present situation you have a substandard sight distance which means anyone approaching Old Mill Road going westbound

on Snake Hill Road over the old bridge has only a 50 foot sight distance to the intersection which is grossly unsafe. Likewise, if you are at the intersection the sight distance looking right or left going west-bound before you turn into the intersection is substandard. The only way we can improve the sight distance as well as improve the railroad clearance over the track is by raising Old Mill Road. There was only one solution and that was building an embankment and that was the reason for the construction. If we were to build the bridge and ignore the sight distance we would be creating an unsafe situation.

Mrs. Krantz said she wanted to make the following statement publicly. "When the State of New York tells you it has to be redone or re this, they are conning you and sucking you in because we need a new bridge, true. But what he is telling you is a whole realignment of Old Mill Road and no matter what he says now don't believe him."

Appearance: Mr. William Bristow

Mr. Bristow said he had examined the plans and saw no valid reason for closing Old Mill Road. In the first stages of the contract it could be brought to its permanent location and paved. It has the additional advantage of getting it out of the way of the bridge project. He asked Mr. Hotaling why it must be closed?

Mr. Hotaling said they try to evaluate everything on some cost effective basis. He said they did not know exactly what the concerns of the people in the area were. That is why they had written to organizations in the area trying to get some input. If there is sufficient reason to maintain traffic on Old Mill Road there should be a way to do that. He said they still have to go back and deal with the people in Albany who have an overview over themselves. He said they need from the people in the area sufficient reason to keep the road open.

Supervisor Dusanenko said between the Police, Fire and Ambulance he felt they had sufficient cause to keep the road open.

Councilman Holbrook said when they first passed the resolution the Town Board felt the road should be closed when it had to be but we thought about that and now we want you to get the feeling of the people here and we are going to rescind that resolution.

Councilman Lettre said they had been premature and had made a mistake. They would now like to rectify it. Mr. Bristow said the only one who can close that road is the County Superintendent of Highways.

Appearance: Mr. Jerome Trachtenberg  
Old Mill Road  
West Nyack, New York 10994

Mr. Trachtenberg said he was not here to debate whether the road is good, bad or anything else. He said he lived on Snake Hill Road back in 1935 and lived there for many years. He now lives only about one half mile from the area under discussion now. He was happy to hear that the Board is going to rescind the resolution and he thanked the Board for calling this meeting.

He said he was a Fire Commissioner for the West Nyack District and as a member of the Rockland County Fire Advisory Board. If this area is closed down the area will be deprived of emergency services. The fire company in West Nyack cannot cover its area going north and west of Snake Hill Road. There are 25 homes there that need the protection. There is also industry there which needs protection.

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He stated that the Fire Advisory Board had spent many hours devising ways and means of how protection could be effected. He said they did not want Old Mill Road closed to deprive the area of these needed services.

Mr. Trachtenberg said that his office is in Nyack and his post office is in West Nyack. He said he would have to travel four or five miles out of his way to go to West Nyack to get his mail. He would have to travel the same distance then to get to his office in Nyack. He said he did not want his habits disturbed as he could see no need for it.

He said there was a valid point and that was with the vision in the area. That should be straightened out but is a minor point and does not require closing the entire area. He said he has dealt with the State of New York Highway Department and its component parts for fifty years. It has always been a disaster. When they built the Thruway at the motel area on Route 303 they insisted that water could come down the hill and make an impossible turn.

He stated that there had to be many accidents before they widened Route 303 at the entrance to the Thruway and Snake Hill Road. He said they always throw the boogy man of money at you. The State spends so much money and he did not care if they spend a few more thousand or even a million. He said every effort should be spent in not closing the road.

Appearance: Chief John Tobin  
West Nyack Fire Department

He stated that there is a reason for concern. If it is 25 houses or one house, if it takes us an extra ten minutes to get there it is ten minutes too long. He said when the Board members said they would keep the road open that was fine with him and he just wanted to voice his opinion. He said he was looking for a commitment that this would not go any other way.

Supervisor said such a resolution would be passed at the next Town Board Meeting.

Appearance: Rabbi Krantz

Rabbi Krantz said it would have been nice if the meeting had been held previously since the community is interested in this bridge. He felt they could do without it entirely. He said he did not want a highway there going thirty miles an hour. We are trying to keep a rural community. We do not want it turned into a super highway. If you could make it that traffic would have to go at five miles an hour he would be very happy because it's safer that way. The bridge has been out for a long period of time. There are other bridges out of commission. Fix those bridges and leave this area alone. He wanted it rural and quiet. He did not want a double lane highway over the bridge. A two lane highway is only an invitation to more accidents and more difficulty in the area. He called upon the Town Board to show some initiative and say we don't want the State and Federal money. He felt that federal monies was a seduction and that after all it is still our money. We do not have to spend a million dollars there. He called upon the Town Board to withdraw from the Department of Transportation and say we don't need this bridge.

Appearance: Mr. Allan Yassky  
Valley Cottage, New York

He stated that when the Town Hall was built sprinklers had to be installed. However, the public decided they did not want sprinklers and that law did not apply in Clarkstown. Now we are

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in a building of public assembly without fire protection. A simple warehouse has to have sprinklers in the same town under the same rules. The point is that if this was an individual and private contractor coming in and this was an entrance to a private subdivision there would be no question but that the road would be kept open. It is nonsense to have two sets of standards. Government is equal to but certainly not above any of the individuals who comprise it. If the state does the work there should be no question but that the road be kept open. If the bottom line is either we do it this way or we don't do it, Mr. Yassky said he did not believe there is a choice. You don't take that kind of money - it just isn't done.

He said are we raising this bridge and then finding out that the piggyback cars can't get through anyway as happened in the Town of Haverstraw? He was assured that had been checked out. Why does Conrail have to stack them two high so they can make more money. That is not our problem.

Mr. Hotaling said there is a law governing the maximum height and we are still below that.

Mr. Yassky said as a developer if he takes down a tree he catches hell and he better replant real fast. He asked if anyone had driven down Old Mill Road lately. We did not hear from the Shade Tree Commission about that. Someone went in and did a number on two hundred year old trees and absolutely decimated the area under the guise that Orange and Rockland wanted to move their poles back to make it a little safer. It's a mess and if any builder or developer had done that we'd be in jail. That's a case where government is not acting under its own rules and regulations but apart from it.

He said if it can't be done in a proper manner and keep the road open, don't do it.

Supervisor said everyone here knows the concensus of the Town Board and that at our next regular meeting we are going to pass a resolution rescinding our previous resolution allowing that road to be closed for up to nine months and also to supply the justification from the West Nyack Fire Company, from the Ambulance Corps, from the Police Department and from other agencies of the Town that it is essential that it remain open. What's good enough for the private sector to conform to, government should also be doing.

Supervisor asked if there was anyone else wishing to speak or anyone with a different idea.

Appearance: Lt. D'Alessandro  
Clarkstown Police Department

He said everyone here had voiced a personal opinion of why they do not want this project to go through. The traffic congestion that has been created by the increase of population in this town necessitates that bridge being rebuilt. People are here stating they don't want to see Snake Hill Road changed. They don't want to see Old Mill Road changed. They do not go out on that highway and enforce the Vehicle and Traffic Laws. They don't know how these commuters drive down Snake Hill Road and on Old Mill Road trying to get to work. That bridge has got to be replaced to accommodate the traffic. Someday we are going to have a "fatal" in the middle of that tunnel because people do not want to sit and let the other guy go.

Mrs. Krantz said she felt there was less traffic because the bridge is closed as people do not want to use the tunnel. With the repair of the bridge traffic will speed up. She suggested a police officer be placed at the tunnel to regulate the traffic and give out tickets to the speeders.

Appearance: Ray Botto  
Briarwood Drive  
New City, New York

He stated that he is in a five person car pool originating in New City and terminating in White Plains. He said they travel down that route to Old Mill Road and have been doing so for the last twenty years. He said they always went over the bridge until it was closed and they do make the loop around under the tunnel. He said it is a hazardous situation. The bridge was bad before. This is a terrible situation also but it is still a way of getting through to avoid traffic on a regular pattern. He said we are not alone and are travelling with a group of people doing the very same thing coming from New City to Westchester each day. Many people from other areas converge at that one point. The problem intensifies when there is inclement weather. The road gets washed out and it is being repaired while the traffic is going through because there is no other way.

Appearance: Jeremy Krantz  
West Nyack, New York

He asked if an environmental impact study had been done? Mr. Hotaling answered in the negative. He said this project had a categorical exclusion. This is basically a bridge replacement project in essence and so far as the federal government goes and the review agencies this is not a type project which requires environmental impact statements. He said they do make preliminary environmental review in order to determine this.

Mr. Jeremy Krantz asked if there was any available impact information regarding Snake Hill Road or Old Mill Road in reference to the regrading as to drainage, etc. Mr. Hotaling said in essence an environmental impact statement is a determination of whether or not you have made a significant change in the environment. Most people would agree that we are not making a significant change in environment with a project of this type.

Mr. Jeremy Krantz said it would appear that they will be straightening Snake Hill Road. He said if you walk the area you would see the major change occurring which is the straightening of a now curving area. Mr. Jeremy Krantz also asked if land was being purchased from Spring Valley Water Company? Mr. Hotaling said yes. Jeremy Krantz asked what the cost was? Mr. Hotaling said he had no idea and Councilman Lettre asked if anyone present had any idea of the cost involved? Mr. Hotaling said that was part of the right-of-way negotiation process. He said in this case Rockland County is doing the right-of-way acquisition. They are co-sponsoring.

Mr. Jeremy Krantz said the cost is borne 100% by the people. Mr. Hotaling said the cost is based on three appraisals and then they come up with a fair market value. This is negotiated. Councilman Lettre asked how much land was involved? Mr. Hotaling said he could not give a firm number. He said he would have to calculate and he did not have a calculator right now. Mr. Jeremy Krantz asked if he could figure out from the map how many feet of Lake DeForest Property they would be taking over? With a preliminary figure of \$1.4 million dollars there should be some idea of the amount of property involved.

Councilman Carey said that Mr. Hotaling would get the figures but Mr. Krantz said he wanted to know now. Councilman Carey said they could not be given now. Supervisor said Mr. Hotaling is not in a position to give the answers that Mr. Krantz wanted now. He suggested that Mr. Krantz write him and copy the Town Board with his questions. Mr. Hotaling will answer your questions and you will have them on file.

Mr. Krantz said that his mother had written to the DOT requesting information regarding this bridge and they had written back to her advising her to come to this meeting and find out. The only way to find out information is if we have someone here who knows what is going to happen. He said there are no specifics on what is being planned it is all generalities. Mr. Hotaling said he would be happy to answer any letter written to him and he would be glad to show Mr. Krantz the plans and discuss them with him.

Mr. Krantz asked if there was a proposal to install a light of some kind between Old Mill Road and Snake Hill Road? Mr. Hotaling said at this time there should be no need for a light as we will be improving the sight distance so that people will be able to see the intersection with adequate warning. Mr. Hotaling said there will be a stop sign.

Mr. Krantz asked what the costs were for taking down the old bridge. Mr. Hotaling said he could only give an estimate as the final cost would be governed by the contract. The cost for removing the structure will be approximately \$10,000.00. As it is not critical to the project it can be done at any time.

Mr. Krantz asked about the degree of grading from Old Mill to Snake Hill. Mr. Hotaling said that would be about 9%. In answer to Mr. Krantz' question regarding the original proposed cost, Mr. Hotaling said that would have been about \$1.5 million dollars. He went on to say that even now it is an estimate until the final bid comes in. To the best of his knowledge now the cost will be \$1.5 to \$1.7 million dollars. If the road is not closed, Mr. Krantz wanted to know what percentage of increased costs would be passed on to the Town. He was answered that it would be 5% of the cost which cannot be determined now.

It was determined that exactly what the cost would be to keep Old Mill Road open for nine months is not now ascertainable.

Mr. Trachtenberg said he mentioned that he had lived in the neighborhood for fifty years and has had an opportunity to examine the proposed changes. They are a vast improvement and should be done as laid out.

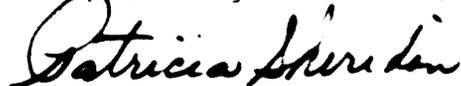
Mr. Trachtenberg said this could be done without closing Old Mill Road and this is the sensible way to do it.

Mrs. Krantz said she did not know if the public had been invited to discuss whether they wanted to improve the bridge or Snake Hill Road or any other section. She felt there should have been a meeting before this to decide if the residents wanted anything changed. She said everything was decided before it was even presented to the public.

Supervisor said this had been on several workshop meeting agendas, several Town Board meetings and the Town Board in many years has had resolutions passed regarding this. All Town Board meetings and all workshop meetings are open to the public. Mrs. Krantz alluded to a "secret meeting" between then Senator Linda Winkow, the Supervisor and members of the Department of Transportation of the State of New York with several contractors. The Supervisor reiterated that there had been several public meetings.

There being no one further wishing to be heard, the informational meeting was closed, time: 9:10 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



PATRICIA SHERIDAN,  
Town Clerk