

BOROUGH OF PITMAN
WORK SESSION MINUTES
MARCH 8, 2021

Call to Order

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Open Public Meetings Act Statement – Pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, I hereby announce that adequate notice of the time and date of this meeting was published in the South Jersey Times on January 7, 2021, posted on the Borough Hall front door, and advertised on the Borough of Pitman website continuously since January 7, 2021.

Roll Call

Council President Blass: Present
Councilwoman James: Present
Councilwoman Rudley: Present
Mayor Razze: Present
Clerk O'Donnell: Present

Councilman Fitzpatrick: Present
Councilman Mazzola: Present
Councilman Weng: Present
Borough Solicitor Krachun: Present

Discussion

Motion to Open Discussion: James
Time: 6:34 p.m.

Second: Mazzola

Glassboro-Camden Rail Line Update

Representatives in attendance:

- John Hanson, CEO
- Michael Howard, Acting Manager Construction and Maintenance
- John Manzoni, STV Project Manager
- Mike Venuto, Chief Engineer
- William Brooks, STV Project Director
- William Shanahan, DRPA Government Relations
- Michael Williams, Manager, Corporate Communications
- Christina Maroney, Director of Strategic Initiatives

Councilwoman Rudley spoke briefly about the recent survey that she distributed online and said that she received approximately 600 responses. She introduced the members of the Glassboro-Camden Line project team some of whom have been involved in the project from the beginning and others who have most recently been involved with the Environmental Impact Study, which is now complete.

John Hanson, CEO of the project spoke briefly and introduced John Manzoni, STV Project Manager who reviewed the Power Point project overview that was prepared for this meeting. A copy of the Glassboro-Camden Line EIS Project Overview is attached to these Minutes.

Discussion

Councilwoman Rudley asked for information on when and how to apply for a Quiet Zone. Mr. Manzoni said that it is up to each town to apply for their own and he said that the New Jersey Department of Transportation has a group that will help with the application process. Mr. Hanson said that the project team will provide technical support and that the DRPA will provide engineering support should the Borough request a Quiet Zone. Councilwoman Rudley asked about the sound made by the gates when they are activated and was told by Mr. Hanson that a Quiet Zone only stops the train from blowing its horn as it passes through. It does not stop the sounds from the gates.

Mayor Razze stated that the roads in the Borough that the train crosses are all County roads. Mr. Manzoni said that the County would then be the entity to apply for the Quiet Zone. He said that the liability is on the owner of the roadway and by establishing a Quiet Zone, the owner is assuming the added liability of not having the train's horn blowing as it crosses the intersection. He said that a waiver can also be obtained to have a bell chime instead of a horn when the train enters the station.

Councilman Weng asked what engineering solutions were put in place to minimize the noise and vibration coming from the train. Mr. Manzoni stated that the tracks are a continuous welded rail, landscaping will be added, and sometimes homes have been insulated or have had windows replaced to cut down on the noise. Councilman Weng asked for a reasonable time frame for when the train will be in full operation. Mr. Venuto said that a conservative estimate would be six years, with agreement from Mr. Hanson who shared that the greatest challenge has been funding the rail line.

Councilman Fitzpatrick expressed concern about the projected lose of 110 parking places in the Borough. Mr. Manzoni said that his team is investigating ways to give back some of the spots. Along W. Jersey Avenue, parking spaces will be lost due to the installation of a second set of tracks. Three ideas for that area are to designate parallel parking spaces, narrow the roadway to keep front end parking and save all the current spaces, and to extend W. Jersey Avenue to the culvert to provide extra spaces.

Mr. Howard said that the information in the Environmental Impact Study is presented as a "worse case" scenario.

Councilman Fitzpatrick asked if 58 Commerce Avenue is the only property to be taken by the rail line and was told that it was. He also asked about the anticipated bike path through that area and was told that the path was not in the specifications when the plans for the rail line were drawn up. Therefore, there is no mention of the construction of a bike trail in the current plans for the train.

Regarding the Quiet Zone, Councilwoman Rudley asked if there is a fee or annual application process to maintain it and was told by Mr. Manzoni that the transfer of liability goes onto the entity that applied for the Quiet Zone, and that once one is designated, it remains as one going forward.

Mayor Ranze said that the River Line estimated greater ridership compared to the actual amount of people that take that train. Mr. Manzoni said that the GCL should not be compared to the River Line as there is a different demographic between the two areas. Mr. Hanson said that he will investigate the ridership of the River Line and provide that information to Mayor Ranze.

Councilwoman Rudley asked about crime taking place on the trains, and what entity would be responsible for addressing those incidents. Mr. Hanson said that New Jersey Transit owns the line and that it is expected that the DRPA will police the activities of the riders.

Motion to close discussion: Blass
Time: 7:26 p.m.

Second: Weng

Public Portion

Motion to open to the public: Blass
Time: 7:26 p.m.

Second: Weng

Meghan Robinson, 614 Ardmore Avenue – Ms. Robinson asked if there is a mechanism in place for something other than an at-grade design, either below ground or above ground for the station platform and tracks. Mr. Venuto responded that it is not feasible to do either based on the cost. When Ms. Robinson asked about the specific cost, Mr. Venuto referred her to the cost analysis section of the GCL website.

Bill Ritzler, 517 N. Broadway – In clarifying the Quiet Zone issue, Mr. Ritzler stated that the correct process would be for the Borough to have discussions with the County directly about the Quiet Zone designation, and Mr. Venuto confirmed that the County must be the entity to lead the request. Mr. Venuto again stated that the GCL Team will offer support with the application process.

Jennifer Grenier, 41 Bellevue Avenue – Ms. Grenier asked what security measures will be put in place for other sections of the tracks aside from the platforms. Mr. Manzoni stated that fencing and landscaping will be installed along the tracks to keep people from crossing over them.

Susanne Lawton, 206 Hunterdon Avenue, Sewell, NJ – Ms. Lawton asked if the DRPA has investigated increasing the use of buses rather than trains for mass transportation. Mr. Manzoni replied that within the roadway network nothing runs north-south on mass transit, making light rail the best option for that situation. Ms. Lawton asked if the project is definite and Mr. Venuto responded that the GCL team is continuing to move forward to getting into the final engineering phase of the project.

Steve Roth, 15 Mansfield Avenue – Mr. Roth asked about the tracks being used both by Conrail and NJ Transit. Mr. Manzoni responded that the tracks are owned by Conrail and that there is a single point control center that monitors all trains traveling along the tracks. Mr. Roth asked who has jurisdiction in the event a crime occurs on the train. Mr. Hanson replied that the owner is responsible for safety on the train and that they receive mutual aid from the local police departments.

